



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Oral evidence: The work of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, HC 330

Wednesday 10 September 2025

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Members present: Dame Caroline Dinenage (Chair); Mr Bayo Alaba; Damian Hinds; Dr Rupa Huq; Natasha Irons; Liz Jarvis; Jo Platt; Paul Waugh.

Questions 88-153

Witnesses

I: Rt Hon Lisa Nandy MP, Secretary of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport; Susannah Storey, Permanent Secretary, Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Lisa Nandy and Susannah Storey.

Q88 Chair: Welcome to this morning's meeting of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, covering the work of DCMS. I know there was a sigh of relief in many DCMS sectors when, in July, the Prime Minister scotched any rumours that the Department was for the chop. There has been a similar sigh of relief at Friday's news that Lisa Nandy was staying on as the Secretary of State.

Welcome to you, Secretary of State, and welcome to Susannah Storey, the Permanent Secretary. We will come later to the reshuffle and what it might mean for the Department, but we want to put on the record our thanks to Minister Chris Bryant for his work on the creative industries—although not necessarily for some of the lyrical puns he used at his evidence sessions; some of us are still in therapy.

Let's move on to the questions, because we have a lot to get through today. Secretary of State, were you happy with DCMS's spending review settlement?

Lisa Nandy: I was. As you all know, it was a difficult spending review. We inherited a difficult financial environment, and our sectors are often vulnerable in that sort of situation. I was really pleased that we were able to come out roughly flat in terms of our spending settlement—around £9 billion over the spending review period—but with a significant uplift in the amount that we invest in the creative industries. That is a huge vote of confidence in the creative industries that have become one of eight priority sectors in our industrial strategy.

I know the Committee is particularly interested in youth and young people. I made a promise to this Committee when I appeared before you last time that the decision to close NCS would not be to the detriment of the amount that we spend on young people. I am really pleased that we have been able to keep that promise.

The final thing I would say is that one of the challenges I understand DCMS has had historically is that, as a Department, it is responsible for many major events. You may remember this, Chair, from your time in the Department. There is often a desire across Government to bid for major events, but not a desire to fully fund them. I was really pleased that we were able to break that cycle and ensure that UEFA Euro 2028 is funded as part of the spending review settlement. That will mean that we do not have to make hard choices and trade-offs elsewhere.

I have worked very closely with the Chancellor on this. She is very committed to the power of the sectors that DCMS represents and the role they play in building a strong, cohesive country where everybody has the opportunity to succeed. It was a pleasure to go through that process, which is not always the case, and I am pleased with where we have ended up given the difficult environment.



Q89 **Chair:** Do you see any particular challenges that you will have to negotiate as part of this settlement?

Lisa Nandy: Yes. The financial situation facing the country is still very challenging and we are going to have to make trade-offs and choices. At the moment, we are looking at that through business planning and I have met with several members of the Committee and heard representations from many parliamentarians about their priorities. We are doing what we can to protect existing programmes as well as invest in the Government's future priorities.

The biggest thing we have had to do as a Department is learn how to work very differently. It is the Prime Minister's view, and mine, that the change this country needs will not be delivered from a small number of politicians in Whitehall Government Departments. One of the things we have done is enlist the help of all our arm's length bodies to get behind that effort and make sure that every pound and every penny that we spend, whether it is through our arm's length bodies or directly through DCMS funding, gets behind the nation's priorities.

Q90 **Chair:** Susannah, what will the settlement do to your headcount? Will it result in any reductions or re-gradings?

Susannah Storey: As the Secretary of State says, the backdrop for this SR is very clear to the civil service, and by the end of the SR we will be smaller than we were at the beginning. I have now just over 1,000 people, and we have committed to about 5% efficiencies. We are in the middle of our business planning process at the moment, and through that we have to work out exactly how we do it. As the Secretary of State says, she is very clear about her priorities, so I want to try to work out with my teams where we can work smarter, whether there are places where we can bring in technological solutions and things like that.

We have tried to crowd in other funding alongside our main settlement. As you know, we are doing work on impact investing and bringing forward work on philanthropy. Alongside the core money that DCMS has, we really want to try to make the most of it across the piece so that the sum of our parts can deliver on this extraordinary agenda, and we are very committed to that.

Q91 **Chair:** Do you think you will lose staff?

Susannah Storey: All Departments are going to end up smaller by the end of the SR period. The art for us is to do that well so that it does not actually impact on the programmes of work. Of course, there are time-limited things. As you know, at the moment we are setting up the independent football regulator. This year, I have a few extra staff working on that. That is an example of a programme that will tail off with no detriment to the outcome. That is the sort of thing we will be looking at.

Q92 **Chair:** Can we move on to public appointments? In eight out of the last 10 pre-appointments that this Committee or others have been involved



in, we have seen issues with either the candidate or the process. Have you noticed that the Department has learned any lessons from these experiences?

Susannah Storey: I do not know exactly what the eight out of 10 that you reference means, but I know that we have had some issues. DCMS does a huge amount of public appointments. I think since this Government have been in, we have brought forward 123 regulated appointments, 73 of which are new. We are one of the biggest public appointing Departments and we have a very expert team, but it is the case every now and again that something goes wrong in the process. Sometimes it is the fact that the pool of candidates does not give Ministers what they want and then we might have to go out again.

We have had some specific issues, for example, as you know, on the independent football regulatory chair. As a result of human error, when we put out the press release about the chair-designate we unfortunately did not put his political donations in. That was an error. We corrected it as soon as we knew, and I have done a review internally to make sure that that sort of thing does not happen again.

I do not think it is a systemic thing; we just have a high volume. The Secretary of State has been clear, which I am sure she will want to say, that she wants us to shift the way we do public appointments. She wants a much more diverse pool of people from right across the country because the nature of our roles is so extraordinary. We want to make sure that the people leading these organisations are representative. We have been in a bit of a transition period.

Q93 **Chair:** We 100% agree with that. This was something I was pushing for when I was a Minister in the Department, but I am not entirely sure that the Department is set up to be able to deliver that because there is a great gap between what the politicians want and what the civil service delivers in terms of shortlists for these types of roles.

You pushed back slightly on my suggestion that there had been an issue with DCMS public appointments, but half of the Commissioner for Public Appointments investigations pertain to DCMS arm's length bodies. I will give you some examples. In January 2024, the Welsh Affairs Committee wrote to DCMS calling for it not to appoint Roderick Williams as the chair of S4C because of his absence of cultural leadership in the wake of the bullying scandal at S4C. Richard Sharp later resigned because he failed to disclose a conflict of interest. The chair of the Charity Commission was approved by the DCMS Committee but resigned four days later over allegations of bullying. It goes on and on. Of course, we all know the situation with the football regulator at the moment. We need to see DCMS raising its game when it comes to these appointments.

Susannah Storey: Once we have finished our internal review, I am very happy to come back to you on that, Chair. We have a dedicated team that is doing its best. I acknowledge though that there have been some



issues, and sometimes that is for reasons to do with our team and sometimes it is to do with wider issues. But on your bigger point about the pool of candidates, that is definitely something the Secretary of State has been extremely clear she would like us to work on, not only in the Department but through wider outreach, so that is something that we will be very focused on.

Chair: Very good. Let us move on to Rupa, please.

Q94 **Dr Huq:** When we had Chris Bryant before the Committee we were talking about tax relief. We did an inquiry on high-end film and TV and he said, "Never say never." What is the progress on that? This summer I went to see a few of the studios in my seat—it would be a good visit, Secretary of State. We have this whole film quarter in Park Royal: there is Garden Studios and Versa Studios, which produced "The Jury", which everyone was gripped by recently. They are all saying that we are losing competitiveness and market share to other countries—we went to France and saw that they do it very successfully. Is there any movement on that?

Lisa Nandy: First, I thank you and the Chair for your kind words about Minister Bryant. He is currently settling into his new role at the Department for Business and Trade. Can I also put on the record my absolute agreement about the need for therapy after so many of those terrible puns?

As a Government, we see film as one of the most exciting industries in this country, not just because of the huge joy that film brings but because of the huge economic potential and because it offers the potential for really good jobs in parts of the country where currently those great, well-paid careers are too often in short supply.

We have been working very closely with investors and industry to make sure that we remain competitive. We are not complacent about this at all. One of the reasons why we acted very quickly to bring forward two new film tax relief rates on visual effects and independent films was because we know that this is a very competitive environment globally. This is a conversation that I have had with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and with the Chancellor to ensure that we remain vigilant in not falling behind other countries.

We are also investing quite significantly in film, particularly in our talent pipeline. We announced a £75 million screen growth package over three years that will help us to expand, for example, the BFI Film Academy. We are trying to make sure that we are working with the widest range of stakeholders to encourage new talent into the film industry, because we know that is one of the reasons why many major investors are very keen to invest in the UK and base themselves here.

The other point I would make, Rupa, is that we won the argument across Government as a Department that the creative industries are an



ecosystem. This is not just about investing in film at the top end. This is also about making sure, for example, that we support our public service broadcasters. I have not had a single conversation with a major investor that has not at some point referenced the BBC and the critical role it plays in providing the infrastructure, training and skills that provide a significant draw for people to come to the United Kingdom.

Across the board, we are prioritising film as part of the industrial strategy and, as we currently stand, I am confident that we remain competitive. We are, of course, working with other countries and learning from them. Recently, the Prime Minister hosted President Macron in the UK; I was very pleased to be at that visit and meet with my counterpart. We discussed the collaboration that we are forming around film in particular, and other areas. So we have done lots, but there is a lot more to do and we are not complacent for a moment.

Q95 Dr Huq: Can I mention some points that my local studio asked me to feed back to you? Besides business rates increases, they say that energy costs are five times more here than in the US, so addressing that might make them attractive.

Some people do not like the term high-end, so they want an unscripted tax credit, because something like "The Jury" is not a high-end drama. Some people do not like this elitist language, so maybe you could consider doing something on that.

Have you looked at the proposal by the Film Distributors' Association? Its modelling shows that for every £1 put in, £7 comes back. This is something we are genuinely world-beating in—I know that term is used a lot—so those are some suggestions.

Lisa Nandy: That is really helpful. I absolutely take your point about language.

The other thing we have been looking at is around investment in film infrastructure, and particularly around cinemas, which are often the only cultural institution in many parts of the country. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh, Jo Platt, has done huge amounts of work supporting the Leigh Film Society over the years, and fighting to get a cinema in her town, which neighbours my Wigan constituency. Watching your experience, Jo, of going through that and the work you have had to do to fight for that has left a very deep impression on me and us as a Government.

Cinemas are often the only cultural institution and, therefore, provide the hub and the basis of cultural life in a place. We are looking at what we could potentially do to ensure that cinemas, especially independent cinemas, are seen as critical cultural infrastructure and eligible for the funding that other cultural institutions are eligible for.

Dr Huq: I can follow up in writing on some of the specifics.



Lisa Nandy: Thank you.

- Q96 **Chair:** Can I quickly pick up on the legacy of Minister Bryant? He obviously showed a huge amount of interest in the creative industries and culture, and he spoke to this Committee about a number of things that he was very keen on doing that we had suggested—never say never to extending the film and TV tax credits was one. Can I ask about a few of the others so that we are sure that the things he cared about do not drop away now that he has left the Department? He kept talking about a 10-point plan for music; is that still coming out? When will we see it?

Lisa Nandy: It absolutely is. Without undermining the incredible work that Minister Bryant did, that was my request as the Secretary of State. As you would imagine with Minister Bryant, the 10-point plan for music then became a 110-point plan for music, but we are working at pace to make sure we are in a position to announce something. I cautiously say that because I have learned over the last year that everything in Government takes far longer than any of us would like, but we should be in a position to at least announce some of that this autumn.

- Q97 **Chair:** He also said he wanted to see a 50% uptake for the grassroots music levy on 2026 stadium and arena tickets. The Music Venue Trust says we are around about 32% at the moment; there is still a really long way to go. Can you please confirm that you still support the target and would take a very dim view if the industry thought that with Chris gone there might be any form of rethinking the Government's commitment to the levy?

Lisa Nandy: I have previously said that if we have to act to put this on a statutory footing, we will, but we would of course prefer that the industry gets there itself. The 50% target remains. I have already had a conversation with the new Minister for music, Ian Murray, who is very committed to this, and we will continue to take that work forward.

- Q98 **Chair:** Finally, there is a digital advertising taskforce, which was to come forward with some standards. Is that continuing, and is it still going to happen?

Lisa Nandy: Yes.

Chair: Very good. Let us move on to Liz, please.

- Q99 **Liz Jarvis:** Good morning to you both. First, I would like to ask you about Pontins. What discussions has DCMS had with Pontins, or its parent company Britannia Hotels, about the future of the holiday parks that have been shuttered?

Lisa Nandy: This is an issue that I have taken a personal interest in. It was raised with me by my former counterpart Stuart Andrew MP, who has had a number of issues in his constituency. It is something that I have also discussed with the Chair of the Committee in recent months.



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We are obviously very concerned about the closures. There have also been a number of issues about safety standards that are difficult to discuss publicly because there are a number of inquests and investigations currently ongoing. This is something that the last Government was trying to pursue as well; it predates my time as the Secretary of State. Maybe the Permanent Secretary would like to give an overview of where we were and where we have got to?

Susannah Storey: You have summed it up, and I know you also wrote to the Chair on it.

Lisa Nandy: We are very concerned. In discussions with the company, it has said that it has a business case and that the business case is clear. However, it has caused significant job losses in parts of the country where those jobs were very important. It has also been a real blow to many families for whom those were holidays that they valued and treasured and were often a source of being able to go on a family holiday that otherwise they could not afford.

As a general principle, I would say that although we absolutely understand that there are pressures on many companies, particularly in tourism and hospitality—we are working very closely with those companies to help to support the hospitality and tourism industry—we take a very dim view of companies that do not take care, particularly when many jobs are at stake.

Q100 **Liz Jarvis:** What would you like to see happen to the sites?

Lisa Nandy: One of the approaches this Government have taken is that we have changed the approach from the last Government, where decisions were made from Whitehall and imposed on communities. We are very keen to work with local communities to help them to realise their own ambitions for those sites. I have been in touch with a number of Members of Parliament who represent those areas and I would be very keen to have those discussions with you as well.

Q101 **Liz Jarvis:** Later this month, ITV will be broadcasting a dramatisation of the phone hacking scandal starring David Tennant and called “The Hack”. Over the last 10 years, the Labour party in opposition repeatedly promised victims of phone hacking and other press intrusions that you would introduce independent regulation for newspapers and online news publishers. What plans does your Department have to keep that promise?

Lisa Nandy: Before the general election and before I was in post—I did not shadow this brief in opposition—the Prime Minister ruled out implementing Leveson 2 in full. We believe that the situation has changed quite significantly since Lord Leveson produced the second part of his report, and we share the view of the last Government that that means we need to take a look at the developments that have happened since, particularly the changes in the way that people consume news and the



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shift to online. But that does not mean that the power of some of the suggestions for reform he made does not remain.

When I was first appointed as Secretary of State at the end of last year, I met with many of the families who had been affected by phone hacking. Some of you will have met those families. I cannot tell you how big an impression the horrors of what they experienced have left on me personally. I made a commitment to them that, first, I would not make promises that I could not keep. They have been looking for change and fighting for change for a long time, and it was important to be clear that we will only make commitments that we can and will keep, because we have to strike the right balance between press freedom—which is incredibly important, particularly when it comes to scrutinising Government—and protecting people from the sort of press intrusion that those families have had to go through. I met with them through the campaign group Hacked Off, and they have gone away to look at a number of practical suggestions where we can work together to make real progress on that issue.

We will of course consult on that. We will not make changes without consultation with parliamentarians, the media and others, but it is important as a Government that we do not just hear those concerns but act on them, so we are working through that very carefully at the moment with them.

Q102 **Mr Alaba:** Good morning. What are the Department's plans around growing tourism outside London, specifically in coastal communities? I represent one in Southend that needs attention and support. Secretary of State, I am mindful that you mentioned change not coming just from Westminster; what does that mean?

Lisa Nandy: I will give you a general sense of how we are approaching this and if you then have any specific follow-ups, please press me.

The first thing we have done is take a place-based approach to the way that we work in the Department. We have developed a place-based tool that enables us to zoom in to every part of the country to see what the Government's footprint is. One of the things I was very struck by when I visited Blackpool shortly after I was appointed Secretary of State was how many Government Departments were present in Blackpool, funding housing and health interventions, supporting the football club and local media—in the DCMS world—and young people. There were so many funding streams pouring into Blackpool but very little of it, if any, lined up behind local priorities and the vision that local leaders had for their area. We are really keen for that to change.

Through the place-based tool we have found that there are areas of the country where, for the last decade or so, they have been described as left behind. People say they feel they have been abandoned by Government. That is because they have been left behind and they have been abandoned. There is no Government footprint there at all. In the various



funds that we have announced we are really homing in on those areas, saying to them, "What do you need?", and then asking them to bid to us for that.

We have got rid of the competitive approach where areas were pitted against one another. You will recall with the levelling-up funds, you would take a borough like mine in Wigan, and you would have different parts of the borough competing against each other because there was only one fund available. We have got rid of that because we recognised that sometimes what you want to do is fund around an area so that you build resilience. For example, we recently announced a fund for the creative industries that we are giving to six mayoral combined authorities, which will give them the freedom to decide where they spend it across their sub-region. That will hopefully help to build resilience into the economy, the whole supply chain and the ecosystem that will allow them to succeed.

The other thing we have done is that most of the funds that we now have, whether it is the Arts Everywhere fund that I announced in February or the youth funding we are putting behind the forthcoming National Youth Strategy, will be driven from the ground up. Rather than us as a Government going out and saying, "We're allocating it for these specific purposes and you can come and bid to us for it," we are saying to communities, "Come to us with what you need and we will fund it."

Let me give an example on that, and then I will stop talking. Coastal, rural and inner-city communities all have particular challenges. In a coastal community, for example, you might want to build a youth club that does not already exist. In a rural community you might want to fund a minibus that helps young people to get to a youth facility that is already there. We think communities are better placed to be able to do that. To go back to the Chair's original question about the spending review, we think that is how you make the money we have go much further and get it to the places it is most needed.

Q103 Damian Hinds: Secretary of State, can I ask about AI and copyright? The Government's preferred option is to have a general exception for text and data mining, with a so-called opt-out. You had a consultation and a ton of responses. Were you surprised by the virulence of the reaction to the Government's preferred option, both from the sector and, indeed, from Members of Parliament, including Labour Members of Parliament?

Lisa Nandy: No, I was not. This is a really difficult issue to solve and people feel very strongly about it, for all the right reasons. The creative industries are one of the most important industries in this country and something that we are really good at. We lead the world, and we light up the world through our creative industries. AI offers enormous opportunities, but it also offers huge threats if we get it wrong. The debate has become very binary: you are either pro AI or you are pro creative industries. Actually, my view has always been that the UK's superpower, our great strength, our USP when it comes to AI, is the data



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that we have—the human data, the quality of the data and content that is produced by the creative industries. If we do not protect the creative industries, we do not have a hope of being an AI superpower.

As a Government, we did not do enough collectively to be clear enough about that, and I take full responsibility for this. We allowed the debate to become very binary: you are either for creative industries or you are for AI. So I was not surprised. We had deliberately tried to separate out the legislation that we were passing in this area from this particular issue around AI and copyright. That did not work. You could see that through the process we got into in Parliament, particularly in the House of Lords, where this issue played out through that legislation anyway.

I will say to you, very personally—I have not said this publicly before—that one of my great frustrations is that because that was a DSIT-led Bill, I was not able to be as present in the debate in Parliament as my counterpart and friend Peter Kyle, who is also very committed to this area. It became a debate that was very much around AI in which the creative industries needed to see that their Secretary of State was also very visible, and the parliamentary process and rules just did not allow for that.

Q104 Paul Waugh: That is not quite right, Minister, because Chris Bryant was constantly present in the Chamber. If you wanted to express more opposition, he could have made it clear, could he not?

Lisa Nandy: He did make it clear. In Chris Bryant's defence I would say that he did. The problem that I had particularly, and I am keen to ensure it does not happen again, is that there are two Secretaries of State who feel very passionately about the creative industries and that people should be paid for their work—we are a Labour Government and that is a core principle that we will continue to defend—and feel very passionately that AI offers enormous opportunities if we get it right. Although Mr Bryant is a very passionate and vocal champion of the creative industries, he was not a Secretary of State, so there was a challenge there. Through the consultation process, we have learned that having a preferred model was not the right approach and that is no longer our position. We do not have a preferred option.

Q105 Damian Hinds: You will have to have one eventually; you are the Government.

Lisa Nandy: Of course we will, Damian, but you do these things through consultation, and what we learned through the very many consultation responses that we had and genuinely listened to is that the situation facing the creative industries is not straightforward, because the implications of one approach for publishing is not the same as for music, for example. A one-size-fits-all approach causes real problems for some parts of the creative industries.



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particular, we heard that loud and clear through the consultation process. We listened, and what we have done since is establish a series of AI and creative industry working groups where we bring together the big tech companies with the creative industries. Peter Kyle and I jointly chaired two of those roundtables before the reshuffle, and Liz Kendall and I are due to chair the third in a couple of weeks. That has enabled us to have one conversation not two, and start to work through the detail to make sure that we get to a preferred option that everybody can support.

Q106 Chair: The previous Government had a similar roundtable where they tried to bring the tech companies and creative industries together, and that ended in disaster. What makes you think that you will be any different?

Lisa Nandy: Because ours has not.

Damian Hinds: So far.

Lisa Nandy: I am being optimistic here. There are people across the tech companies and the creative industries who feel very passionately that we have to find a solution to this, who understand both the power of AI and what it can bring, the power of the creative industries, and the need to protect and future-proof them. I have been really heartened by the quality and constructive nature of that discussion and the willingness to engage, especially when it is hard. I am optimistic about that.

Q107 Chair: Do you think the fact that the Government reshuffle has seen virtually the whole ministerial team from DSIT wiped out and replaced is a recognition by the Government that they got this spectacularly wrong and need to start again?

Lisa Nandy: That is a question for the Prime Minister, not for me. Having been through reshuffles in your own time, some of you will know that people are not often taken into the confidence of the Prime Minister about why decisions are made.

What I would say, though, is that the new Secretary of State Liz Kendall and I discussed this yesterday—three days into her being appointed—and it is a very high priority for her as well as for me. I do not want to put words in her mouth, but she was very clear with me that this has to work for people and it has to work for the creative industries. I am very optimistic that we are going to be able to find a solution but, as the Committee knows, this is really difficult. There is no country in the world that has found a neat or straightforward solution to the challenges that are posed.

Q108 Damian Hinds: There are few that have quite the same tension that we have. It is a fundamental tension and it is particularly strong here because we are a country that has both a strong, very creative sector and a strong, nascent and developing AI sector. In the machinery of government, this Government have tried to deal with that by having a Minister who stretches across the two Departments. As I understand it,



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Ian Murray maintains that in the change of Government, but there is still this question about who the head person is. Next time a piece of paper comes through Parliament, who is the Secretary of State leading it through? Do you agree that the signal that sends to the sector is fundamental?

Lisa Nandy: Yes, I would. That is something we have discussed across Government and agreed that, after we have worked through the issues with tech companies and the creative industries to get to a consensus, we will do jointly across DSIT and DCMS when we return to Parliament.

Q109 **Damian Hinds:** You mentioned the different sub-sectors—publishing and music—and art is another. They have quite different existing systems, processes, associations, guilds and all the rest of it. Is it physically possible to have an effective opt-out mechanism?

Lisa Nandy: I do not want to pre-empt the work that we are doing through the working groups, but that is one of the key questions that we are working through at the moment. The way that we have established the process is that there are three roundtables, the third of which we are shortly about to chair and hold. Then, we will take some individuals who are working through specific issues and, with their permission, put them into working groups. That is the question we are trying to answer at the moment.

Q110 **Damian Hinds:** No Government Minister ever answers the question: “When can we expect the results?” So let me ask a different one. How far through assessing the responses are you? I think you had 11,500 responses from the consultation, and there are the roundtables, the different inputs you are getting and what you are hearing from colleagues in Parliament. Roughly how far through that process would you say you are?

Susannah Storey: I think that is the same question put a different way.

Damian Hinds: It is, yes, and rather elegantly, if I may say so.

Susannah Storey: Absolutely. As the Secretary of State says, this Committee has done so much work across the creative industries and on so many of these issues. It is a hugely important subject, so we will do the work until it is done. It is difficult for me to say we are at x or y percentage. To your point, the sorts of things we are looking at are input, output, transparency, and different versions of opt-out.

Q111 **Damian Hinds:** Can we expect something this calendar year?

Susannah Storey: I do not think it is worth getting drawn on that, is it? We need to do the work and then we will come forward.

Damian Hinds: Or this financial year?

Susannah Storey: We know it is urgent because in the real world obviously the tech transformation is happening. In our daily lives, we are



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no longer doing a Google search and going through to links; we are getting answers informed by AI. What the Secretary of State has been so eloquent about is that we want to make sure that in this country AI innovation is informed by the creative industries. We want it to be in that win-win space, so that is the thing we are trying to do.

Chair: They need to be informed, but we also need to make sure that they are remunerated for their work that has been inhaled.

Susannah Storey: Yes, absolutely.

Lisa Nandy: I will address this directly, because it came up so much during the parliamentary debates. There was a concern among some parliamentarians, particularly in the House of Lords—I have met with all those people who voiced concerns—that the Government was somehow trying to kick this into the long grass. I make a commitment to this Committee on behalf of Parliament that we absolutely will not do that and that we will not in any sense allow this to be unnecessarily delayed.

Alongside that, and recognising the urgency of this to creators, I also want to say that we do not want to get it wrong, so we are taking the care and the time that we need to get it right. But I promise this Committee—I make this commitment today—that we are not going to kick this into the long grass. We are going to grip this issue and find a solution, and that almost exactly echoes the words that the new Secretary of State used to me yesterday after Cabinet.

Chair: Thank you very much. Let us move to Jo, please.

Q112 **Jo Platt:** Thank you, Chair, and can I thank the Secretary of State for those words and that commitment to independent cinema? I declare an interest as a patron of Leigh Film Factory. I know those words will be widely appreciated, so thank you.

Lots of artists from different sectors are expressing their concerns about the ongoing issues with the Arts Council funding application portal, with technical issues ongoing since July. Are you happy with how the Arts Council is handling this?

Lisa Nandy: There is a technical issue that we were discussing yesterday. Susannah, it might be better if you answer.

Susannah Storey: ACE has had a problem with its systems, as you know, and that is affecting people. It has put information on its website to help people to understand what it is doing and it is trying to resolve it. My teams in the Department, both the sponsor team and our DDAT team, are trying to assist with resolving it as quickly as possible.

Q113 **Jo Platt:** Obviously there are a lot of artists affected. Locally, I have had artists approach me. A lot of groups and sectors are reliant on funding that is due now for them to exist. Given what is at stake and the criticisms of the system since its onset, will the Government provide



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extra support in getting this right, to improve it for everybody? Again, to declare an interest: I used the Arts Council portal for funding applications, and it was horrific.

Susannah Storey: We are already providing technical support to ACE. It is a matter for them. We did not get additional money in the spending review to give it a new system, but obviously through the Arts Council England review that is happening we are looking at the whole set of questions around ACE. Right now, we are just trying to help it to resolve the problems so that, as you say, people can apply for grants and get the money if they have been successful.

Lisa Nandy: Jo, one of the things that I have been told when I have been briefed on the issue is that there are alternative ways to apply for the majority of grants. If that is not working, I would be really happy to take that up with the Arts Council. I was particularly struck by what you just said about the application process not being particularly smooth before these problems arose. I would be really keen to follow up on that. If there is anything further you can share, I will make sure that I see the head of the Arts Council and deal with that.

Q114 **Jo Platt:** It is an important point to make. My personal experience of working with artists is that they are artists; they are not funding applicators. This is the problem that a lot will feed back. It is really worth while to have that sort of conversation.

Lisa Nandy: It is a really fair point. This is something we have asked Margaret Hodge to look at specifically as part of her review of the Arts Council.

It happens not just in art but in sport as well. One of the challenges we have had is that with the funding available for grassroots sport you often have somebody applying for that who is not skilled in filling out 50-page forms but is incredibly skilled in coaching a local football team and inspiring young people in their community. We often find that they cannot navigate a really complex funding process. As in sport and arts, and across many of our sectors, we are looking at how we can change that so that, as part of those funds, we have people who are designated to walk through that process with communities, artists and others so that they get help from start to finish and get the funding they need.

We have also been working across fashion with Paul Smith's Foundation in respect of young fashion designers. He is funding a programme where they incubate young fashion designers and provide them not just with the studio space but also with the accountancy, tax and legal advice that often is not their skillset, and seeing whether, by filling that gap, we are able to get a much more diverse range of young people into the arts, fashion and culture. They are creators, not necessarily people who have run a business. It is something we are looking at across all our sectors, but you are absolutely right to say that the current system is unsatisfactory.



Q115 Jo Platt: Manchester city council has demonstrated what is possible when local government, major events and cultural assets work together, raising £250,000 to support grassroots music venues thanks in part to the big-ticket events that we have had in Manchester like Oasis—which I attended—and Sam Fender. It has created a blueprint for sustainable investment. Are you going to look at that and work with the Music Venue Trust to do a deep dive?

Lisa Nandy: Yes, definitely. I was really pleased to be at the first Beyond The Music conference in Manchester and to have discussions with the people who have been involved, working very closely with the excellent Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, who is really passionate about this, and Bev Craig, the leader of the council. We think that is a blueprint that we could develop in other parts of the country. I am particularly keen that we do that outside major cities, because talent is everywhere but opportunity is not, so we are working on that at pace.

Q116 Chair: Can I take you back to the Arts Council? The Creative Foundations Fund was about £80 million for vital repairs for buildings up and down the country; Secretary of State, you have spoken with great passion about the importance of supporting the arts nationally. That fund had applications worth over £700 million going into it—it was nine times oversubscribed. It shows the huge long-term capital need—the black hole—in funding really important vital maintenance and repairs to some of our most important cultural buildings up and down the country. Is more money going into that fund?

Lisa Nandy: The Permanent Secretary will be able to talk about the capital settlement that we got in the spending review, but this was a point that we particularly pressed with the Treasury because, obviously, there comes a tipping point where either buildings are not viable or it costs far more to do the work. Early investment is helpful because it preserves those institutions, but also because it is far more cost-effective if you are able to intervene earlier.

This is one of the things in the brief that keeps me awake at night. We inherited a situation where right across the piece, whether it is sporting infrastructure or museums and arts institutions in particular, many of those buildings were built around the same time and have had very little in the way of capital investment and are in a really dire state, some with risk-to-life status in various parts of the buildings. They go from our big, great cultural institutions to smaller grassroots venues as well, and it is something I have spent a considerable amount of time talking to representatives of those sectors about.

We are really keen to address it, but obviously it is a very difficult financial situation, so we are having to prioritise. Arts institutions in particular should be prioritised, because there was a museums fund under the last Government but there was nothing comparable for theatres and other arts institutions. They have very much felt that they have been invisible. We are really keen to turn that around and the



spending review settlement will help with that, but I cannot say hand on heart to the Committee that we can solve all those challenges.

Q117 Chair: Do you think the Government fully understand and appreciate that some of our big cultural venues are just as important as British brands like BAE Systems and Rolls-Royce? The previous Government put a lot of money into helping some restoration of the National Theatre, which is a huge British export and a great British brand. The Royal Festival Hall is another one, and it is in dire need of support for some structural changes it needs to make. What sort of conversations have you had with them? Do this Government feel they would want to support one of our big iconic venues in the same way?

Lisa Nandy: Yes, definitely, and we really see the value of them. My dad was on the board of the National Theatre, and when I was growing up in Manchester, as kids we would often spend the weekends that we had with him in the National Theatre. That was a wonderful opportunity for a child growing up in Manchester. It is my second home in London and it is one of the places I go to without even watching a play—I just go there to be sometimes because I feel so comfortable and at home there. I want every kid in this country to grow up feeling at home in those great national institutions and to have the access that I had at a very young and early age to world-class theatre, amazing directors, scriptwriters, and actors and actresses.

We have been working very closely with them. We recognise that a lot of them may be based in London, but the work that the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre, the Tate, the British Museum and so on are doing all over the country is extraordinary, and they are genuinely national institutions. They are also international institutions. Recently, I was in India signing a cultural co-operation agreement with my counterpart there ahead of the trade deal that we announced. It is a fantastic partnership between the British Science Museum and its equivalent in India. There is huge appetite all over the world for more of those cultural collaborations. In a world that feels increasingly fractured and divided, these institutions have enormous power to reconnect Britain to the world.

The Committee will know that the previous Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, and I co-chaired a soft power council. We will be continuing that work with the new Foreign Secretary, and that is a recognition of the power of these industries and the need to defend, protect and support the really important work that they do.

Susannah Storey: To your point on capital, Chair, I should add that the SR was in two phases. In the first year, this year, we got a good capital settlement, which is why we prioritised that £85 million fund. As you say, it has been so oversubscribed that we will be taking it into our business planning.



We have about £2.9 billion for the rest of the SR period. We want to look at how we can allocate that in the best way, because we recognise, as you do, that in times of financial difficulties people do tend to starve capex and it becomes a problem. That is why we have focused on it this year, and we are very keen to make sure we think about that as we go forward through our business planning which, hopefully, will be done this quarter. That puts us in good shape to have a multi-year settlement and be clear with the institutions about what they are going to get.

Q118 Chair: On top of this, you also mentioned philanthropy. Are there any plans to look at how you can use Government money to help to trigger other investment that would help with some of the capital?

Susannah Storey: Yes, we have been looking at a place-based philanthropy strategy and really trying to think about whether there are philanthropists who want to give money—either individuals or institutions—and then helping them to know where and how to give it to really add and crowd in to the money the Government have.

Lisa Nandy: This is something that I am really passionate about. In my town of Wigan, Mike Danson, who is the owner of Wigan Warriors and Wigan Athletic, is somebody who grew up there and still calls Wigan his home. He does not live in Wigan any more, but he cares passionately about the place. He came in to save our football club and to support our rugby league club, and he is doing really significant work in the community.

Every community has that sort of diaspora. I imagine in Paul's constituency, in Rochdale, you will have people who got on, but then they got out. They often had to get out to get on because of the lack of opportunities that we have had in many of our communities. Those people still care passionately about their communities and, as Government, we could play a much more significant role in helping to inspire them to come home and invest in communities that traditionally have not had enough funding.

I asked for the stats when I was first appointed to the brief, and philanthropy has really stepped up to fill the gap that has been created by Government stepping back. However, one of the biggest areas of cuts to arts and culture has been at local level, not national level. That has meant that there are some communities that have ended up as cultural deserts altogether, largely far outside of London and away from major cities. Those areas are where philanthropy has been the least forthcoming, for obvious reasons: people there do not have a great deal of money. This is something we are really keen to address, and the place-based philanthropy strategy is the vehicle through which we will do it.

Q119 Paul Waugh: It is great that we finally have an industrial strategy and that those two words are no longer dirty words within Government, and that creative industries are obviously part of that. Earlier, you mentioned



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that public service broadcasters are a key part of the ecosystem for jobs, skills and investment. Ofcom's report in July on the future of public service media made clear that a sense of urgency was needed from Government. It is not just about the industry; it is about the Government's role. The report calls for: "Urgent clarity on how TV will be distributed in future", and says: "The timeliness of the Government's decision remains a critical factor." When can we expect some urgent clarity on the transition to IPTV?

Lisa Nandy: We take this incredibly seriously, but it is one of the areas that we obviously have to take great care with because of the implications of making that shift. We have been working very closely with Ofcom, which has been looking into the issue and is due to produce a report.

Susannah Storey: Stephanie Peacock has also had a working group with the PSBs, Arqiva and the relevant parties, because we want to take their views before we come to a decision.

Q120 **Paul Waugh:** Is there a sense of urgency on the part of Government?

Lisa Nandy: There is. Obviously, some of our public service broadcasters have had some very challenging circumstances recently, so we have been looking at the immediate issues in front of us. At Channel 4 there is a very important role for the new chair and chief executive when they are appointed, to deal with some issues they have had, but we are also looking across the board at public service media.

Shortly—I am sorry to do this, as those of you who have been in Government know that shortly is code for trying to do this as quickly as possible to move the system—we are about to publish the terms of reference for the BBC charter review and, obviously, we were keen not to just look at the BBC in isolation from the wider challenges facing public service broadcasting. I have said to this Committee before that I consider the BBC to be one of the two most important institutions in this country, alongside the national health service, and the whole public service broadcasting ecosystem to be one of the UK's great strengths. It faces significant challenges and as a Government we are going to have to address them. We cannot just kick into the long grass.

Q121 **Paul Waugh:** We will come on to the BBC in a minute. The key reason I am asking you this question is because we need a managed transition to IPTV; that is important. Ofcom made it absolutely clear that a later decision on IPTV risks undermining the investment and innovation needed for that transition. Where does that leave it? Your current position is, "We will do it as soon as we can."

Lisa Nandy: Yes.

Paul Waugh: Can you offer any more reassurance for the industry?



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Lisa Nandy: I cannot today, Paul, but I have heard your point loud and clear and we are doing everything we can. We will redouble our efforts to make sure that we do this quickly, but we do it right.

Q122 **Paul Waugh:** You mentioned the BBC charter. Before we get into that, in a nicely robust session with the BBC yesterday, the Committee managed to extract from the BBC chairman this quote: "Once the Green Paper is out in early October". Has he let the cat out of the bag?

Lisa Nandy: We'd better go back and get on with it then.

Paul Waugh: Has he let the cat out of the bag? Is it early October?

Lisa Nandy: We are certainly going to start the charter review process before the end of this year. We are hoping to be in a position to do it in the autumn, and I probably should not be drawn any more than that.

Paul Waugh: He is not wrong, is he? He was not misleading the Committee when he said early October.

Lisa Nandy: I do not think he would have ever intended to mislead the Committee.

Paul Waugh: Is he wrong?

Lisa Nandy: You will all know that things in Government sometimes take a frustratingly long time. The charter review has to be concluded by the end of 2027 and we are very keen to ensure there is sufficient time for Parliament, the public and broadcast media to be part of a proper conversation around that.

I have said before that this charter review is the most critical of recent decades, because there have been concerns for a long time. This Committee and its predecessor Committee have been warning about the challenges, particularly around the funding of the BBC, changing viewing habits—the revolution we have gone through in terms of viewing habits that have caused significant challenges—and, of course, we have had a pandemic that hit the advertising of other public service broadcasters. If we do not grip this now, we are looking at a situation of managed decline, and we are not prepared to accept that as a Government. We are making sure that we get that right. The chairman is not wrong to suggest that we will be doing this in the autumn; I just do not want to make commitments to the Committee that I then find I cannot keep later.

Q123 **Paul Waugh:** Longer-term funding of the BBC World Service is obviously a key part of the charter. Will you be making strong representations to the new Foreign Secretary that this is something the Government should be gripping?

Lisa Nandy: Yes, of course, and I am very confident that, as with the previous Foreign Secretary, there will be a very strong recognition of the role that the BBC World Service plays around the world, particularly in



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relation to an environment in which other foreign states are investing heavily in their own state broadcasters and propaganda, which is incredibly dangerous to the UK. It was something that was not lost on the previous Foreign Secretary and I will, of course, be meeting with the new Foreign Secretary to discuss this.

Q124 Paul Waugh: The sector plan said you would explore how the Government could grow the BBC's commercial arm. What more can you do to help BBC Commercial?

Lisa Nandy: I have discussed this extensively with the director general and with the chair. We are keen to ensure that the BBC is able to maximise the amount of commercial revenue it receives. But I have to be honest with the Committee: the scope for that will never match the funding needs that the BBC has and there will always be a need for some kind of public financing of the BBC. We have only ruled out one option as a Government and that is direct taxation, because of the critical importance of the independence of the BBC from Government.

If I may, on that point of independence, the other thing that the BBC finds very challenging—the Committee will know that there have been several challenging issues and areas where the BBC has fallen short on this in recent months—is that it is rightly held to the highest of standards, but there has been a fracturing of the news media and there are different standards being observed in other places. To take a very clear example, and something that this Government and I feel very strongly about, there is a real importance for the public when they look at the news to be able to understand whether what they are seeing is political polemic or news. At the moment, that situation is currently completely unsatisfactory and there has been a blurring of political polemic that is presented as news on other channels.

I am really keen that as part of supporting not just the BBC but all our public service broadcasters, we make sure that we get those rules right. Ofcom is currently consulting on tightening the rules around politicians presenting news programmes and news in any format. That is something that we as a Government strongly support. We will look closely at what Ofcom presents to us, but it is an area in which we intend to act.

Q125 Paul Waugh: By implication, are you talking about GB News? Obviously, like me, you would be a strong supporter of freedom of speech and of the freedom of media and the press. But at the same time, if you switch on GB News at night, it is basically a newspaper-on-TV format which, under the Ofcom rules, it is not meant to be, is it?

Lisa Nandy: I have had particular concerns raised with me by parliamentarians about the appearance of Nigel Farage presenting news programmes on GB News. That is a fair criticism from Members of Parliament of all political parties, because the public have a right to know if what they are seeing is news and is impartial or not.



One of the challenges that that then creates for public service broadcasters is that people lose trust in the news altogether. That then is a challenge for the whole country, because the way in which people consume their news has polarised and fragmented, and people are reading different accounts. Those shared spaces and that shared understanding that is the basis of democracy is fracturing. That is a very dangerous position for a country to be in, and the impartiality of our news is something that we intend to robustly defend.

It is not for the Government ever to stray into determining who can be featured on broadcast media and what is discussed. That is entirely a question for broadcasters, whether it is GB News, the BBC or others, not least because they exist to hold up a mirror to Government and to subject us to scrutiny, and that is essential in any democracy. But it is right and proper that as a Government we ensure that we have a proper framework so that viewers are empowered to understand if what they are seeing is news, or if what they are seeing is political polemic presented as news.

Q126 Chair: To go back to the BBC, we spoke to them yesterday about workplace standards. The director general is very keen on the work of CIISA, and I know, Secretary of State, that you have spoken very warmly about their work as well. They say that over 700,000 people—about a third of the workforce—in the creative industries have been impacted by bullying, harassment or discrimination, costing the economy about £1.8 billion a year. They are now pivoting to a registration model, as you know, but they are finding that some organisations that have been, let us say, more high profile with issues around bullying, discrimination or harassment are unwilling to sign up. Does the Government plan to do anything to compel registration, maybe via some sort of statutory instrument?

Lisa Nandy: I have had these discussions extensively with CIISA, which we strongly support as a voluntary initiative. I have made clear to them that if, at some point in the future, we believe it is necessary for this to become statutory, that is something that the Government are very open to. However, they believe, and we believe, that we can move faster to deal with the horrendous situation that you described, and potentially be more effective, if we can persuade a wider range of organisations to sign up.

I am having conversations with the streamers that have been very reluctant to sign up to CIISA so far. I am also genuinely quite appalled to learn from CIISA that Banijay, the production company behind the recent headlines, had committed to sign up to CIISA but has not yet produced a single penny in funding. If that has changed in the few hours since we have been sitting here, I would be delighted to hear it, but we do take a very dim view of companies that have had these issues, that have been heavily criticised for not having dealt with them, and then have not made



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good on those commitments. We are working very closely with CIISA to encourage more to sign up.

I want to commend the BBC for showing a real leadership role in this. The chairman in particular, after the recent series of events that they have had, has been interviewing individual staff and holding discussions with junior members of staff, and has also made the commitment that the BBC will expect those that it commissions to sign up to CIISA. That is leadership, and we really appreciate the stance the BBC has taken.

Q127 Chair: I have two quick questions on the BBC, and I'd like quick answers. You have just spoken to Paul about the chair suggesting that we might get a charter review launched in October. As a Committee, we have been promised it all year. We are getting very tight on time. What are the chances of there not being enough time to do it properly and the licence fee being rolled over?

Lisa Nandy: We will do it properly, and we are still on course to be able to produce that Green Paper and the terms of reference this autumn.

Chair: We are not going to see the licence fee rolled over?

Lisa Nandy: We are on track and in a position where that should not be the case.

Q128 Chair: On the BBC World Service, I have another quote from the chair yesterday—he was very helpful on a number of issues. He said that “there is a disconnect between the warm words and how much the World Service needs.” At the Liaison Committee in July I asked the Prime Minister about this, and he suggested that the BBC World Service represents “a matter of national security.” Do you agree, and are the Government going to match their warm words with a warm commitment?

Lisa Nandy: Yes, I do agree, and I would gently push back against the suggestion that the Government have not been supportive of the World Service in particular. When the director general approached myself and the former Foreign Secretary when we were first appointed, the Foreign Secretary was forthcoming with funding to support the shortfall that the World Service was facing.

One of the challenges that we have, and it is a wider challenge around the licence fee, is that attitudes towards the licence fee have changed. Particularly for the younger generation, who now tend to consume a lot of their TV online through platforms like YouTube and others, they find it very difficult to understand why they pay a licence fee, because they see it as a subscription service to a service they do not use. As a Government we have a role to play, first, in helping people to understand how the licence fee supports public service broadcasting and the whole broadcasting infrastructure, not just the BBC, but also the role that the BBC plays in the multiple mediums on which it broadcasts that people use and tap into, even if they do not realise because they are not sitting down to open Netflix.



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Q129 **Chair:** We need to hurry on, but the point is that you can understand licence fee payers seeing that the World Service is not for them, but it is a matter of national security because we see that when those services are withdrawn in some parts of the world, they are immediately back-filled by Chinese and Russian state media. Are you articulating that value to our national security to other Government Departments—to Defence, for example—that might potentially be able to understand the significant role it plays and want to back-fill that money?

Lisa Nandy: Yes. The point I was going to make was that that is not well understood by the public, because obviously the British public tend not to listen to the World Service.

Chair: Thank you. Let us move on to Rupa, please.

Q130 **Dr Huq:** Hi again. This is another Chris Bryant leftover. Do we know when the ticketing consultation is coming out?

Lisa Nandy: I want to say imminently, but should I say shortly? I will defer to the Permanent Secretary.

Damian Hinds: In due course.

Lisa Nandy: In due course—somebody has been in the Cabinet before.

Susannah Storey: We have basically been taking views on the level of any price cap and trying to make sure we bring that forward, so it is coming forward shortly.

Rupa Huq: Shortly? Okay.

Susannah Storey: But obviously we need to make sure that Chris's replacement can get up to speed and make his decisions.

Q131 **Dr Huq:** Do you think it will be out by Christmas?

Susannah Storey: Yes, we are getting on with it.

Lisa Nandy: I am very hopeful that we will be able to produce that this side of Christmas.

Q132 **Dr Huq:** Secretary of State, I want to ask you, as a former shadow Foreign Secretary, about journalists in Gaza. Every time there is a UQ on this subject, an increasing proportion of the questions are on this issue. Two hundred journalists have been killed. There was the double-tap hospital strike, with Al Jazeera, and we know that Israeli authorities refuse the passage of international journalists. Is your Department alive to this? What you are doing for British media outlets in response?

Lisa Nandy: This is a responsibility that I jointly share with the Foreign Office; it leads on foreign journalists and I lead on UK-based journalists. We are horrified by the number of journalists who have lost their lives during the Gaza conflict. It is estimated to be almost 200 now, which is an extraordinary number of lives. I am particularly concerned that the



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Committee to Protect Journalists has assessed that 26 of those have been deliberately targeted because they are journalists. That is absolutely unconscionable. The previous Foreign Secretary took a number of steps in order to deal with that situation, including signing a joint statement with other nations calling on Israel to do more to protect journalists and to end any targeting of those journalists.

The challenge we have is that they have almost all been Palestinian, because foreign journalists are banned by Israel from entering Gaza. So what happens is that when those journalists are killed, the truth dies with them, and the world is denied the right to know the truth of the full horror of what is happening in Gaza.

For my part, as the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, I am responsible for journalists here in the UK. I am about to chair a roundtable with a number of organisations, both about the protection of journalists in Gaza and about access for UK journalists to Gaza, to ensure that those stories can be told and revealed to the world. I would like to thank the Committee for the work that you have done on this, and a number of you have raised this in Parliament as well. I think many of those journalists feel very alone and isolated at the moment.

We are really clear that it is incumbent on the Israeli Government not just to ensure that journalists are protected and that those stories can be heard, but to make sure that there is access to Gaza for UK and other foreign journalists, to allow the truth to be told.

Q133 Dr Huq: You wrote a letter to us on 6 August covering various BBC scandals: the Glastonbury coverage, which was an incitement of anti-Semitism; the "Gaza: How to Survive a Warzone" documentary; the whole Greg Wallace debacle; the report that took so long to come out. You said: "While I am pleased there has been some progress, there is more that needs to be done." It just feels like this current BBC lot we had yesterday are in constant crisis management mode. Are you confident that it can be accountable for the mistakes it keeps making on standards?

Lisa Nandy: The key word that you used there was accountability, and it was a word that came up over and over again when I brought a statement to Parliament after the Glastonbury incident. There are real concerns among parliamentarians of all political persuasions about lack of accountability and people not being held to account for failures to uphold editorial standards.

I will say a couple of things. First, obviously I have been very robust with the BBC about this, not least because as well as the very clear issues around antisemitism and Glastonbury, the failures around the Gaza documentary and the failures to uphold editorial standards had precisely that effect that we have just been discussing: silencing the voices of people in Gaza. The BBC could not have stood by that documentary because of the serious editorial failings that it has. As a consequence, the voices of those children in Gaza are not heard and seen. I just wanted to



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make that point because sometimes the way that this debate has played out has been very much that you are either pro-hearing the voices of Gaza or against it. Actually, that is not the situation; the real concern that many of us had about the serious editorial failings in that instance was that those voices then could not be heard, and should not be heard because the BBC had not done the due diligence.

From the very robust discussions I have had with the chairman and the director general, I think they understand that and the seriousness of that. Since I last came before the Committee, they have taken a number of practical steps, including putting in place accountability measures so that people will face repercussions for those failures, particularly around Glastonbury. It is for the BBC to announce those, but in private conversations I have been heartened by the change of stance and the progress that has been made, while being clear that I expect to see the BBC move much more quickly and be much more robust when and if these issues arise in the future.

Q134 Dr Huq: Yes—hatred is completely inappropriate for a teatime audience.

I have been contacted by various BBC staff telling me that the *Guardian* has been reporting that the BBC is going to offshore up to 10,000 staff and replace them with AI. This is actually contrary to its charter, and contrary to the regional hubs and the creative economy that this Government sets so much store by. It has only started consulting with unions after this came out in the press. It has not denied this and a lot of staff are worried about it. Do you know anything about this?

Lisa Nandy: On that specific issue I do not. I have had previous discussions with the BBC leadership around the collection of the licence fee and the company that is responsible for that, and reflected concerns from trade unions about the potential for those jobs to be offshored. Obviously, the BBC is a proud British institution and we as a Government are keen to make sure that it continues to be anchored in the UK and fly the flag for the UK. But I am not aware of that specific issue so I will take it away, Rupa, and I will write to you about it.

Q135 Mr Alaba: Every £1 invested in community sport and physical activity generates £4.21, and that speaks to the Government's growth agenda. Do you believe this is the extent of the Treasury's ambition? We had an announcement regarding two cricket domes over the summer; should we be doing more?

Lisa Nandy: In terms of cricket, one of the challenges is that there was a significant commitment to investment in cricket made by the last Government, but there was not a single penny of funding attached to that. No money had been allocated to that announcement.

As a Government we were determined that we would invest in cricket and, as you know, Bayo, we recently announced £1.5 million of investment into two cricket domes in Luton and Lancashire. That is the floor, not the ceiling, of our ambition. It is a down payment on what we



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believe cricket in particular can do for communities. It was incredible being with some of the England women cricketers and seeing the impact on young girls when they had the chance to meet them face to face. I want every girl in the country to have the opportunity to get involved not just in football, which is a great national sport, but in all grassroots sports. We recently announced £400 million of investment in grassroots sport, some of which will be very specifically focused on encouraging more girls into sport—things like adding an additional changing room to an existing sports facility, which then allows girls to participate as fully as boys.

We are also looking at attaching conditions to our funding, particularly for girls, because one of the challenges that many parliamentarians have raised with me is that even as we are going across the country investing in new facilities, the established teams are getting priority to be able to play. Those established teams are normally boys' teams, so the girls are playing at 9 pm when the facilities have become free. We think that is unacceptable, so we are looking at using the power we have in Government to attach conditions to the funding to make sure that that does not take place and that there is equal access. We are very well aware of the power of sport, and the Prime Minister is personally very invested in it.

Q136 Chair: Have the Government given any consideration to looking again at the 3 pm cut-off for sports on Saturdays? There are a lot of arguments that women's football could be shown during that period when football is not normally shown on TV, and that would help to give visibility to more women's sports.

Lisa Nandy: As far as I am aware, unless the Permanent Secretary corrects me, we have not. But it is certainly something I am happy to take away.

Q137 Paul Waugh: I declare an interest as a member of the Dale Trust, which is the Rochdale football supporters' club, and I am a season ticket holder at Rochdale.

Secretary of State, you mentioned that philanthropists play a big role in lots of our towns, particularly outside London. In Rochdale, Sir Peter Ogden is one of those Rochdale-born entrepreneurs who has now invested a lot back into the Rochdale community, and we owe a lot to him.

I was at Rochdale earlier this summer with the chairman of the Independent Football Regulator, David Kogan. One of the things that came up in our discussions with him about his role and how he is crafting his role—obviously he is independent—was the way smaller football clubs rely a lot on developing their local youth talent and giving opportunities through BTECs, excellence in terms of football and furthering their careers. For a club, of course, financially and commercially you can then sell on that local player and you can survive. The key point is survival.



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David Kogan was told by Rochdale football club that actually, under EFL rules, you have only two years in which you can keep a youth academy: once you drop out or are relegated, your academy ceases to exist and it gets no funding, and actually is not allowed to exist. David Kogan said he would look at that as part of his work. Do you agree that that would be included in how you envisage the role of the Independent Football Regulator?

Lisa Nandy: Yes. As you know, Paul, we went through real challenges at Wigan Athletic and nearly lost the club twice, which is one of the reasons—not the only reason—why I am so passionate about strengthening football governance. That was not an issue that I was aware of, so it is certainly something—

Paul Waugh: He was not aware of it either, but he said that actually now he has heard about it first-hand he really wants to deal with it.

Lisa Nandy: I will also look into that; that is a real concern.

On the broader point of the football regulator and the strengthened system of football governance that was begun by the last Government and has been completed and strengthened by us, it is about trying to ensure that that point you made about surviving is not the reality facing many football clubs around the country any longer, and that we can reach an agreement between the leagues and get a fair financial flow through the game. Then clubs do not just live hand to mouth, constantly worrying about survival, which I know is the situation facing Rochdale.

Q138 **Paul Waugh:** This summer we have had Morecambe and Sheffield Wednesday in real financial and ownership difficulties. Do you think that if the Independent Football Regulator had existed prior to that, that those difficulties might not have existed?

Lisa Nandy: I cannot pre-empt decisions the football regulator would make, but that is precisely why we acted at pace and got the legislation on to the statute book within the first 12 months of this Government. When Reading got into difficulties we said, "Never again," and then we had Morecambe and Sheffield Wednesday. There are significant powers in the Football Governance Act, such as the strengthened donors' and directors' test, that could have made a particular difference in those clubs, particularly Morecambe. Of course, there is also the backstop—which is very much a backstop—that the football regulator can intervene if necessary, in order to remove an owner who is threatening the future of the club.

In relation to Sheffield Wednesday, I would say the Government's view is very strongly that football club owners are custodians of those clubs, and they have a responsibility to hand them on in better shape to the next owner and the next generation of fans. In Sheffield Wednesday's case I am really extremely concerned about the current ownership and the lack of willingness to sell the club and invest in the club. This is something I



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have been discussing very closely with local MPs and the Government are keeping a very close eye on, and our message to those owners is that change is coming.

Q139 Paul Waugh: The Permanent Secretary referenced the controversy over David Kogan's appointment earlier; do you have any clues as to the timing of the outcome of the Shawcross review into that?

Lisa Nandy: We absolutely recognise that we need to move on this quickly, but after I discovered that David Kogan had previously made political donations to my former leadership campaign, we took a decision that I would recuse myself from the process. In the report the Committee warned Mr Kogan about a perception that there could be some lack of impartiality as a consequence. I took that very seriously. The Sports Minister is going to make the decision about the final appointment, but she is going to make it once the Shawcross inquiry has concluded, out of respect for the process.

Q140 Paul Waugh: You were obviously not involved, but does the Permanent Secretary have any clue as to the timing?

Lisa Nandy: What I would say from a political point of view is that I had understood that that inquiry, which opened in the middle of May, would conclude within a matter of weeks. It is obviously having real-world consequences that that has not yet concluded, and I am very keen that we are able to move forwards as quickly as possible in whichever way the Minister for Sport determines.

Susannah Storey: On the official side we have obviously been very open with the Commissioner for Public Appointments and have given him all our relevant documentation. As the Secretary of State said, it opened on 15 May, so we are really keen to get to an outcome on that.

Q141 Chair: You have not heard when they are likely to opine?

Susannah Storey: They have not given us a timeline at this stage.

Q142 Mr Alaba: The Department notified us in June that the interim National Youth Strategy report would be published shortly. We are still awaiting that, so would you be able to clarify what the delay has been?

Lisa Nandy: Yes. One of the things we did with the National Youth Strategy—the first National Youth Strategy in decades—was establish it in a completely different way so that it is led by young people. We put them in the driving seat, we established the youth board, as the Committee will know, and the existing youth team in my Department was strengthened with some external appointments to make sure that we fully supported them. They led on the biggest ever conversation with young people that Government have been able to have—more than 20,000 young people. I am convinced that is because it was their consultation, not ours, which took place on their terms, not ours as a Government. The richness of that has been remarkable.



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What we have discovered though is that one of the things the young people and the team that supported them felt very strongly about was that the original plan I had set out to the Committee—to produce a state of the nation report outlining the problems, and then later in the year to come to Parliament with the National Youth Strategy providing the solutions—was unsatisfactory. They did not want to produce the problem without the solution, so we have listened to that and changed our approach. The plan is we are going to publish them both simultaneously this autumn, and we are on track to be able to do that.

I do not want to pre-empt that with the Committee—we will of course give you an advance copy through the Chair—but the findings from the state of the nation report are, as you would imagine, very stark. We are working very hard at the moment to corral the whole of Government to help us to really grip the challenges facing that generation.

Q143 Mr Alaba: I know you do not want to pre-empt it, but would you be able to elaborate more on some protections around young people on online safety?

Lisa Nandy: One of the things we have discovered through the state of the nation report and the consultation—the conversation we have been able to have with young people—is that actually the online world and the real world are not separate. There are problems, huge challenges, facing young people in terms of the physical spaces in the real world that used to exist: where they could go and be, have healthy relationships and discover confidence and resilience. As those spaces have disappeared or been reduced, and their access to them through public transport has also reduced, they have retreated into their bedrooms, where they spend a significant if not a majority of their free time alone online, where those relationships are deeply unhealthy.

As you would imagine, a significant number of girls are targeted with unwanted sexual harassment, abuse and illicit images, and there are also the real problems with young men and the way in which they are being targeted around misogyny and other areas. That in turn seems to be affecting young people's ability and confidence to go out and have relationships in the real world. So it is an ecosystem—a vicious cycle—that has been allowed to develop and requires us to intervene on a number of fronts to break. Online is obviously an essential part of that, but so too is rebuilding those physical spaces in communities where young people can go and have those good, healthy relationships with their peers and with trusted adults as well.

Q144 Natasha Irons: It is good news that Young Futures hubs have moved into DCMS. Although you cannot pre-empt anything with the National Youth Strategy, for people who have councils that have lost all their capacity to provide those spaces for young people, or are now relying on the voluntary sector to step up, it can be quite patchwork. There needs to be a universal offer for young people, but I would say that Young Futures hubs are a more targeted approach, because it is about intervention and



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tackling youth violence. How will those two things fit together, and how are we looking at youth work and youth workers within those spaces? They are quite different disciplines: you have a sort of upstream universal offer to stop people needing intervention later, but something that is more targeted later on through Young Futures hubs.

Lisa Nandy: This is something that you and I have discussed before, Natasha, and I absolutely take the point that having a very local grassroots offer cannot be at the expense of having a universal offer that young people can access wherever they are in the country. You made that point very compellingly and I have really absorbed that and taken that on board. It is also a view that the young people who are driving the National Youth Strategy share very strongly.

The youth hubs have moved into DCMS. I am very pleased about that; the former Home Secretary and I felt very strongly that if those youth interventions were not positive interventions then they would not be effective, and that DCMS was the right place for those to sit and for us to lead on. They are targeted interventions, but they sit as part of a broader set of policies, interventions and programmes for young people that are more universal.

You asked specifically about the workforce. We know that one of the great challenges that happened over the last decade and a half was that the workforce was really depleted, and what happens when you lose a youth worker is you lose the lifeline for young people—that magic that is the relationship gets broken. So we are investing; for example, we have £3 million that we are already committed to investing to increase the sector and workforce capacity. There will be more in the National Youth Strategy around that, because those relationships, whether it is with youth workers or other trusted adults, are absolutely central to the chances of this generation succeeding. You will see that as a real focus in the National Youth Strategy.

Q145 Natasha Irons: Obviously this is a massive opportunity. Like you say, we have not had a National Youth Strategy—we have not thought about this and what it is to be a young person in this country—for a very long time. We had Eugene from Play England here last week—we will talk about that in a minute—and he said that young people “make up 20% of our population, but 100% of our future.” We do not shape our services or our communities like that, and this is an opportunity to do that.

Is it an opportunity to look again at the statutory protections around these things? Obviously councils are under the cosh and under pressure, but these are often the first things to get cut and often the first things to go down the list. We pit this service against, say, early intervention for babies and early years; should this not be something that is separate to that, because it is a stage of your life, and should we be looking to back up the funding that is coming in, with protection for it? Otherwise it could have a bit of a death, with bidding against each other and that sort of thing.



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Lisa Nandy: Having been a councillor myself and worked very hard to try to deal with a budget that fell short on almost every front, I am sceptical about national Governments handing new responsibilities to councils without the funding to match. The reality of that statutory protection for youth services—although it sounds very attractive to me as a principle—without the funding is that councils will struggle to protect those services and will have to make really difficult choices elsewhere.

I genuinely believe that the closer decisions are made to people, the better they are, so we have taken a different approach through the National Youth Strategy. Obviously the details are yet to be announced, but the approach that I have asked the team to take, and the young people have been very supportive of, is that councils and mayors have freedom and flexibility to be able to work with young people in their communities to decide how money is spent. It is not mandated or dictated by Government, but we should find mechanisms so that young people can actually exercise real power in decision making in their local areas.

An example that I have previously discussed with the new Housing Secretary—the former DEFRA secretary—is that when he was the leader of Lambeth council they set up a trust that anyone over the age of 12 could join, where a lot of their youth funding was put, and they could co-decide as a community how best to spend that funding. They got much better outcomes in terms of youth violence, gang violence, positive activities for young people and outcomes for young people than they had done previously when the councillors were deciding. So we are looking at where there are mechanisms that we can use that will genuinely empower young people to make those decisions at local level.

Susannah Storey: As the Secretary of State says, what you will see when we come forward with our strategy, which is genuinely exciting, is that we are trying to move the things we are doing closer to communities. So for the money DCMS controls across spaces, workforce and enrichment, that is what we will be doing. The Secretary of State and Stephanie Peacock have also done a lot with other Departments to try to make sure that everything is pointing in one direction.

Q146 **Damian Hinds:** You are suggesting that the amount of time that children spend online, including alone online, is a result of previous Government policies on youth services. The implication would presumably be that all the other countries that have also seen the same increase in the amount of time that children spend online must have had similar policies, whereas I do not think they did. Are you saying that as a result of your new youth strategy, you anticipate a reduction in the amount of time young people spend online, including alone online? What sort of quantity of reduction should we expect to see in, for example, the Ofcom Online Nation study or the OECD studies in the next one, two or three years ahead?



Lisa Nandy: I was making the point about quantity and quality, but I will focus very much on your point about time online, because that is a significant concern to parliamentarians and parents all over the country, including me.

I am not suggesting that the upwards trend in terms of time that is spent online is a solely UK phenomenon, nor that it is solely a result of Government action or inaction. But we are finding that there is a definite link between the degradation of real-world shared spaces that young people can access and the amount of time that they spend online or alone in their bedrooms as a consequence. To give you an example from the work we have done, only one in four young people could access any kind of arts or music provision in the last year. That is completely unacceptable. We have seen—

Damian Hinds: Only one in four children, including at school?

Lisa Nandy: I can get you the precise figures, but that is the headline figure¹. There was a 78% reduction in youth spend over the time that the last Government was in office; that has obviously had a major impact on the places that young people can go. But there is a global trend around this: young people are spending more time online, and that is something that we have to grip.

The other finding from the report is that the UK is an outlier in terms of the impact that is having on young people, so we are doing worse than other comparable countries in terms of the impact that that has on isolation and loneliness in particular. It is something that we have already started to do some work on as a Government, and I have been working with the sporting bodies—Rugby League, Premier League and others—around a pilot programme particularly targeted at young men to get them out of their bedrooms and into the sports facilities, and with trusted adults around them.

Q147 **Damian Hinds:** What sort of reduction in the amount of time online should we expect to see in one, two or three years' time?

Lisa Nandy: I do not want to pre-empt the National Youth Strategy, but one of the things we have been debating with the young people who are driving it is: do we set a target around that? If we do, do we set it as an internal or an external target?

The reason they are a little reluctant is that they would like to see many of these issues dealt with completely. You do not want to see a reduction in harmful content towards children online, you want to see no harmful

¹ Correction by witness: The source of the statistic used on access to arts and music provision is the [DCMS Youth Survey Pilot Report](#) (published 7 November 2024) which states that "A fifth of young people (19%) had taken part in art or music-related activities over the past year" in relation to participation in organised clubs and societies related to arts and music. This statistic does not include access to arts and music provision at school.



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content towards children online. You want to see every young person in the country able to access youth facilities, arts, music and culture.

Damian Hinds: Yes, but you would expect to see the time come down?

Lisa Nandy: Of course.

Damian Hinds: Just give us a rough idea of how much you would expect it to come down?

Lisa Nandy: It is a question that we are debating; I would be happy to take suggestions from the Committee.

Chair: We want to try to get you out of here on time, Secretary of State, so we need quicker answers.

Q148 **Natasha Irons:** Very quickly on the point of getting kids out of their bedrooms, we had the session on play last week, and there has been a 50% fall in the amount of time children spend playing outside. I am an older millennial: I am one of the last generations of people to go out and fall down and hurt myself and do those sorts of things. Kids are spending 23 minutes less playing outside at break time as well. It feels like there is a bit of a crisis in children just being allowed to play and have access to that space in terms of playgrounds, but also just playing out in play streets and things like that.

The Centre for Young Lives had the Play Commission, which recommended having a national play strategy like we had before in 2008—cue lovely pictures of Ed Balls and Andy Burnham on a swing. Their recommendation is that we bring that back, but it sits with DCMS because of its ability to cross Departments. What are your thoughts on that?

Lisa Nandy: It is a shared responsibility between DCMS and DFE. I have read the report and it makes a number of very helpful and powerful suggestions. It is something that I will discuss with the Education Secretary; I have not had an opportunity to discuss it with her yet, but I will.

For our part we are obviously doing a lot in this space, particularly in terms of the transformation funds, whereby we are helping local authorities rebuild their capacity at local levels so that they can provide better spaces and opportunities for young people in their areas—for example, the investment that I referenced earlier in relation to grassroots sport. But the report makes a very powerful case that there needs to be a cross-Government strategy, and it is something that we will look at very seriously.

Q149 **Natasha Irons:** Would you like to see the banning of “No ball games” signs?

Chair: There was a piece in *The Guardian*, wasn't there?



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Lisa Nandy: Most people in this country would believe that children have a right to play on our streets and that we should encourage that. One of the loveliest things I have ever seen is in a park in London near where I used to work for the Children's Society, and adults are only allowed to enter if they are accompanied by a child. That is the approach that I would like to see us taking as a country.

Chair: And a ball.

Lisa Nandy: And a ball.

Q150 **Mr Alaba:** Charities are on the verge of crisis: demand is going up; costs are going up; contracts are down; individual and corporate donations are down; volunteering, most importantly, or crucially, is down. Does the Department have any sense of how to address this crisis?

Lisa Nandy: The Prime Minister hosted a reception for the charity sector at Downing Street in the first couple of weeks of us taking office. That was a deliberate priority in order to say to a sector that has felt very beleaguered and at times under attack over recent decades, "You are absolutely central to our efforts to rebuild this nation."

As a former charity worker myself, I feel very strongly that although charities are not the same as Government, they have a particular role to play: they can reach people we cannot reach; they can speak truth to power and hold us to account; they have not just a right but a duty to speak up on behalf of their beneficiaries and to hold the Government to account on that; and they can work constructively with us to promote positive change.

Out of that came the civil society covenant, which we launched with the Prime Minister and Ministers from across every Government Department very recently—I am losing track of the year.

Susannah Storey: It was in the summer.

Lisa Nandy: Yes, in the summer. Thank you. That was a document that we produced with civil society about strengthening our ways of working and our partnership. We deliberately called it a covenant because we wanted it to be less contractual and more of a genuine relationship than the last time the Labour Government had a compact with civil society. As part of that we have committed to working very closely to support the charity sector with the challenges it faces.

I know that many parliamentarians have been really concerned about national insurance increases and the impact on charities. I fully understand those concerns and we have heard those representations loud and clear from the charity sector. We are doing what we can to support them in really challenging financial circumstances, but I would be really happy to take suggestions from the Committee about more that we could do.



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Mr Alaba: Secretary of State, thank you for broaching the subject of NICs, because that is something that comes up with every visit I have with a charity.

Susannah, is there anything you would like to add?

Susannah Storey: In support of what the Secretary of State said, alongside the civil society covenant we have been talking to all Government Departments to make sure that they are engaging with the charities in their sectors. If you think about the Energy Department, there is huge work that the charity sector does there, and it is the same right across colleagues, so alongside the Ministerial work we have been supporting that at an official level to really make sure it drives that change that charities want to see, to work in partnership with the Government.

Q151 **Chair:** Let me give you three quick-fire questions before we let you flee. Thinking back to what we discussed at the beginning with the public appointments, it is vital that the Charity Commission gets the right person as chair given recent appointment issues, because we know they have had issues in the past. If we think that your preferred candidate is not appointable, would you appoint them anyway?

Lisa Nandy: It would depend on the reasons, but we take the Committee's view very seriously indeed. We should be in a position to put a candidate in front of you shortly. I am expecting to get recommendations from the independent panel in the next few weeks, and I have been really pleased with the quality of the shortlist. I hope you will be pleased as well, but obviously it is for the Committee to consider that, and I will take that very seriously.

Chair: It is really important we get it right because, as you have heard from Bayo, the charitable sector is in a real sense of crisis at the moment.

Lisa Nandy: Absolutely.

Q152 **Chair:** On a completely different subject, do you accept the British Horseracing Authority's assessment that more than 2,700 jobs are at risk if the Treasury's proposals on gambling taxes go ahead?

Lisa Nandy: We have had a consultation about that, but we have not announced the results of the consultation. I have had representations from parliamentarians across the board about the challenges facing horseracing and the importance of getting that right, and I have had a number of discussions with the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary, and I will be having those discussions with the new Chief Secretary as well.

Chair: Do you know when the outcome of the consultation is going to come?

Lisa Nandy: I do not, I'm afraid.



Susannah Storey: No, it is a matter for the Treasury, but we are very focused on it.

Q153 **Chair:** Finally, charities that provide support for those suffering gambling harms are really worried about the lack of certainty regarding their funding once the statutory regime begins. Do you have any idea when the commissioning decisions are going to be made?

Lisa Nandy: This is an issue that has just been raised with me by another parliamentarian, so I have asked the Department to get me an urgent answer on that. I do not know if there is anything additional you can add at this stage, Susannah?

Susannah Storey: No. as we bring in the statutory levy we are providing some additional funding to some charities involved. I am more than happy to come back to you with the detail of the plans.

Chair: As an indication of how vital this is, there is a little over six months to go before the NHS, the Department of Health and Social Care and OHID take over the commissioning of gambling harm treatment and prevention. Betknowmore UK and the charities that form the wider National Gambling Support Network have yet to receive any communication from the new commissioners regarding their future, which puts the whole system, and by association all those it supports, at risk. We really need some sort of comfort from the Secretary of State that those charities, their staff and the service users that they support will be protected. People cannot just make those sorts of arrangements overnight. Can we get an assurance that the Secretary of State will meet them and their staff to hear their concerns?

Lisa Nandy: Yes, of course. We will get you an answer on that ASAP.

Chair: It would be good if you could exert some pressure on the powers that be to bring forward that kind of support as quickly as possible.

Lisa Nandy: Yes.

Chair: Thank you very much. We have gone a little over your time, but we have tried to keep you as close to time as possible. Thank you both very much for your time today.