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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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HOUSE OF LORDS

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The following abbreviations are used to show a Member's party affiliation:

Abbreviation	Party/Group
CB	Cross Bench
Con	Conservative
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GP	Green Party
Ind Lab	Independent Labour
Ind SD	Independent Social Democrat
Ind UU	Independent Ulster Unionist
Lab	Labour
Lab Co-op	Labour and Co-operative Party
LD	Liberal Democrat
Non-afl	Non-affiliated
PC	Plaid Cymru
UKIP	UK Independence Party
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

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House of Lords

Thursday 28 April 2022

11 am

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Chelmsford.

Retirements of Members

Announcement

11.09 am

The Lord Speaker (Lord McFall of Alcluth): My Lords, I should like to notify the House of the retirements, with effect from today, of the noble Lords, Lord Brabazon of Tara, Lord Moonie and Lord Oxburgh, pursuant to Section 1 of the House of Lords Reform Act 2014. On behalf of the House, I should like to thank the noble Lords for their much-valued service to the House.

Worldwide Displacement of Refugees

Question

11.10 am

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of displaced people and refugees worldwide; and what steps they are taking to convene an international initiative to tackle the root causes of mass displacement.

The Minister of State, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park) (Con): My Lords, in November 2021, the UNHCR estimated that the number of people forcibly displaced globally exceeded 84 million by mid-2021. Since then, another 11 million people have been displaced within Ukraine or abroad as refugees. The UK has led the way in forging innovative solutions to refugee crises and championing a longer-term international approach to displacement. Ultimately, political efforts to build and sustain peace are the key to resolving displacement.

Lord Alton of Liverpool (CB): My Lords, I thank the noble Lord for that reply. Does he recall the Cross-Bench debate in January of this year to which he answered and the calls made for urgent consideration to be given to the root causes and push factors that have led to the more than 80 million people that he has just identified being displaced, 50 million of whom are displaced because of violence or conflict, everywhere from Ukraine to Afghanistan, Burma and Syria, and some of whom spend their entire lives in camps? What consideration have we given to following up the calls made in that debate for the United Kingdom to convene a COP 26-style summit to identify and support durable solutions that enable refugees and displaced people to rebuild their lives and live in safety and dignity, rather than seeking perilous journeys or festering for years in squalid conditions where they can become fodder for traffickers and insurgencies?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Con): The noble Lord is absolutely right, and of course I very much remember the debate and the message that was conveyed by a number of noble Lords in that debate. He mentioned COP 26 which, while ostensibly focused on climate change, is every bit as relevant to the debate we are having today as it is relevant to climate change. We are in a world that is increasingly unstable. The majority of refugees are displaced as a consequence of violence, but we know that the environment is becoming an increasing factor. So the solution is not to focus purely on the issue of refugees but, using every tool at our disposal, to do everything we can to ensure that the world addresses those gigantic challenges that I know the noble Lord is as concerned about as I am.

Baroness Northover (LD): My Lords, the Minister mentioned climate change. Is he aware that the expansion of the Sahara was partly what fuelled the conflict in Darfur, as people were displaced from that area? That was an early warning of the global instability likely to follow climate change, yet we hear that the funding on climate change in his department is about to be decimated. Does that make sense?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Con): The commitment that we have made as a Government to not just maintain levels of funding for climate change but in fact to double our international climate finance to £11.6 billion remains intact. So I am not sure where those rumours are coming from—more so because, as part of that commitment to spend £11.6 billion on climate change, we are also committed to spending around £3 billion of that on nature-based solutions to climate change, specifically so that we can tackle the kinds of issues that the noble Baroness has just mentioned.

Lord Cormack (Con): My Lords, what estimate has been made of the number of these refugees who are fleeing or have fled religious persecution? It must be a very considerable figure.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Con): My Lords, I am afraid that I do not know the answer to that, but I would imagine that the noble Lord is right and that it is a very significant figure. However, with his permission I will convey his question to the Home Office and get back to him.

Lord Anderson of Swansea (Lab): Does the Minister agree that the real challenge lies not in identifying the causes of migration, which include poverty, repressive regimes and, yes, conflict and climate change, but rather in forging an international consensus to tackle those root causes? What initiatives does the Minister have in mind?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Con): The noble Lord is right that the solution is a global one, but that is precisely why the UK is putting in so much effort, not only through the duration of our presidency of COP, which of course did not end in Glasgow—it ends when we hand the baton to Egypt at the end of this year—but also through the CBD nature COP,

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 which is being hosted by China in Kunming. I do not think there is any country in the world—and I would even include the host country—that is putting more effort into seeking the highest possible ambition. In addition to that, a great friend of the United Kingdom, Andrea Meza, a former Environment Minister of Costa Rica, is now running things in the UNCCD—the desertification COP—and we will be working extremely closely with her to ensure that there too we get the highest possible ambition.

Baroness Cox (CB): My Lords, is the Minister aware of the growth of Islamic jihadism in many areas of Nigeria, which has caused massive displacement? Recently, I visited the Middle Belt. In that region alone, there are an estimated 3 million displaced people, and we personally witnessed their suffering and destitution. Does the Minister therefore acknowledge that, if there is not a systematic, effective international strategy led by global Britain to tackle the root causes, we will see an exponential growth in human suffering caused by mass displacement?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Con): The noble Baroness is absolutely right, and that feeds very much into the question from my noble friend Lord Cormack. I of course agree that the UK has an enormously important role to play, and I think we have demonstrated, particularly over the past year, our ability to convene and to provide that leadership, not least through our stewardship of the COP conference. So, yes, I agree, and I know the Government agree, too.

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, earlier this month, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees warned that the Government's plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda violates international law. What impact does the Minister think that will have on the forthcoming CHOGM in Rwanda? Does he not agree that this unworkable, unethical and extortionate policy will undermine our influence on fellow Commonwealth countries to comply with international law?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Con): My Lords, I do not recognise that. The Government are convinced that the approach we are taking in relation to Rwanda passes all the legal tests that it might be subjected to. I understand where the noble Lord is coming from, but I suggest that there is a myth that doing nothing is the kind option. Doing nothing absolutely guarantees a continuation of the kind of suffering that this deal is designed to ameliorate.

The Lord Bishop of Chelmsford: As we heard the Minister say, the UN estimates that more than 11 million Ukrainians have been displaced from their homes since 24 February, more than 5 million have fled the country and approximately two-thirds of the country's children are now displaced. We would do well to remember that these are not just numbers; each of them represents a human life. The outpouring of concern from the British public and willingness to

host refugees in their homes has been a powerful statement of love amid this extraordinary tragedy. Indeed, many across the diocese of Chelmsford, which I serve, and across the country, have gone to great lengths to welcome refugees with open arms. Can the Minister expand on what is being done to address concerns raised about delays and complications in processing asylum applications through the Homes for Ukraine scheme?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Con): I start by echoing very strongly the comments of the right reverend Prelate on the generosity of the British public. We are forging ahead as a Government, doing everything we can to ensure that our doors are open and the country is welcoming to those people fleeing violence in Ukraine as a consequence of the Russian invasion. We have two bespoke humanitarian routes for people in Ukraine. They have been announced and they respond directly to the needs and requests of the Ukrainian Government. There is no limit on the number of people who can come here as of 21 April, and more than 71,000 visas have been issued under both those schemes. The family route has been extended. It is difficult to know the numbers—no one knows them—but an estimated 100,000 Ukrainians may join their family members in the UK. Although there have been delays—there is no point pretending that there have not—it is very much the view of the Home Office and the Foreign Office that the systems are now in place to ensure the smooth functioning of the approach we set out.

Lord Green of Deddington (CB): Does the Minister agree that the wonderful response of the British public to the Ukraine crisis illustrates their willingness to help when they are sure that those concerned are genuine? Secondly, in the wider context of the review that he mentioned, will the Government include another look at the refugee convention, now many years old and facing entirely different circumstances?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Con): Again, I strongly agree with the noble Lord. Clearly there is a recognition of the acute needs of people needing to flee Ukraine for obvious reasons—likewise Afghanistan—but there is also a recognition that, often, underlying the movement of people en masse around the world is a criminal network of almost indescribable brutality and ruthlessness. That is exactly what this Government seek to undermine because, until we remove those incentives, such organisations will continue to go from strength to strength. I will convey the noble Lord's message about the convention to the Home Office.

Bilateral Relations with Caribbean Countries *Question*

11.20 am

Asked by Lord Bellingham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to expand and improve bilateral relations with Caribbean countries.

The Minister of State, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park) (Con): My Lords, the UK and the nations of the Caribbean have strong and enduring relationships based on mutual respect, trust and shared values. Through increased ministerial engagement and the UK's diplomatic network in the Caribbean, the Government continue to develop modern partnerships across the region that deliver on our priorities, including the rules-based international system, climate change, advocacy for small island developing states, development, trade and security.

Lord Bellingham (Con): My Lords, I am grateful to the Minister for that reply. Does he agree with me that realm status in the Caribbean, and indeed elsewhere, confers considerable mutual benefits? Although decisions about the monarchy's future in these realms are for the people of those countries—after a referendum, we hope—surely the FCDO should not be neutral in this but keep stressing the substantial benefits of the status quo. Does the Minister also agree that, in the recent tours they carried out, the Cambridges and the Wessexes showed good judgment and good humour and did both their country and their monarchy proud?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Con): I thank my noble friend for his comments; I absolutely agree. As he said, decisions about the future relationship between Caribbean countries and the United Kingdom are ultimately for the people themselves. That is the bedrock of our arrangement through the Commonwealth and the associations that he talked about. The approach we take is a model for other powers around the world when it comes to states and Governments with which they are associated.

Lord Purvis of Tweed (LD): My Lords, the UK's trading relationship with the Caribbean is under a rollover European Union agreement—an EPA. The European Union has subsequently updated its Cotonou agreement so there is now a new deep and comprehensive relationship with the 15 CARIFORUM nations. Looking forward, does the Minister agree that we should move at pace for a deep and comprehensive free trade agreement with all 15 CARIFORUM nations that goes beyond simply tariffs, trades and history and looks forward to a new trading relationship that includes sustainability and closer people relationships?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Con): The noble Lord is absolutely right: the Caribbean is a region of huge importance and potential to the UK. We have asked Darren Henry MP, our Caribbean trade envoy, to focus specifically on building the pipeline of UK capability. We are keen to better engage the diaspora on trade and investment opportunities in the region. We look forward to the continued implementation of the CARIFORUM-UK EPA trade agreement, which covers the largest number of countries—14, plus Haiti as an observer. In fact, it is the largest agreement we have apart from the trade and co-operation agreement with the EU. It is our most comprehensive trade

agreement with developing countries and covers areas ranging from goods and services to public procurement and sustainability.

Lord Howell of Guildford (Con): My Lords, is my noble friend aware of the considerable—and increasing—Chinese involvement and engagement in the Caribbean states? It is happening not only in the Caribbean but in the South Seas as well. Is he aware that this is about not just trade agreements, double taxation agreements and loans, which often cannot be paid back, but weapons training and officer training? We have now reached a point where the Chinese are seeking to establish in another Commonwealth realm a full naval maintenance base, including a police and military presence. This has gone very far indeed. Will my noble friend remind his colleagues in the Foreign Office that, while we are neglecting many parts of the Commonwealth, other countries—notably China—are realising the strategic value of these states and moving in fast? We need to have a better understanding of the vital security nature of the Commonwealth and give it proper attention.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Con): My noble friend makes an extremely important point in relation to the Caribbean which could just as easily be made in relation to small island developing states in the Pacific, for example. The 2021 integrated review noted very clearly that China's increasing power and international assertiveness is likely to be the most significant geopolitical factor in the 2020s. China now has one of the largest diplomatic presences in the Caribbean after the UK, US and Brazil. China continues to expand its engagement in the region as part of its broader strategy to secure support for its belt and road initiative and to reduce support for recognition of Taiwan. Unfortunately, the Caribbean's infrastructure needs, which are significant, provide an opportunity for China to increase its influence, and much of that comes through Beijing's loan strategy, which my noble friend just alluded to. All this makes it even more important that the UK steps up its support for, and partnership and engagement with, countries across the Caribbean and, for the same reason, the Pacific region.

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, can I touch on the issue of influence and values that the Minister mentioned? Human Rights Watch has reported that seven countries in the eastern Caribbean still maintain anti-LGBT laws, a relic of British colonialism, as Theresa May once said at a previous CHOGM. Can the Minister tell us, ahead of CHOGM 2022 in Rwanda, what steps the Government are taking to encourage them and others to end this appalling discrimination?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Con): The noble Lord makes a hugely important point. I cannot say it is true of all the engagements that we have on a bilateral basis with members of the Commonwealth, particularly those countries that take the regressive views that he has outlined in relation to LGBT issues, but certainly in most of those exchanges this issue is

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raised and the UK has always stood up internationally, as we do domestically, for the rights of LGBT communities.

Baroness Hooper (Con): My Lords, in welcoming the Government's plans, which my noble friend has outlined, may I ask him to clarify whether these extend only or mainly to the English-speaking Caribbean, or to other countries such as Cuba, the Dominican Republic or Haiti?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Con): Obviously, the UK has a particularly strong and valued relationship with those English-speaking countries with which we share a very close history, but our involvement and interest in the region goes beyond them. For example, the Prime Minister had meetings yesterday with a number of leaders of Caribbean countries, not all of them English-speaking. We have many issues in common, not least the question of China but also climate change, which is regarded by most Caribbean countries as literally existential.

Lord Boateng (Lab): My Lords, small island states of the Caribbean do not qualify for ODA, yet they have real needs. Might not the Government's policy carry more conviction if it addressed more realistically the understandable demands of the Caribbean for reparations for slavery?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Con): The noble Lord makes an important point about ODA. In the current system, the unique vulnerability of small island developing states to issues such as climate change and shocks such as Covid is not recognised. It was made very clear over the last couple of years that they are uniquely vulnerable, and consequently their economic ranking can change very quickly. That is not reflected in the system of recognition, which means that you have countries which, for all intents and purposes, should be ODA-eligible but are not according to the current rules. This is an issue which we are raising robustly in the OECD. I hope that we can see some changes there. Additionally, the UK is working with Fiji and other countries on a global taskforce on access to finance. One of the problems is that it is incredibly complicated accessing finance from the multilateral institutions. They are bureaucratic, time-consuming and so on. We are working very hard on that too, and that is recognised by the small island developing states in question.

Baroness Northover (LD): My Lords, rightly, the Minister has just mentioned the significance of climate change in the Caribbean. The hurricanes in the region are much more extreme and frequent than they used to be, but can be tracked across the Atlantic. The United Kingdom was behind the curve when it came to Hurricane Irma, for example, not holding a COBRA meeting until several days after it had hit. Can the Minister reassure us that the Government are far better prepared to help the overseas territories if and when they are hit by similar hurricanes?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Con): I can. The United Kingdom, not least through its presidency of COP, has raised the issue of adaptation to climate change. We know that, whatever we do in mitigation, change is inevitable whether we like it or not. Enabling vulnerable countries to adapt as well as they can and to deal with natural disasters, which are happening with increasing intensity, is a top priority. Although we have not set a forensic target, our view is that the balance of investment in climate change issues should be more or less 50:50 between mitigation and adaptation. Other donor countries are increasingly following us on that.

Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton (Con): My Lords, further to that question, I declare my interest as honorary colonel of the Cayman Islands Regiment. Both the Cayman Islands Regiment and the Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment were created by this Government after Hurricane Irma in 2017 to ensure that there is on-island capability to deal with post-hurricane events. I am sure the noble Baroness is deeply reassured by the Government's action, which directly addresses her question. I remind your Lordships' House that there are not only Commonwealth citizens in the Caribbean but British citizens in the overseas territories. I simply ask for reassurance from my noble friend that those citizens are properly consulted when legislation is passed through your Lordships' House.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Con): I am sure many noble Lords are envious of the noble Lord's job and would be willing to swap, but he makes a good point. I can certainly provide that reassurance.

School Governing Bodies: Diversity

Question

11.31 am

Asked by **Baroness Blower**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage greater diversity on school governing bodies.

Baroness Penn (Con): Volunteer school governors and trustees are critical in helping schools and trusts to perform well. Diverse perspectives and backgrounds on governing boards strengthen strategic decision-making in the best interests of all pupils. We provide practical support to help boards improve diversity through published guidance and, last year, invested £1.2 million in recruitment. There is more to do and we continue to encourage governing boards to be more representative of the communities they serve.

Baroness Blower (Lab): I thank the noble Baroness for that response. Does she agree with me that all state-funded schools should have parent and community governors who reflect their locality? Employers and unions might work together to encourage people to put themselves forward. Indeed, they might support governorship by negotiating paid leave as necessary to carry out governing body duties and responsibilities.

Baroness Penn (Con): The Government are keen to encourage local governing bodies to recruit more diverse members. Voluntary campaigns by all organisations in the educational sector will also encourage people to engage and consider the questions the noble Baroness raises.

Lord Baker of Dorking (Con): My Lords, the Youth Unemployment Select Committee of this House reported last November with a mass of recommendations, all of which have so far been rejected by the Government. One of the recommendations was that every secondary school should have a local employer on its board, at the very least to implement what the Prime Minister said; he wants to put industry at the heart of education. A governing person who is a local employer will be able to ensure that, when pupils leave school at 18, they have employability skills. At the moment, most do not have employability skills and that must end.

Baroness Penn (Con): My Lords, I was not aware of that particular recommendation, but I am aware of my noble friend's work in this area on a number of fronts. In the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill that we just passed we took more important steps to ensure better links between employers, skills and careers advice in schools to ensure that young people leave school with the skills they need and knowledge of the opportunities out there for them.

Lord Storey (LD): My Lords, I wonder how we can have a local employer on a governing body or hear the voices of parents from diverse communities if a governing body does not exist. These days, many multi-academy trusts choose not to have a governing body or for it to represent a number of schools. When a multi-academy trust has schools in, say, Stoke, Birmingham and Portsmouth, how does that reflect the diverse communities that make up the UK?

Baroness Penn (Con): The noble Lord is right that local governance is a vital way to connect trusts to their local schools and communities. The vast majority of trusts already have local governance arrangements in their trust structure, and it is our intention that all trusts should reap the benefits of having effective local governance arrangements. We will discuss with the sector the best way to achieve that.

Baroness Wheatcroft (CB): My Lords, a survey in 2019 by the National Governance Association found that the average age of governors was 55. Does the Minister agree that when searching for more diversity, diversity of age should be encouraged because at 55 many people will be out of touch with the education system?

Baroness Penn (Con): My Lords, I agree with the noble Baroness. Age is something we are looking at in terms of diversity as well as gender, ethnic background and other characteristics.

Baroness Lister of Burtersett (Lab): My Lords, my noble friend made a specific suggestion around paid leave to enable parents to fulfil the responsibilities of

school governors. For those on low wages, that is crucial. Will the Minister please comment on that proposal?

Baroness Penn (Con): My Lords, I know that there are arrangements in place to allow people to take leave to fulfil voluntary obligations. I know that it is unpaid at the moment. I will take that suggestion back to the department.

Lord Watts (Lab): My Lords, the Government have weakened the role of local authorities in schools. How are governing bodies that are faced with failed schools going to get the level of support that they need to bring about change in those schools?

Baroness Penn (Con): My Lords, there are effective arrangements in place to ensure that governing bodies in maintained schools and boards in academy trusts get the effective support they need to fulfil their role in our education system.

Lord Grocott (Lab): My Lords, will the Minister elaborate a little on the answer she gave about multi-academy trusts? She seems to have said that local involvement in school management is important, but as far as academy trusts are concerned she acknowledged that it is important but just hoped that trusts would do that. Do we not need a bit more than that from the Government?

Baroness Penn (Con): My Lords, I said it was not just a hope and that it is the Government's intention to achieve that. It is already in place in the majority of trusts. We will work with the sector to find the best way to deliver on that intention.

Lord Blunkett (Lab): My Lords, I reassure the noble Baroness, Lady Wheatcroft, that when you reach a certain age you are still in touch with young people and the education service. Will the Minister go back to her colleagues and take a look at whether guidance could be given to the founders of multi-academy trusts about how many of their relatives and close friends should appropriately be trustees?

Baroness Penn (Con): My Lords, I believe that the Government provide clear guidance for trusts on their governance arrangements. The Government will always make sure that that is the case.

Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (Con): My Lords, listening to the questions we have had, does my noble friend agree that the important thing is to look at the effectiveness of the governance of these schools? Would she like to pay tribute to our noble friend Lord Harris for the fantastic work he has done in transforming failing schools into some of the leading schools in the country?

Baroness Penn (Con): My Lords, my noble friend is absolutely correct. It is about effectiveness and outcomes, and that is the focus of the schools White Paper that the Government recently published. To go back to the original Question, diversity is essential to ensure that effectiveness, and the Government support it.

Lord Addington (LD): My Lords, further to my noble friend's question, if a school does not have a governing board, how can we get any benefit from it? Will we change this in the next Queen's Speech?

Baroness Penn (Con): My Lords, there are governing bodies for maintained schools and boards for academy trusts. As I have already said to noble Lords, the majority of trusts have local governance in place and we want to work towards a situation where all trusts have local governance systems in place. That is something that we are talking to the sector about. That does not necessarily mean legislation. There are different ways that we can effectively achieve change.

Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Lab): My Lords, the Minister rightly said that governors should be representative of the community that the school serves. Setting a good example by, say, enabling a culture of equality and diversity so that it thrives within the school or the trust should be a key role of a board of governors. However, the facts show that that is not the case. Last year the National Governance Association published figures showing that just 5% of school governors were from ethnic minority backgrounds, and that figure has not changed since 1999. I will save the Minister from gently reminding me that my party was in government for about half that period, but her party is in government now and it is incumbent on her to say what action the Government will take beyond guidance, which clearly is not working, so that those boards are made more aware of the need to deal with the lack of diversity among their own number.

Baroness Penn (Con): The noble Lord is correct that there is more work to do. In response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, we committed to continuing to encourage governing bodies to be more reflective of the school communities that they serve, and we recommended that they collect and publish board diversity data at a local level voluntarily. As far as the Government's actions are concerned, we are investing in recruitment campaigns with specific diversity targets to help increase the pool of people who can serve on these boards and support local schools.

Baroness Hussein-Ece (LD): My Lords, many years ago when I was a school governor—I declare an interest—I was encouraged by a school in Hackney, a very diverse school in a very diverse borough, which created two extra co-opted places specifically to reflect the diversity of the school and to encourage parents from those communities to join the governing body. That was very effective and I benefited from it, and I would like to think that all the kids there who I was in touch with also had a point of contact. Why can this not be rolled out to those academies that are serving the community but probably do not hit any of the diversity targets, so that they can better represent their communities?

Baroness Penn (Con): I think the Government would encourage local initiatives such as the one that the noble Baroness refers to in increasing the diversity on

boards and trusts of local schools. The other issue that we need to bear in mind is that for different communities diversity looks different, and the solutions may be different in different areas. We need to get the best practice out there, learn from it and provide the tools and encouragement to local areas so that they can do better in this area, supported by the Government.

NHS Mental Health Patients in Private Hospitals *Question*

11.42 am

Asked by Baroness Thornton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to address the reported £2 billion per year the NHS is paying to private hospitals to take on its mental health patients as a result of bed shortages.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Lord Kamall) (Con): Non-NHS providers have always played a role in delivering NHS services for patients since the founding of the NHS. The CQC regulates both NHS and independent providers to deliver care to the highest quality. The Government and the NHS have an ambitious transformation programme to increase investment in community mental health services and to introduce new models of care so that more people are cared for in their communities, reducing reliance on inappropriate in-patient admissions.

Baroness Thornton (Lab): I thank the Minister. I beg the indulgence of the House to record that this is my last outing as opposition health spokesperson—although I shall be taking up other Front-Bench duties so your Lordships have not escaped completely. I wish to record a huge thank you to colleagues across the House with whom I have worked over many years; my especial thanks to the small but perfectly-formed Labour health team, my noble friends Lady Wheeler and Lady Merron and indeed the Back-Benchers; and my thanks to the many Ministers whose well-being I may not always have enhanced over the years.

On this Question, the issue is not whether it is a good use of NHS funding to spend £2 billion a year on privately provided mental health beds. It is about whether, given the parity of esteem for mental health recently reinforced in the brand new Health and Care Act, the Government have a plan to invest in reversing the decline of mental health beds and increasing the number of NHS mental health beds available at community level, as the Minister mentioned, where they are needed, and over what period.

Lord Kamall (Con): I begin, if noble Lords will allow me, by paying tribute to the noble Baroness for her doughty and robust opposition, but also for the advice when I was a new Minister suddenly thrown in at the deep end. It was very comforting to have one of the Opposition help me and give advice—I make no

comments about the quality of the advice but I was incredibly grateful. I also pay tribute, to requote her words, to the perfectly formed shadow team. I thank them very much for all their holding us to account.

On the issue, when I was looking at the future of mental health, one thing we have to look at its granularity. There are different types of mental health; someone suffering from eating disorders, for example, will have a very different need from someone who is schizophrenic. It is really important that we do not just assume that everyone needs to be in a bed. Where appropriate, we should move people out to the community but make sure that they are supported there, not just kicked out the door and left to fend for themselves. We are looking at a massive programme of investment and at how we can have more targeted interventions for those suffering from different mental health issues.

Baroness Watkins of Tavistock (CB): My Lords, I declare my interest as the recent chair of a major HEE review, recommending ways to improve and deliver the mental health nursing workforce, which was released on 20 April. Can the Minister really drill down on the extent to which the new ILATs will be accountable for both local provision of mental health in-patient beds—services are not enough and some people need admission and care in hospital—and the consideration of workforce needs, not only locally but for the services they purchase in the independent and not-for-profit sector?

Lord Kamall (Con): The noble Baroness makes an important point about how we ensure that those who require services in their community receive them, while ensuring that we have the appropriate workforce. She will know that throughout debate on the Health and Care Bill, we have discussed the fact that Health Education England, as well as NHS England, is developing workforce strategies—as are local trusts at their level, which know their needs and requirements at the same time. In terms of the specific question, I shall have to write to the noble Baroness.

The Lord Speaker (Lord McFall of Alcluith): My Lords, we have a virtual contribution from the noble Baroness, Lady Brinton.

Baroness Brinton (LD) [V]: My Lords, I too congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Thornton, on her outstanding contribution in her health Front-Bench role. From these Benches, it is always a pleasure to work with her and we look forward to continuing with her in her new role. Yesterday, the CQC served the Norfolk and Suffolk mental health trust with an improvement notice, reporting that staffing levels remain unsafe, waiting lists were long and, on average, 49 people per month died within six months of contact with that trust. There are staff shortages across NHS mental health services, so can the Minister say what the Government will do to ensure that there are enough qualified mental health professionals in the NHS?

Lord Kamall (Con): I thank the noble Baroness for the question and for repeating the fact that you can find problems in the independent sector and in NHS

providers. What is really important is that we are looking at the HEE workforce plan as well as the NHS workforce plan, while working with trusts at the local level and other providers of care to ensure that we have the most appropriate staff levels to meet local conditions.

Lord Young of Cookham (Con): My Lords, if the £2 billion which the NHS is paying to the private sector is enabling vulnerable mental health patients to get high-quality care, is this not to be welcomed as it takes pressure off the NHS?

Lord Kamall (Con): I should remind noble Lords that the noble Baroness said that she was not against private provision out of principle. Private provision can be very helpful and has always worked with the NHS, ever since it was founded. If we think about responders—for example, the impact of lockdown on many people—we have seen an increase in mental health needs. What do you do to increase the provision of mental health services? Do you wait for a new NHS hospital to be built? No—if there is a private provider out there, or an independent provider that can provide those services, you engage them. That is why the NHS and the independent sector, working together, is a really important partnership.

Lord Turnberg (Lab): My Lords, is the noble Lord aware of the Migration Advisory Committee's report, which pointed out what we all know: poor pay is driving social care workers, including mental health workers, out of the service and into the private sector? For example, they are losing more through inflation than they can keep up with and their pay certainly runs behind private sector pay. I understand that a social care worker can earn more in an Amazon distribution centre than they can in the social care sector. Can the Minister bring to the notice of the Treasury the damage that this policy is doing?

Lord Kamall (Con): The noble Lord clearly discusses an important point: we have to have the appropriate workforce. The Government have begun a register of social care to work out who is in the workforce, what qualifications they have and what improvements we have to make to social care. We should also remember that social care providers are a mixture of private homes and state provision. At the same time, we have to make sure that we have the right people, locally trained. For example, the visa system encourages people to come and work in our social care system as well.

Lord Kakkar (CB): My Lords, I draw noble Lords' attention to my declared interests. In view of recent press reports about a young patient who absconded from a private sector mental health unit and subsequently died, and the subsequent coroner's inquest findings, is the Minister able to confirm that the Department of Health and Social Care will be able to provide guidance on the safety and security arrangements that should attend outside areas at mental health units and subsequently might be used as the basis for CQC inspection?

Lord Kamall (Con): Can I begin by—if my information is correct—wishing the noble Lord a happy birthday? If it is not his birthday, I have made a fool of myself. I am sure all the House joins me.

Wherever there is a tragedy, we have to learn the lessons. We spoke about this during the Bill, for example with HSSIB and making sure we have a safe space to understand what went wrong and ensure it does not happen again. We have to make sure that, as we move towards different models of care for people suffering from mental health conditions, it is appropriate to their condition. Not all mental health conditions are the same. Some will need in-patient provision and others will need care in the community, but we should make sure they are actually supported in the community.

Baroness Parminter (LD): My Lords, I declare an interest in that I have a daughter currently in a private eating disorder facility out-of-area, which the NHS is paying for—for which I am extremely grateful. Given the increasing numbers of people suffering from eating disorders, both children and young people and adults, what hope can the Minister give families like mine that in future their young people and family members will not be sent far away, when we want to see them? They might be in hospital for four, six or nine months at a time. What hope can the Minister give people that—yes, there are brilliant community services for eating disorders and we need more of them—we will open up more beds in local areas to help families and sufferers of these appalling diseases?

Lord Kamall (Con): I thank the noble Baroness for sharing her very personal story. It is important that we understand it is more than stats and figures, which are provided to me by the department. In the community, we understand it is important to make sure that provision is as close to the patient and family as possible. We have to remember that care is not just for the patient; it impacts friends, family and others. We are looking at ways to ensure that care is delivered close to families and those suffering from these conditions.

Business of the House

Motion on Standing Orders

11.52 am

Moved by Lord Ashton of Hyde

That Standing Order 72 (Affirmative Instruments) be dispensed with to enable the motion to approve the Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) (Amendment) (No. 8) Regulations 2022 to be moved, notwithstanding that no report from the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments on the instrument has been laid before the House.

Lord Ashton of Hyde (Con): My Lords, on behalf of my noble friend the Leader of the House, I beg to move the Motion standing in her name on the Order Paper.

Motion agreed.

Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) (Amendment) (No. 7) Regulations 2022

Motion to Approve

11.53 am

Moved by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

That the Regulations laid before the House on 30 March be approved.

Considered in Grand Committee on 26 April.

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, I am not wishing to object to the statutory instruments. As the noble Lord knows, in the debate in Grand Committee we strongly supported the Government's actions, and we will continue to support them speedily introducing sanctions against the Putin regime. However, the 37th report of the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee made a very valid point: that the Explanatory Memorandum, which we did not have available at the time of the debate, failed to set out the rationale particularly for the luxury goods chosen in the sanctions and the value threshold, and so on, which I think is £250. The committee made the point that,

“When legislation is passed through Parliament at speed,”

which is absolutely necessary in this case—

“it is particularly important that the policy choices it implements are very clearly explained.”

So I hope that, if the Minister is not able to speak on this today, he will write to all noble Lords who participated in the debate, setting out the rationale and that, in future, when these urgent SIs come before the Grand Committee, they will take cognisance of the opinions of the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee.

Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts (Con): My Lords, I was going to be very brief, and I can be even briefer, because the noble Lord, Lord Collins, has stolen most of my lines. I speak on behalf of the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee. Because of the truncated nature of the process, we were discussing, debating and examining these regulations even as the noble Lord, Lord Collins, and my noble friend were debating them in the Moses Room. We were of course completely behind their policy purpose and support them entirely.

However, we had some serious questions about the way the regulations will operate, particularly on the selection of items—for example, why are we not banning the export of ambulances, which presumably have some military value?—and the selection of the value of £250 for items of luxury clothing, which means that you can export a suit worth £240 but not one worth £260. That took us to our question about enforcement, because, as the noble Lord, Lord Ricketts, who knows much more about this than I will ever know, has said, sanctions are only effective if they are defined and enforced. They begin very clearly and then, gradually, they become less effective over time because evil-intentioned and clever people find ways around them.

We have written to my noble friend about these points—he will have received the letter this morning—and I very much hope that he will be able to reply in some

detail and copy it to the noble Lord, Lord Collins, and all of those who spoke in the debate in the Moses Room.

The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) (Con): My Lords, I acknowledge the strong support that we have received from your Lordships' House in support of all of the sanctions that we are passing in this respect, particularly on Russia and related activities, covering both individuals and organisations. I also recognise the point raised by my noble friend Lord Collins and my noble friend, in thanking the committee on SIs for its strong support of the Government being able to move at speed.

I also fully recognise that the explicit and specific point on application and definition is very much key, and there are always loopholes—this is a serious issue. On the suit example, what if you had bought one in a sale and it was discounted by a certain amount? It could also fall within that. I have not yet seen the letter, which would have arrived this morning, but I will give a comprehensive response to my noble friend, the noble Lord and all noble Lords who have participated.

Motion agreed.

Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) (Amendment) (No. 8) Regulations 2022

Motion to Approve

11.57 am

Moved by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

That the Regulations laid before the House on 14 April be approved.

Relevant document: 37th Report from the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee. Considered in Grand Committee on 26 April.

Motion agreed.

Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (High-Risk Countries) (Amendment) Regulations

Motion to Approve

11.58 am

Moved by Baroness Penn

That the Regulations laid before the House on 28 March be approved.

Considered in Grand Committee on 25 April

Motion agreed.

Homes for Ukraine: Visa Application Centres

Commons Urgent Question

11.58 am

The Minister of State, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Home Office (Lord Harrington of Watford) (Con): My Lords, with the leave of the House, I shall now repeat in the form of a Statement the Answer to an Urgent Question in the other place

from my honourable friend Kevin Foster, the Minister for Safe and Legal Migration. The Statement is as follows:

“The whole country is united in horror at Putin’s grotesque war, and we stand with the Ukrainian people.

We are delighted that so many British people have already put forward generous offers of help to displaced Ukrainians. Nearly 90,000 visas have been issued so that people can rebuild their lives in the UK through the Ukraine family scheme and Homes for Ukraine. Our visa application centre footprint in Europe has traditionally been small, in line with demand. This is because EU nationals had freedom of movement and, post Brexit, EU nationals do not need visas to visit the UK, with applications from EEA nationals for skilled worker and student visas able to be done from home via our fully digital application route.

As the Ukrainian crisis escalated, we increased our appointment capacity across Europe. We have gone from offering some 2,000 appointments a week in Europe to 13,500 appointments. Within days, we established a new VAC in Lviv, and we kept our VAC running in Kyiv right up until the Russian attack was launched. We also established a new application point near the Polish border with Ukraine. We were able to offer walk-ins and on-the-day appointments to all customers wishing to apply for the initial family concession route and fulfil all appointments when they were required.

I am pleased to advise the House that VAC appointments are readily available in all locations across Europe and, in the majority of locations, are available on the same day for customers looking to book a slot. As we have said throughout, we will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Ukraine.”

Noon

Lord Coaker (Lab): My Lords, I thank the Minister for that, but why, despite the Minister’s best efforts, is a bureaucratic nightmare the reality for many Ukrainians fleeing war? The most alarming thing is that the people bearing the brunt of the Home Secretary’s failures are young children. Babies, young children and their families fleeing war are forced to travel hundreds of miles across Europe to get biometrics done. The problem has been reported for weeks, and we have already raised it in the Chamber, so what is being done about it? Apparently, even once a visa approved, the Home Office is failing to tell people that they are finally welcome in the UK. Why is it that 71,000 visas have been approved but that, so far, only 21,600 people have arrived here safely? I know that the Minister knows this and is working hard on it, but it needs fixing urgently.

Lord Harrington of Watford (Con): I thank the noble Lord for his response. His first question was why young children need to have their biometrics done, and he said that it could mean they have to travel a long way to do it. The reason why they have to have their biometrics done, and the reason why all this procedure takes place, is simply to make sure that they are indeed the children of the parent they are with. I have visited a VAC, having taken notice of what the

[LORD HARRINGTON OF WATFORD]

noble Lord, Lord Coaker, said—as I always do and as indeed I did when he was in the other place—because it is very serious. It is about as light-touch as is imaginable. For example, I saw a young child whose only form of identification to show that she was indeed the child of that mother was a letter from the doctor who delivered the child in Ukraine. That was acceptable, as are birth certificates. There is not a very high level of proof, but we just have to make sure because of our information about traffickers of young children. I know that the noble Lord would sympathise with that.

The noble Lord's second question was, why do we not tell people when they have got the visa? There have been delays, and I am now assured that that is not the case. I am sure that the noble Lord will have me here at this very Dispatch Box if he has reports to the contrary, but he knows he could tell me that personally beforehand.

Finally, the noble Lord asked why there are so few arrivals compared to the total amount of visas. This has been perplexing me. The main reason for my recent visit to Poland was to try to find out why it has happened. There are a number of reasons, and I have commissioned some professional research on it given the number of people who have got visas compared to the number coming, so I can give the noble Lord only my opinion based on what I saw. I think that there are two reasons. One of them is that it has taken too long for people to get the visas from the time of their application—I accept that and have done my best to make sure that it is not the case, and we are now at “friction”, which means that the target of 48 hours should in the vast majority of cases be met.

The second reason—again, this is not research or a systematic poll or anything like that; it is from speaking to people involved—is that many of the refugees take our visas out in case the worst happens beyond now, but, for the moment, a lot of them believe that they can go back and live in their country, and they wish to stay as close as possible. I have had quite a few moving experiences in Syria and other places, but seeing young women speaking on mobile phones to their husbands and fathers who are fighting in live time—which I know can obviously be done with technology—I can imagine why they want to stay as near as possible. I am working on this, and I intend to make sure that the system is simplified and that we have people helping people through the procedure. If necessary, we will move on to helping them with flights and with everything in the process.

Lord Paddick (LD): My Lords, a brief answer from the Minister would be appreciated. Initially, the Home Office said that Ukrainian refugees had to have a visa because of concerns that Russian agents would pretend to be refugees. The Home Office then changed its mind and said that Ukrainian refugees had to have a visa because of concerns, as the Minister has said, about trafficking. Yet, all other European nations have accepted Ukrainian refugees visa free because the Ukrainians put systems in place to protect vulnerable people, and so did the countries receiving them. A

Home Office whistleblower told the *Guardian* on Saturday that the system was “designed to fail”. Is that not nearer the truth?

Lord Harrington of Watford (Con): I thank the noble Lord, Lord Paddick, for his comments and will try to be as brief as he wants me to be. On the reasons for the visas, I do not recognise the one about the infiltration of secret agents. I do, however, recognise the point about safeguarding, trafficking and so on. I hope that the noble Lord knows that I have done my best to ensure that this procedure is carried out as quickly as possible, but I make no excuses for our trying to identify that people who come here are who they say they are before they arrive. This is very important.

I do not accept what the whistleblower has said in the *Guardian*. I would like them to come and speak to me, and I would be very happy to go through it with them—that is how I run my whole ministry. I do not recognise that point.

Baroness Falkner of Margravine (CB): My Lords, I declare an interest as chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. I endorse the point made by the noble Lord, Lord Paddick: as many people as possible want to get in on this, and I will be very brief indeed. Will the Minister please ensure that local authorities respect Section 149 of the Equality Act and enforce their obligations under the public sector equality duty in order to ensure that Ukrainians are not discriminated against as they resettle here?

Lord Harrington of Watford (Con): I can assure the noble Baroness that I will ensure that there is no discrimination at all in the way Ukrainians settle here. I will write to her on the specific point regarding of the Act of Parliament she mentioned.

Baroness Neville-Rolfe (Con): My Lords, I thank my noble friend the Minister for the online briefing he has been giving to parliamentarians, and would like an assurance that this will continue because it helps to answer our questions. The visa process has been slow, if robust, and I am interested to hear the total numbers we are planning for.

Lord Harrington of Watford (Con): I thank my noble friend for that question. Yes, I am continuing the online briefings. I have tried to have some online and some face to face; I do a weekly one for MPs. Today, I am circulating a programme right through to the Summer Recess, hopefully, for when these facilities are available. On the second point, I can do nothing but agree with my noble friend.

Lord Dubs (Lab): Can the Minister confirm that there are no problems regarding children who are due to come here but who have been delayed because of a lack of visas? Sometimes, families are being split up; some family members are getting visas and others are not. There is a distressing story of a 17 year-old girl who is stuck and vulnerable; her mother wants her to come here but she cannot come with her. Her family is waiting for her, but nothing is happening.

Lord Harrington of Watford (Con): I can confirm to the noble Lord, Lord Dubs, that I have looked at every single individual case and hope that the cases to which he referred will be cleared up very quickly—in the next one or two days.

Lord Alton of Liverpool (CB): My Lords, from my own visit to Vilnius and the centre where 1,000 people are arriving every single day, I can confirm what the Minister has said about the desire of many to stay within the region in the hope that they will be able to return as quickly as possible to Ukraine. I raised with the Minister the specific example of a small British charity working in the Ukrainian-speaking area in Romania which does not qualify for the Disasters Emergency Committee funding because it is a small charity and not part of DEC. Surely, we should be doing more to assist charities like the one I have raised with the Minister to enable people to stay for as long as possible where they are, if that is their desire, and recognise that their visas may well indeed just be an insurance policy in case things do not work out.

Lord Harrington of Watford (Con): I agree entirely with the noble Lord. I have pressed the FCDO, which is responsible for our on-ground response there, to make sure that this work is done. I am also commissioning a particular piece of work to help unaccompanied children, because I feel it is very important.

Lord Cormack (Con): My Lords, it is several weeks since I raised with my noble friend the letter sent by a group of rectors and vice-rectors of universities. Can he tell me how many academics have now been issued with visas under this scheme, which is sponsored at this end by Universities UK?

Lord Harrington of Watford (Con): I am afraid I cannot give my noble friend the answer I wanted to because, ironically, I was due to have a meeting with the Minister at the DfE at 11 am today to discuss that when this Urgent Question came about. However, I will make sure that he has a Written Answer to that question.

Arrangement of Business

Announcement of Prorogation

12.10 pm

Lord Ashton of Hyde (Con): My Lords, on behalf of the Leader and myself, I take this opportunity to thank all noble Lords across the House for their work, especially this week, to conclude consideration of important Bills. I also thank the usual channels for their efforts and collaboration to make sure that, despite our policy differences, the business ran smoothly during what has been a complicated and challenging week.

Most importantly, I thank the staff of the House, who have across the last 11 months supported some very late—and some very early—sittings. As Members, we rely on a huge variety of people to make sure that the House is kept running. While it is always invidious

to name specific people, particular thanks this week must go to the Public Bill Office, officials in the Government Whips' Office and the opposition offices for juggling six Bills, ping-pong and ponging between the two Houses. Also, for very different reasons, I thank the catering teams for their service well into the night and the clerks and doorkeepers who stay patiently for as long as we do. I think I speak for the whole House in thanking them and all others without whose hard work and dedication the House could not function as it does. I hope they and all noble Lords have a restful Prorogation ahead of the start of the new Session. I beg to move that the House do adjourn during pleasure until Prorogation at 12.20 pm.

Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Lab Co-op): My Lords, I join the noble Lord in thanking everyone for their contribution in this Session. This House does an important job in providing scrutiny and challenge to the Government—and solutions, where they are prepared to listen to them. We all need to look carefully and play our part to ensure that our processes and procedures are followed properly at each stage of business when we return in the next Session. I urge the Government that very controversial Bills are not all backloaded in the next Session and are spread out more evenly across it. That would enable much better scrutiny and avoid all these late nights.

Finally, I join the noble Lord in paying tribute to the staff of the House in this Session. We should remember that, when we are in our Recess, they will still be here getting the House ready for the new Session and State Opening of Parliament on 10 May. I wish all Members here a happy, pleasant and joyful Recess. When we return in the new Session, we will take up those challenges again.

12.14 pm

Sitting suspended.

Royal Commission

12.21 pm

The Lords Commissioners were: Baroness Evans of Bowes Park, Lord McFall of Alcluith, Lord Newby, Lord Judge and Baroness Smith of Basildon.

The Lord Privy Seal (Baroness Evans of Bowes Park) (Con): My Lords, it not being convenient for Her Majesty personally to be present here this day, she has been pleased to cause a Commission under the Great Seal to be prepared for proroguing this present Parliament.

When the Commons were present at the Bar, the Lord Privy Seal continued:

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons, Her Majesty, not thinking fit personally to be present here at this time, has been pleased to cause a Commission to be issued under the Great Seal, and thereby given

[BARONESS EVANS OF BOWES PARK]

Her Royal Assent to divers Acts which have been agreed upon by both Houses of Parliament, the Titles whereof are particularly mentioned, and by the said Commission has commanded us to declare and notify Her Royal Assent to the said several Acts, in the presence of you the Lords and Commons assembled for that purpose; and has also assigned to us and other Lords directed full power and authority in Her Majesty's name to prorogue this present Parliament. Which commission you will now hear read.

A Commission for Royal Assent and Prorogation was read:

Elizabeth The Second, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Our other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith, To Our right trusty and right well-beloved the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and to Our trusty and well-beloved the Knights Citizens and Burgesses of the House of Commons in this present Parliament assembled, Greeting:

Forasmuch as in Our said Parliament divers Acts have been agreed upon by you Our loving Subjects the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and the Commons, the short Titles of which are set forth in the Schedule hereto but the said Acts are not of force and effect in the Law without Our Royal Assent and forasmuch as We cannot at this time be present in the Higher House of Our said Parliament, being the accustomed place for giving Our Royal Assent to such Acts as have been agreed upon by you Our said Subjects the Lords and Commons, We have therefore caused these Our Letters Patent to be made and have signed them and by them do give Our Royal Assent to the said Acts, Willing that the said Acts shall be of the same strength, force and effect as if We had been personally present in the said Higher House and had publicly and in the presence of you all assented to the same, commanding also Our well-beloved and faithful Counsellor, Dominic Rennie Raab, Chancellor of Great Britain, to seal these Our Letters with the Great Seal of Our Realm and also commanding The Most Reverend Father in God Our faithful Counsellor Justin Portal, Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of All England and Metropolitan, Our well-beloved and faithful Counsellors

Dominic Rennie Raab, Chancellor of Great Britain

John Francis, Lord McFall of Alcluith, Lord Speaker

Natalie Jessica, Baroness Evans of Bowes Park,
Lord Privy Seal

Richard Mark, Lord Newby

Igor, Lord Judge

Angela Evans, Baroness Smith of Basildon

or any three or more of them to declare this Our Royal Assent in the said Higher House in the presence of you the said Lords and Commons and the Clerk of Our Parliaments to endorse the said Acts in Our name as is requisite and to record these Our Letters Patent and the said Acts in manner accustomed and We do declare that after this Our Royal Assent given and declared as is aforesaid then and immediately the said Acts shall be taken and accepted as good and perfect Acts of Parliament and be put in due execution accordingly.

And whereas We did lately for divers difficult and pressing affairs concerning Us the State and defence of Our United Kingdom and Church ordain this Our present Parliament to begin and be holden at Our City of Westminster the seventeenth day of December in the sixty-eighth year of Our Reign, on which day Our said Parliament was begun and holden and is there now holden, Know Ye that for certain pressing causes and considerations Us especially moving We have thought fit to prorogue Our said Parliament.

We therefore confiding very much in the fidelity, prudence and circumspection of you Our Commissioners aforesaid have by the advice and consent of Our Council assigned you Our Commissioners giving to you or any three or more of you by virtue of these Presents full power and authority in Our name to prorogue and continue Our present Parliament at Our City of Westminster aforesaid on a day no earlier than Thursday the twenty-eight day of April and no later than Wednesday the fourth day of May until and unto Tuesday the tenth day of May there then to be holden, and we command you that you diligently attend the premises and effectually fulfil them in manner aforesaid. We also strictly command all and singular Our Archbishops, Bishops, Lords, Baronets, Knights Citizens and Burgesses and all others whom it concerns to meet at Our said Parliament by virtue of these Presents that they observe, obey and assist you in executing the premises as they ought to do, In Witness whereof We have caused these Our Letters to be made Patent, witness Ourselves at Westminster the twenty-eighth day of April in the seventy-first year of Our Reign, by The Queen Herself signed with Her own Hand.

The Lord Privy Seal continued:

In obedience to Her Majesty's Commands, and by virtue of the Commission which has been now read, We do declare and notify to you, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons in Parliament assembled, that Her Majesty has given Her Royal Assent to the Acts in the Commission mentioned; and the Clerks are required to pass the same in the usual Form and Words.

Royal Assent

12.38 pm

The following Acts were given Royal Assent:

Local Government (Disqualification) Act,

Down Syndrome Act,

Animals (Penalty Notices) Act,

Professional Qualifications Act,

Skills and Post-16 Education Act,

Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act,

Subsidy Control Act,

Cultural Objects (Protection from Seizure) Act,

Motor Vehicles (Compulsory Insurance) Act,

Glue Traps (Offences) Act,

Approved Premises (Substance Testing) Act,

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act,

Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act,

Building Safety Act,

Health and Care Act,

Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act,

Pension Schemes (Conversion of Guaranteed Minimum Pensions) Act,

British Sign Language Act,

Judicial Review and Courts Act,

Nationality and Borders Act,

Elections Act,

Monken Hadley Common Act.

Prorogation: Her Majesty's Speech

12.41 pm

Her Majesty's most gracious Speech was then delivered to both Houses of Parliament by the Lord Privy Seal, in pursuance of Her Majesty's Command, as follows.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons, my Government has acted to address the unprecedented issues the United Kingdom has faced, from the global pandemic to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. As the nation has recovered from Covid-19, my Ministers have taken action to build a strong and prosperous United Kingdom. My Government has continued to address the impact of the pandemic on business and the NHS and to level up opportunities, jobs and growth across the country. My Ministers also worked with international partners to protect and promote freedom and democracy across the globe.

My Ministers continued to implement the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. My Government invested further in our gallant Armed Forces, spending more money last year than in any of the past thirty years. It has also worked with international partners to support the people of Ukraine and respond to the crisis. Legislation was passed to tackle economic crime and ensure transparency in property ownership. My Ministers also ensured that punitive sanctions were imposed on individuals and organisations undermining the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

My Government has taken forward a programme of modernisation for the Armed Forces and reinforced the United Kingdom's commitment to NATO. My Ministers honoured and strengthened the Armed Forces Covenant, placing it in law. Measures were introduced to provide relief from National Insurance contributions for employers of veterans.

My Government took action to protect the health of the nation. The vaccination programme delivered over 140 million doses and additional funding was provided to support the NHS. Legislation was passed to empower the NHS to innovate and reduce bureaucracy. As a result, patients will receive more tailored care, closer to home. My Ministers set out proposals to secure the long-term funding of adult social care.

Building on the success of the vaccination programme and new ways of funding research and innovation, my Ministers oversaw the fastest ever increase in public funding for research and development. This will support

pioneering new treatments against diseases such as cancer and secure jobs and investment across the country.

My Government introduced measures to increase the safety and security of its citizens.

Legislation strengthened police powers to tackle crime and disorder, increased sentences for the most serious and violent offenders and ensured the timely administration of justice. Measures were passed to establish an immigration system that strengthens the United Kingdom's borders and deters criminals who facilitate dangerous and illegal journeys.

My Government introduced legislation that will ensure internet safety for all, especially for children, while harnessing the benefits of a free, open and secure internet. Legislation was passed to better protect digital infrastructure.

My Government invested in new green industries to create jobs, while protecting the environment. The United Kingdom hosted the COP 26 Summit in Glasgow.

Legislation was passed that will set binding environmental targets.

My Government strengthened economic ties across the union. My Ministers invested in improvements to national infrastructure and brought forward measures to strengthen connectivity by rail. Measures to extend mobile coverage and gigabit-capable broadband were introduced.

Legislation was passed to encourage investment and competition across the United Kingdom and drive economic growth. Legislation established a new approach to the recognition of professional qualifications, supporting international trade. My Government have created new freeports, which will drive regeneration by bringing investment, trade and jobs. My Ministers delivered legislation to increase the national insurance starting thresholds, benefitting almost 30 million people.

My Government took action to address lost learning during the pandemic and ensure every child has a high-quality education. Legislation was passed to support a lifetime skills guarantee to enable flexible access to high-quality education and training throughout people's lives.

My Government helped more people to achieve home ownership. The practice of charging ground rents was ended for most new leasehold properties. My Ministers delivered legislation to ensure that the tragedies of the past are never repeated, by establishing in law a new building safety regulator.

My Government reduced bureaucracy for the voluntary sector, enabling charities to focus on their core work. Legislation was passed to ensure that more dormant assets can be released, so funds can help those in need.

My Government strengthened and renewed democracy and the constitution. Legislation was passed to ensure the integrity of elections and restore the balance of power between the Executive, legislature and the courts. Measures were brought forward to protect the freedom of speech in higher education. My Ministers promoted the strength and integrity of the union. Laws were passed to strengthen the devolved Government in Northern Ireland.

The United Kingdom hosted the G7 Summit and supported the global effort to secure a robust economic recovery from the pandemic. My Government have committed £1.4 billion of aid to the international effort to tackle the pandemic. My Ministers deepened trade ties around the world, beginning trade negotiations with India and Canada, and negotiations to accede to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

My Government continued to provide aid where it had the greatest impact on alleviating human suffering, promoting global prosperity, and upholding human rights and democracy. While holding the presidency of the G7, my Ministers led a global effort to get 40 million more girls across the world into school and 20 million more girls reading by 2026. The United Kingdom has supported countries globally to provide clean and reliable infrastructure through British Investment Partnerships, helping countries to build back after the challenges in recent years.

Members of the House of Commons, I thank you for the provisions which you have made for the work and dignity of the Crown and for the public services.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons, I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels.

The Lord Privy Seal (Baroness Evans of Bowes Park)
(Con): My Lords and Members of the House of Commons, by virtue of Her Majesty's Commission which has been now read, we do, in Her Majesty's name, and in obedience to Her Majesty's Commands, prorogue this Parliament to the 10th day of May, to be then here holden, and this Parliament is accordingly prorogued to Tuesday, the 10th day of May.

Parliament was prorogued at 12.49 pm.