

Special Inquiry Committee Proposals for 2025

Proposals submitted by 25 September 2024

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Special Inquiry Committee proposals	3
Proposal 1: Letter from Lord Saatchi	3
Proposal 2: Letter from Lord Liddle	6
Proposal 3: Letter from Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws	8
Proposal 4: Letter from Lord Alton of Liverpool	10
Proposal 5: Letter from Baroness Kidron	12
Proposal 6: Letter from Lord Kirkhope of Harrogate	15
Proposal 7: Letter from Lord Morse	17
Proposal 8: Letter from Lord Green of Deddington	18
Proposal 9: Letter from Lord Meston	19
Proposal 10: Letter from Lord Wallace of Saltaire	21
Proposal 11: Letter from Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick	23
Proposal 12: Letter from Lord Kempself	27
Proposal 13: Letter from Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle	29
Proposal 14: Letter from Baroness Smith of Llanfaes	33
Proposal 15: Letter from Baroness Watkins of Tavistock	37
Proposal 16: Letter from Viscount Hailsham	39
Proposal 17: Letter from Baroness Lister of Burtersett	40
Proposal 18: Letter from Baroness of Nicholson of Winterbourne	43
Proposal 19: Letter from Baroness Hayter, Baroness Hoey, Baroness Jenkin of Kennington, Baroness Ludford, Lord Moynihan, Lord Triesman and Lord Wasserman	45
Proposal 20: Letter from Lord Boswell of Aynho	49
Proposal 21: Letter from Lord Empey	50
Proposal 22: Letter from the Lord Bishop of Manchester	51
Proposal 23: Letter from Baroness Deech, Baroness Foster of Aghadrumssee and Baroness Noakes	55
Proposal 24: Letter from Lord Aberdare and Lord Birt	57
Proposal 25: Letter from Baroness Valentine	59
Proposal 26: Letter from Lord Lipsey	62
Proposal 27: Letter from Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots	63
Proposal 28: Letter from Lord Fuller	65
Proposal 29: Letter from Baroness Young of Old Scone	67
Proposal 30: Letter from Lord Foulkes of Cumnock	71
Proposal 31: Letter from Lord Dubs	72
Proposal 32: Letter from Lord Ravensdale, Baroness Morris of Yardley, Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay and Lord Storey	74
Proposal 33: Letter from Baroness Boycott	76
Proposal 34: Letter from the Lord Bishop of Gloucester	78
Proposal 35: Letter from Baroness Scott of Needham Market	80
Proposal 36: Letter from Lord Cromwell	82

Proposal 37: Letter from Lord Teverson	85
Proposal 38: Letter from the Lord Bishop of Oxford, Lord Bethell, Lord Clement-Jones, Baroness Harding of Winscombe, Baroness Kidron and Lord Knight of Weymouth	87
Proposal 39: Letter from Lord Wills	89
Proposal 40: Letter from Baroness Kramer	90
Post-legislative scrutiny proposals	93
Proposal 41: Letter from the Lord Bishop of St Albans	93
Proposal 42: Letter from Lord Curry of Kirkharle	95
Proposal 43: Letter from Baroness Browning and Lord Touhig	98
Proposal 44: Letter from the Earl of Lytton	100
Proposal 45: Letter from Lord Rennard	102
Declarations of Interests	104

SPECIAL INQUIRY COMMITTEE PROPOSALS

Proposal 1: Letter from Lord Saatchi

A better connection between people and Parliament

Description of proposal

The reputation of the House of Lords does not currently reflect the excellence of its work or the significance of its contribution to our democracy. I propose that the Liaison Committee should consider initiatives to improve the reputation of our House, enhance our democratic process, encourage participation from citizens, and make use of more technology to support this.

These days, the House of Lords is a body which receives very little praise. There is usually off-hand criticism of our motives or behaviour.

Yet, to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, the Hansards of the well-mannered and illuminating debates in the Lords bear witness that the place is overwhelmingly occupied by intelligent and responsible people, honestly striving by their own best lights to prospect for real ideas with the unremitting zeal of a prospector hunting gold.

Right now, if the House of Lords had a logo, it would be a light under a bushel. It is time to awaken her sleeping beauty.

As our Lord Speaker, Lord McFall says:

“To engage with society ... a solid link between Westminster and themselves.”

Purpose of inquiry

To overcome some of the current feelings of disillusionment with politicians who sometimes seem not to listen or care.

Relevant Member experience

It is based entirely on the knowledge and expertise of members of the House.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

It crosses all departments boundaries.

10-month time frame

Yes.

Additional comments

I have probably seen more public opinion research in the UK than any living person. There can be only one conclusion. The British people are the most aware and sophisticated electorate in the world.

We have changed. We know more. We see more. In the 1960's 4% of us went to university. Now it's 50%. We don't have to rely on the BBC to tell us what is going on. We know it all. In seconds.

Nobody understands this better than the team in No.10. That's why they ask our opinion on everything every minute of every day. They just keep the results to themselves. Perhaps it's now time for the people's voice to be heard more directly.

People would like more accountability. More oversight. A better means to express their concerns, their questions and their views.

Modern technology enables that to happen with a clarity and force that has not been possible until now. People of all ages and social demographics often feel unrepresented by a political class that sometimes seems neither to hear them or care about them.

Let us try to bridge that growing divide and reconnect people with parliament by devising ways of allowing people to express their views and see a direct connection between those views and the action taken by Parliament.

You may hear it said that the people lack the time or motivation to be involved in lawmaking. But what they don't have the time for is waffle, clichés and platitudes.

It may be said that people's modesty means they are willing to rely on those who are better qualified. But they don't have to doff their caps anymore to the passing horse-drawn carriage. They are the experts now. Their phone has more knowledge than any Minister.

Therefore 2000 years of human progress could perhaps give us a better version of democratic legitimacy. The will of the people as the source of political power, government authority, and law in real time, without waiting for the next General Election. Government of the people, by the people, for the people. It wasn't a bad idea at the time. So let our House consider whether there is a more modern way to reflect that.

Let us agree with Tennessee Williams:

“We have met many people that seemed well-adjusted, but I am not sure that to be well-adjusted to things as they are is ... to be desired ... I'm not sure that I would want to be well-adjusted to things as they are. I would prefer to be wrecked by desire for things better than they are, even for things which are unattainable, than to be satisfied with things which are.”

Let us recall the words of Saint Paul:

“Always pressing onward to the upwards call.”

And if that is too otherworldly for some tastes, then let us revisit the statue of our war hero, General Slim, standing right opposite the gates of No.10:

“You cannot win a war unless your troops believe they are fighting for a noble object.”

I must emphasise that in looking at this proposal, the Liaison Committee is not asking the House of Lords to climb Mount Everest. Cure cancer. End poverty. Or stop all wars. People only have to be satisfied that we did at least try to change the world to make it a better place. An honest attempt is all that is required.

In summary, I cannot do better than President Kennedy in the speech he never gave in the city he never reached on the day he was assassinated.

This is how it ended:

“Conformity and complacency will not do.”

I very much hope the Liaison Committee may look favourably on this proposal as suitable and relevant for a special enquiry Committee.

With gratitude for your time and attention.

SAATCHI

Proposal 2: Letter from Lord Liddle

A new generation of public-private investment: how to avoid the mistakes of PFI and more successfully attract private investment in public infrastructure

Description of proposal

The new government is committed to public-private partnership as a means of financing investment in a wide range of public goods including the transition to Net Zero; a new generation of nuclear power stations; the modernisation of the National Grid; public support for spin offs from the UK science base and technological innovation; raising levels of investment in the transformation of the NHS (as recommended by the Darzi report); urban and inter-urban transport schemes such as extending HS2 to Euston, the East West Oxford to Cambridge railway, possibly adding extra capacity to the West coast Mainline as well as investments to improve transport connectivity within metropolitan areas outside London; the public infrastructure necessary to support a new generation of New Towns.

To help facilitate public private partnerships the new government has already announced, with money set aside, the creation of National Wealth Fund and Great British Energy though it is unclear as yet how these new bodies will work with the private sector.

The Special Inquiry would consider how best to make these ideas work both from the perspective of the taxpayer, also the putative pension fund investor.

Purpose of inquiry

There is nothing new in the desire to mobilise private investment in public goods. The 1990s saw the Private Finance Initiative which was successful in building new schools and hospitals but was subsequently criticised on grounds of cost (greatly exceeding the cost of government borrowing) and inflexibility (with constant dispute about what covered by the PFI contract and what was not).

Similarly the Conservative governments since 2010 launched several initiatives to mobilise pension fund investment in long term projects—but with limited success. Pension funds have shown great reluctance to invest in projects that have high construction risk (which would be true of most public infrastructure from nuclear power stations to HS2 or its equivalent).

The special inquiry would draw on the experience of these approaches in the past and hopefully make recommendations for greater success in the future.

Relevant Member experience

The House contains many members with City expertise as well experience of running major public services, as well as economists and retired senior civil servants.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

It is by nature a cross departmental proposal looking at most aspects of public investment and how best to secure private sector additionality.

10-month time frame

I would have thought yes. Indeed a shorter inquiry might be desirable to inform the government in shaping its policies which in this area are at the moment an aspiration rather than a firm and clear plan.

Additional comments

The new Labour government is committed to public-private partnership as a means of financing investment in public goods. The National Wealth Fund is explicitly mandated to invest in industrial projects with high growth potential on the basis that the taxpayer contribution would be no more than 25%. Great British Energy is similarly being set up with a remit to attract private investment in energy transition. For infrastructure and high tech enterprise investment there has been much discussion of how best UK pension fund money can be attracted back from abroad to support riskier growth enhancing investments in the UK.

There are similar ideas under consideration for the nuclear sector. In terms of rail investment, whereas HS2 was regarded as a 100% tax payer investment, its impact has already been to increase land values and private investment in central Birmingham: might part of this increment have been used to finance the railway itself and what would be the opportunities for this public private approach elsewhere in the railway system (for example the proposed Oxford-Cambridge or Transpennine links; the remodelling of Euston). To what extent and how can new town private developers contribute to essential public infrastructure such as highways, light rail networks, schools hospitals and community facilities?

At the same time policy makers are fully aware of the criticisms of PFI schemes launched under the last Labour governments. So strong have been these criticisms that the last government abandoned PFI altogether. The Conservatives did accept the principle of public private financing for a new generation of nuclear reactors, though as yet the details have yet to be finalised.

I envisage a special inquiry with a title something like. THIS TIME, IN PROMOTING PUBLIC PRIVATE INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIPS, HOW CAN WE DO BETTER THAN PFI.

LIDDLE

Proposal 3: Letter from Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws

A review of HMG's approach to investigating and prosecuting international crimes under the principle of universal jurisdiction

Description of proposal

During an inquiry into the atrocities perpetrated by Daesh, the Joint Committee on Human Rights established that the British Daesh returnees were investigated and prosecuted for terror-related offences only and not for any other international crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The number of convictions was confirmed by HMG as 32 out of over 400 Daesh returnees. The reasons for this are unclear and require attention and inquiry.

Similarly, there have been a very limited number of investigations and prosecutions of international crimes from other situations globally, however, this time because of the limitations of the law. Indeed, sections 51 and 58 of the International Criminal Court Act 2001 (ICCA 2001) are limited to international crimes perpetrated by British citizens or residents only (a limitation that exists only to the 2001 Act, but not to other crimes such as torture or Geneva Convention violations). Other countries, such as for example Germany, have much broader laws enabling prosecutions of international crimes independently of the nationality or residence of the alleged perpetrator. It is crucial to examine how the ICCA 2001 could be amended to ensure that it accommodates a broader understanding of universal jurisdiction and also—that it is aligned with the approach in the domestic law on torture and Geneva Convention violations.

Purpose of inquiry

The Inquiry would assess how the law (but also policy and practice) would need to change to ensure that UK courts could take a more proactive approach to ensuring justice and accountability for international crimes.

Relevant Member experience

The proposed inquiry could make the best of the knowledge and experience of Members of the House by engaging them to participate in the inquiry and share their expertise. Members of the House with particular expertise on these issues include:

Baroness Butler-Sloss K.C., Lord Carlile K.C., Lord Brennan K.C., Lord Forsyth, Lord Marlesford, Lord Campbell of Pitternween, Baroness Helic, Lord Hannay of Chiswick, Lord Hope of Craighead, Lord Wood of Anfield, Baroness Hodgson, Baroness D'Souza, Lord Alton of Liverpool.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

It is envisaged that officials would be invited to submit evidence in a focused session. Witnesses could be drawn from some of the following departments, and submissions sought from others:

- Home Office
- Department of Justice
- Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Former or current House of Lords Ministers could be asked to give evidence, including:

- Baroness Northover
- Baroness Warsi
- Lord Howell of Guildford
- Baroness Anelay
- Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon
- Lord Collins

10-month time frame

The proposed special inquiry committee is capable of being completed in one year with an attempt to finalise it within a shorter period of time. The inquiry will conduct between 5 and 10 expert witness sessions of up to 2 hours per session. The witnesses will include experts from the above-identified departments, legal academics and practitioners, and others with relevant expertise.

Additional comments

The inquiry could also involve a public call for evidence from individuals or groups with relevant expertise to ensure that the inquiry is as comprehensive as possible to significantly contribute to the debates on the topic.

KENNEDY OF THE SHAWS

Proposal 4: Letter from Lord Alton of Liverpool

A review of HMG's responses to the war in Ukraine

Description of proposal

In February 2022, Russia unleashed an illegal war “an act of aggression” against Ukraine with a full-scale attack. What followed can be described as war crimes, crimes against humanity, and even elements of genocide aiming to annihilate the Ukrainian nation in whole or in part.

HMG responded to this aggression with military assistance to Ukraine but also opened the doors to refugees from Ukraine, supporting the legal steps taken internationally (at the ICC), imposing travel bans and freezing orders on Russian leaders and others complicit in the acts, among others.

Three years after the war began, it is crucial to examine the responses taken to date, their effectiveness, and any shortcomings that may require adjustments in the future (to make sure that HMG is best equipped to respond to similar situations.)

Purpose of inquiry

The inquiry would provide a comprehensive analysis of HMG's responses to the war in Ukraine including the effectiveness of the travel bans and freezing orders (and repurposing frozen assets), legal steps (incl. before the ICC), and assistance to Ukrainian refugees.

Relevant Member experience

The proposed inquiry could make the best of the knowledge and experience of Members of the House by engaging them to participate in the inquiry and share their expertise. Members of the House with particular expertise on these issues include:

Baroness Hodge of Barking DBE PC, Lord Stirrup, Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws LT KC, Baroness Butler-Sloss KC, Lord Carlile KC, Lord Brennan KC, Lord Forsyth, Lord Risby, Lord Harrington, Lord Dannatt, Baroness Smith of Newnham, Baroness Helic, Lord Hannay of Chiswick, Lord Hope of Craighead, Lord Sharpe, Lord Wood of Anfield, Baroness Hodgson, Baroness D'Souza

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

It is envisaged that officials would be invited to submit evidence in a focused session. Witnesses could be drawn from some of the following departments, and submissions sought from others:

- FCDO
- Department of Justice
- Treasury

Former or current House of Lords Ministers could be asked to give evidence.

10-month time frame

The proposed special inquiry committee is capable of being completed in one year with an attempt to finalise it within a shorter period of time. The inquiry will conduct between 5 and 10 expert witness sessions of up to 2 hours per session.

The witnesses will include experts from the above-identified departments, legal academics and practitioners, and others with relevant expertise.

Additional comments

The inquiry could also involve a public call for evidence from individuals or groups with relevant expertise to ensure that the inquiry is as comprehensive as possible to significantly contribute to the debates on the topic. In 2023, building on work and in co-operation with the then Dame Margaret Hodge MP, I moved Committee Stage amendments to the Economic Crime And Corporate Transparency Bill¹. At Report Stage Lord Sharpe of Epsom accepted the principle of the amendment but it would be fair to say that their intention has still not been achieved.

ALTON OF LIVERPOOL

1 <https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-05-09/debates/215F3955-EAC8-4D24-A666-5514BB25F0F0/>

Proposal 5: Letter from Baroness Kidron

AI in early years and education settings: The EdTech Inquiry

Description of proposal

EdTech, driven by AI, is rapidly being introduced into schools and Early Years and other education settings. Supercharged during the pandemic, but continuing at pace, Ed Tech, for school management, learning and safety has been adopted with almost no consideration of the safety, privacy and, most surprisingly, pedagogy. Most schools are technology friendly, recognising that the world pupils inhabit is increasingly digital first. However, there are significant concerns about the insufficient proof of educational value and simultaneously the potential impact on children’s privacy, safety and wellbeing.² While this inquiry is likely to consider the question of mobile phones in school, its focus will be on school-owned, operated devices and services, used in the classroom and or Early Years and other education settings.

The King’s Speech referred to the prospect of raising educational standards, breaking down barriers to opportunity and promote children’s wellbeing.³ The Commons Education Committee’s 2023 inquiry into the effects of screentime on education and wellbeing strongly highlighted the need for a kite marking scheme for educational resources to help identify their appropriateness and value for children’s learning.⁴ The Committee also urged the government to introduce standards for educational content labels and address the regulatory gaps, particularly around privacy, that fail to protect children interacting with EdTech in the UK.

The EdTech Inquiry would provide substance for the government’s commitment on raising standards. It would address the identified gaps in certification and/or lack of measurement in pedagogical outcomes relating to EdTech. It would also look at the regulatory gaps. For example, the Online Safety Act 2023 exempts schools, leaving Ed Tech unregulated⁵, and the Age Appropriate Design Code (AADC) doesn’t fully apply to EdTech, with an unfortunate outcome that children are better protected on the bus to school than in the classroom.

The Education Committee recommendations and recent parliamentary debates⁶, including those concerning Early Years, clearly show an urgent need to consider the impact of EdTech and the need for clearer guidance for parents, students, and schools on the educational value of these tools and an understanding of benefits and risks of using such tools. The inquiry would support the education community by identifying the benefits of personalised learning and quantifying the associated risks. By addressing these pressing issues, the inquiry would give Parliament a crucial opportunity to tackle one of the most under-explored but urgent areas in public policy—highlighting the need for EdTech standardisation efforts from a learning sciences perspective, an evidence-based risk-benefits assessment,

2 <https://digitalfuturescommission.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/A-Blueprint-for-Education-Data-FINAL-Online.pdf>

3 [Children’s Wellbeing Bill]. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-kings-speech-2024>; <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/lln-2024-0040/>; <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/LLN-2024-0040/LLN-2024-0040.pdf>

4 <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7912/screen-time-impacts-on-education-and-wellbeing/news/197365/education-committees-new-inquiry-into-effects-of-screen-time-on-education-and-wellbeing/>; <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7912/screen-time-impacts-on-education-and-wellbeing/>

5 <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45128/documents/223543/default/>

6 <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2024-04-15/debates/84830FA4-3B3D-4934-A8D8-869516B0C0CE/DataProtectionAndDigitalInformationBill#contribution-B2C533BD-C6F2-4C50-B85E-D869604D8274>

and clear and robust responsible AI benchmarks to ensure that current gaps in regulations can be mitigated.

Importantly, the inquiry will seek to identify the ways in which AI-EdTech can be integrated into schools to support pedagogical best practice, support teachers, prepare children for future careers and allow them to use AI for learning and creativity.

Purpose of inquiry

The inquiry will seek to understand the benefits and risks posed by AI-driven EdTech and propose solutions that ensure students benefit from these technologies. It will identify regulatory gaps, and it will establish a set of specific recommendations to address concerns of the lack of both evidence of educational value and robust regulatory protections.

Relevant Member experience

This inquiry necessarily needs to consider a wide range of subjects of great concern to the House. There is a strong desire across the House to see improvements to education, in schools and early years. The House has established itself as being world-leading in digital protection of children, and there are a number of peers with specialist knowledge in AI systems.

The House is therefore uniquely placed to consider how to approach developing standards in the EdTech sector, providing schools with clear AI integration guidelines, and protecting children from the risks linked to EdTech. At the same time, it is important to ensure that children benefit from these technological advancements and are prepared for future careers. Moreover, there is also a desire from House leadership and Members to engage children in public policy. Giving children a voice in this inquiry offers a unique opportunity for participation.

Members of the House are well suited to provide expertise on this issue. Peers have specific knowledge and experience of matters relating to children, education, regulation, and the AI industry. In their professional roles, members are involved in curriculum development and the impact of AI industry's application in education, as demonstrated by the work of the Communications Committee⁷, referenced by the Lord Speaker. Members of the House with education backgrounds would be well-placed to examine the evidence for the educational value of EdTech, while those with regulatory experience or as members or leaders of professional bodies would be able to contribute to discussions on the way forward for adopting robust regulatory, policy frameworks, or industry standards and benchmarks for AI-driven EdTech procurement in schools.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

Education, Health and Digital will be key focus areas for the inquiry. This is a necessarily cross and/or interdepartmental issue, and how an inter and/or cross departmental approach can work will be one consideration of the inquiry. This inquiry sits at the critical intersection between the Department for Education, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and the Department for Business and Trade, and arm's length bodies, devolved administrations and public sector bodies including the Information Commissioner's Office.

7 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5804/ldselect/ldcomm/54/54.pdf>

10-month time frame

Yes. The desk research into the existing and emerging policy and regulatory landscape across the UK will be conducted and will set out the key areas of interest specific to AI-driven EdTech use in schools. The work with teachers, children and young people will be done contemporaneously and their views on the same areas of policy and guidelines in schools will be sought.

Special advisors and witnesses to the inquiry from academia, including the UK representatives that gave evidence to the UN High-level Panel on AI to which the UK is signatory, will bring a rich evidence background to the work.

Additional comments

An important stakeholder in this area are young people themselves. The inquiry presents a crucial opportunity to gather and incorporate their views, hopes, and concerns regarding the use of AI in education.

The UN, OECD, and G7 under Canadian chairmanship have all indicated interest in this area but cited lack of policy material. The House is uniquely well placed to submit its findings to international partners.

KIDRON

Proposal 6: Letter from Lord Kirkhope of Harrogate

Artificial Intelligence

Description of proposal

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is poised to fundamentally transform numerous aspects of society, economy, and governance. Recognising its immense potential and inherent risks, it is critical for the UK to develop a robust regulatory framework that ensures the ethical development and deployment of AI technologies. This special inquiry committee will explore the current state of AI regulation in the UK, identify key challenges, and propose forward-looking strategies to secure the nation's leadership in this vital sector.

AI is reshaping industries, from healthcare and finance to transportation and education, by introducing unprecedented efficiencies and capabilities. However, its rapid advancement also brings challenges, including ethical considerations and privacy concerns. The inquiry will address these issues by focusing on several critical areas:

- **Regulatory Innovation:** Examining the UK's principle-based regulatory approach and its effectiveness in adapting to new AI technologies.
- **International Leadership:** Evaluating how the UK can maintain and enhance its role in global AI governance.
- **Ethical Standards:** Ensuring AI development aligns with ethical principles and protects human rights.
- **Economic Growth:** Understanding the impact of AI on economic growth and job creation.
- **Consumer Protection:** Enhancing measures to protect consumers in the age of AI.

The ultimate goal is to understand how to create a robust, flexible, and forward-looking AI regulatory framework that not only protects UK citizens but also promotes innovation, fosters economic growth and positions the UK as a global leader in AI.

Purpose of inquiry

The inquiry seeks to:

- Develop a comprehensive understanding of the current AI regulatory landscape.
- Propose actionable recommendations to improve and future-proof the regulatory framework.
- Strengthen the UK's position as a leader in AI governance and innovation.
- Ensure AI developments are ethical and beneficial to society.
- Promote sustainable economic growth through a supportive regulatory environment.
- Understand best practices in AI regulation by examining models from other countries and organisations. For example, the EU's AI Act.

Relevant Member experience

Members of the House bring a wealth of expertise in law, technology, ethics, and public policy. This inquiry will leverage their diverse backgrounds to:

- Critically analyse existing regulations and propose evidence-based recommendations.
- Engage with key stakeholders, including industry experts, academics, and international partners.
- Foster a multidisciplinary approach to AI regulation, ensuring comprehensive and balanced recommendation.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

AI impacts a wide range of sectors including healthcare, finance, security, and education and crosses many, if not all, departmental boundaries. This inquiry will:

- Facilitate collaboration across multiple government departments and agencies involved in AI.
- Address interdisciplinary issues such as data privacy, cybersecurity, and ethical use of AI.
- Ensure that regulatory approaches are cohesive and comprehensive, taking into account the various facets of AI's impact on different sectors.
- Encourage coordinated efforts to manage AI's influence on both public and private sectors, ensuring all relevant policies are considered.

10-month time frame

Yes, the proposed inquiry is designed to be completed within the stipulated timeframe. With a well-structured plan, the committee will be able to hold approximately 20 one-hour evidence sessions, engage with key stakeholders, conduct thorough research to ensure timely completion of the inquiry and produce a final report.

Additional comments

The establishment of this special inquiry committee is crucial for ensuring that the UK not only keeps pace with global advancements in AI but also positions itself as a leader in this transformative technology. AI has the potential to revolutionise every sector of society, driving innovation, economic growth, and improvements in quality of life. However, without a robust and forward-thinking regulatory framework, the UK risks falling behind other nations, including the EU, which has already made significant strides in AI legislation.

This inquiry will provide the necessary oversight and strategic direction to harness AI's potential while safeguarding public interests. By addressing regulatory gaps, promoting best practices, and ensuring ethical standards, the UK can create a sustainable and competitive AI ecosystem. The committee's work will be instrumental in shaping policies that support innovation, protect consumers, and ensure that AI developments are aligned with the broader societal good.

KIRKHOPE OF HARROGATE

Proposal 7: Letter from Lord Morse

Conditions for Growth

I suggest this subject because the current government and its predecessors have cited economic growth as the preferable pathway to avoid high taxes and yet to allow increased public spending without recourse to higher taxes, or further increases in the national debt.

However, achieving sustained growth appears to be very difficult for the UK, and other European countries. There have been recent studies comparing European growth with that achieved in the USA and in the far east showing a massive disparity over a period of twenty years.

I believe that the House could make a valuable contribution to understanding the conditions required to allow growth to be achieved and sustained, and to the approach to framing policy in this area.

Examples of the areas to be examined are:

- (1) Relative international growth rates
- (2) UK historic growth rates
- (3) Distinction between boom led growth and sustainable growth
- (4) International investment into the UK, and evidence of the conditions to attract it, and of how investment decisions are made.
- (5) The conditions to build business confidence to invest based on international comparison
- (6) Management's freedom to manage resources including to reduce or increase headcount, to decide on location etc. and consequences of limitations on these.
- (7) Skills availability and consequences of restrictions in ability to source skills internationally
- (8) Restrictions on executive pay and dividends, impact on attracting investment and managerial or technical talent.
- (9) Industrial strategy

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it does allow us to see that an inquiry focussed on Conditions for Growth would certainly involve a wide range of Government Departments. It would also draw on the rich mix of skills available in the House of Lords. I know we have very substantial experience of international finance and banking, business and HM Treasury, which would contribute to a wide ranging and authoritative piece of work.

MORSE

Proposal 8: Letter from Lord Green of Deddington

Consequences of very high levels of immigration now expected

Description of proposal

Net migration is now, by far, the highest in our history having run at nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ million in both 2022 and 2024. In recent times both governments have sought to focus attention on asylum numbers but they amount to less than 10% of net legal immigration.

Continued inflows of anything like these numbers would pose very serious problems across government and, indeed, for the future of our society.

Even if the net inflow is assumed to be 315,000 p.a. as in the latest ONS projections, this gives a population increase of just over 9 million in the next 22 years—that is about 8 cities the size of Birmingham. Furthermore, experience suggests that net migration could turn out to be considerably higher than the level assumed by the ONS.

Meanwhile, public opinion has reverted to the levels of 8-10 years ago. A Yougov tracker poll of 2 September found that 60% of the public now think that immigration has been too high over the past 10 years. The same poll found immigration tying at 49% with the economy as the most important issue facing the country. 40% thought that immigration had been mostly bad for Britain, double the number that thought it was good.

The Committee would bring together and examine the consequences, economic and social, of such a radical change in our society.

Purpose of inquiry

The inquiry would examine the implications for housing, health, education and the economy. They would be very extensive but, so far, there has been no attempt to draw the threads together in a coherent manner.

Relevant Member experience

Their wide range of experience and expertise are exactly what is needed.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

Each department would benefit from a wider approach.

10-month time frame

Probably. The main issues are well known but are invariably addressed separately. They need pulling together as they involve a fundamental change in the nature of our society.

GREEN OF DEDDINGTON

Proposal 9: Letter from Lord Meston

Deprivation of liberty orders [‘DoLs’] i.e. Court orders authorising deprivation of children’s liberty in unregulated secure placements

Description of proposal

The increasing use of these drastic orders to restrain vulnerable children, and the scarcity of suitable accommodation for them, has been the subject of repeated and largely unheeded concern expressed by senior judges responsible for the making of such orders.

A report by the Children’s Commissioner for England, “*Who are they? Where are they 2020—Children Locked up*”, identified the problem which had already been highlighted in critical court judgments.

The growing number of children concerned and the shortages of places for them as shown by Ministry of Justice statistics and extensive work done by the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory.

DoLs applications for under-18s in England rose from 102 in 2017–8 to 1,238 in 2023–24. The courts have continued to be asked to authorise arrangements for children which do not properly meet their needs.

In a judgment In January 2023 Sir Andrew McFarlane, President of the Family Division Referred to the very substantial deficit that exists nationally in the provision of facilities for the secure accommodation of children. He said that the situation will not change until urgent and effective action is taken by government and Parliament to discharge the obligation that is on the State to protect the country’s most vulnerable children [2023] EWHC 129 (Fam).

As stated in another recent High Court case “These are amongst the most complex and traumatised children within the Care and Family Justice systems, yet the care they receive is often, although not always, extremely poor” [2024] EWHC 564 (Fam).

Powerful articles by the former President, Sir James Munby, [*“Judges are sick of locking up children who need help. Yet still the state does nothing”*] in the Observer [9 June 2024] and by Lord Justice Cobb [*“Deprivation of liberty orders for young, vulnerable people: a measure of our civilised society?”*] in Child and Family Law Quarterly (Vol 36, No 1, 2024) have restated the acute nature of the problems. As Cobb LJ (echoing Sir Andrew McFarlane): “the High Court is having to operate outside of the law as it has been made by Parliament and, despite the judges consistently asking it to do so, Parliament has seemingly not even discussed this parlous and most worrying situation.”

Lord Waldegrave of North Hill did later raise the topic in the King’s Speech debate on 24 July 2024.

The government are said to have recently set up a panel of experts to look into the rise in DoLs, although the Children’s Commissioner wants more radical thinking about alternatives.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9xxyl3gp39o>

<https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/child-protection/392-children-protection-news/57822-dols-figures-underline-crisis-in-secure-children-s-homes-places>

<https://www.nuffieldfjo.org.uk/resource/legal-outcomes-of-cases-at-the-national-deprivation-of-liberty-court>

An inquiry could assess the current extent and urgency of the problems, and the measures required to address them—with or without further legislation, and the extent of any necessary judicial supervision. It could also consider alternatives to these orders [possibly by reference to the different and apparently more rigorous regime in Scotland].

Purpose of inquiry

To reveal and analyse what are now long-standing problems, and the response of the government to them, and to inform necessary changes [including the forthcoming Children’s Wellbeing Bill].

Relevant Member experience

The House contains members with knowledge of, and expertise in, the operation of social care relating to families and children, educational provision ; and expertise in relevant human rights considerations.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

It potentially involves policy considerations for Health and Social Care, Education, Justice and Local Government.

10-month time frame

Yes.

MESTON

Proposal 10: Letter from Lord Wallace of Saltaire

Devolved government and Local Democracy within England

Description of proposal

Local government within England has seen sharp cuts in funding and repeated restructuring over the past four decades. In 2024-5 40% of major councils are facing substantial deficits; some are threatened with bankruptcy. Central government has acquired detailed control over the delivery of public services. Many public services provided by local government 40-50 years ago are now tightly controlled by central government, or privatised. England is now by far the most centralised state in Europe and North America.

The incoming Labour government has inherited a patchwork of council structures, with two-tier councils in some areas and single-tier councils in others, with combined authorities now covering much but not all of the country. ‘Devolution deals’ have offered different powers and financial packages to different city and non-city regions. Elected mayors have become a condition of such deals, with different arrangements for scrutiny and for links to their component councils. Elected mayors have become an accepted and popular part of English government in some cities—although Bristol has voted to abolish its mayor. Elected Police and Crime Commissioners exist alongside mayors and local authorities in much of the country, although in London the elected mayor combines the two roles.

The lowest tier of government in several cities covers between one and two million people, with local wards constituted for 12-15,000 voters—too large for most voters to know their local councillors, or for councillors to maintain personal contact with most voters. Town or parish councils, which can provide a greater sense of local community, exist in many rural and prosperous areas but not in many deprived urban communities; their very limited financial and legal capabilities mean that they cannot provide many services. The centralization or privatization of so many of the public services that affect citizens’ lives has meant that complaints and grievances have been increasingly addressed to MPs rather than councillors or mayors, leading to MPs becoming more and more local and personal advocates rather than legislators.

The only parliamentary scrutiny of this untidy patchwork during the 2019–24 Parliament was a short survey by the Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, **Governing England** (HC463, October 2022). It concluded that ‘there are serious problems with the current arrangements that prevent the effective delivery of policies and services that are desperately needed in local areas across England’. At a time when public trust in our political system and ‘Westminster politics’ has sunk to the lowest level ever since surveys began, there should also be concern about the weakening of ties between voters and political representatives, and the increasingly wide gap between the delivery of services and the ability of recipients to challenge their provision or to hold anyone responsible for shortcomings.

There is widespread acceptance that English over-centralization is one of the underlying problems of our system of government. Sam Freedman, in his well-received new study, **Failed State**, argues that ‘the solution lies in increasing state capacity outside Whitehall.’ A Lords Enquiry would consider how this might best be done.

Purpose of inquiry

The aim would be to provide a survey of the current position in terms of tiers of government, powers devolved from Whitehall, population and geographical extent, and to consider what the future direction and underlying rationale for relations between central, regional (or sub-regional) and local governments should be. Some comparison with other countries' arrangements would be appropriate. It would not need to go into detailed study of service delivery in different areas, but to provide an overview of this crucial dimension of England's governance and democratic structure.

Relevant Member experience

The Lords contains a number of experienced former Council leaders, together with senior civil servants, MPs, and others with careers in public services, with different perspectives on local representation and accountability, service delivery and the benefits and costs of coordination of public services at regional and local level rather than from the centre.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

Health and social care services, education, housing, planning, environmental conservation, policing and transport are distributed across departments in Whitehall but interact closely at regional and local levels. This would consider how best to improve the management of these links across departmental boundaries by devolving delivery and accountability.

10-month time frame

Yes. There are many outside bodies that can provide evidence to the committee to enable it to take a view on how coherent (or incoherent) the current pattern of central-local relations is and which direction it would recommend for the future.

Additional comments

My concern for developments in central-local relations has been sharpened by central government's imposition of local government changes on Yorkshire. The City Region concept, with an elected mayor (though without a strong structure for scrutiny and accountability) may be appropriate for West and South Yorkshire (though the scale of the main authorities, particularly Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield, makes them remote from voters), but makes little sense for North and East Yorkshire. North Yorkshire now has the geographically-largest single-tier authority in England—though for some reason York's district council was excluded, while Harrogate's and Scarborough's councils were abolished and included. There is now in addition a combined authority for North Yorkshire and York with an elected mayor. East Yorkshire has a county council and a separate unitary council in Hull, and is about to institute a combined authority with a mayor, alongside these two councils, under a devolution deal. In contrast with the district councils in Yorkshire, which were considered to be too small in population (at between 80,000 and 150,000) to be viable, I note in contrast that Rutland, with a population of 41,000, retains its non-metropolitan County Council.

WALLACE OF SALTAIRE

Proposal 11: Letter from Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

Driving UK Scientific Leadership in Global Health: Meeting Sustainable Development Goal 3.3 (or 3) and Ending the Malaria Epidemic

Description of proposal

An inquiry committee on the Sustainable Development Goal of ending the malaria epidemic by 2030 is needed to understand how the UK can drive forward progress against malaria through research and development (R&D), vaccination programmes, health financing, innovation and global health governance. The committee would assess current achievements, identify remaining challenges, analyse the significant knock-on effect malaria has on other development challenges, and determine actionable steps the UK government can take to accelerate progress in eradicating one of the world's deadliest infectious diseases.

Progress Against Malaria

Just six years remain until the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) deadline, but substantial progress is still required to meet global health targets, including malaria. The 2024 progress review indicates that malaria-related goals, such as reducing malaria incidence and mortality rates, are significantly behind schedule.⁸

Malaria remains one of the world's deadliest infectious diseases. In 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported almost 250 million cases of malaria and over 608,000 deaths globally.⁹ The majority of these deaths occurred in children under five.¹⁰ The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted malaria prevention and treatment services, and global progress saw setbacks—according to the WHO, annual malaria cases in the WHO African Region increased by 22 million between 2015 (the year the SDGs were established) and 2022.¹¹ Universal access to malaria treatments remains a challenge, with millions of people lacking adequate healthcare services. The new government has an opportunity to show leadership in the global fight against malaria, leveraging its strengths in innovation and international cooperation to drive forward meaningful progress on the SDGs.

And there are reasons to be positive—we now have two British-backed malaria vaccines approved and deployed in malaria-endemic countries, representing a significant step towards eradicating this disease. A committee would explore how the UK can build on this to deliver greater progress against malaria.

Research and Development

One area where the UK plays pivotal role is in research and development (R&D). The UK has a strong track record in medical research, including the malaria vaccines, but also insecticides, bed nets, antimalarials and more. Investing in R&D not only boosts local innovation but also contributes to global health solutions, and the UK government's commitment to spending 2.4% of GDP on R&D by

8 United Nations. (2024). The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024: Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Advanced unedited version. Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2024/SG-SDG-Progress-Report-2024-advanced-unedited-version.pdf> [Accessed 12 June 2024].

9 World Health Organization (WHO). (2023). *World Malaria Report 2023*. Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240086173> [Accessed 12 June 2024].

10 World Health Organization (WHO). (2023). *World Malaria Report 2023*. Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240086173> [Accessed 12 June 2024].

11 World Health Organization (WHO). (2023). *World Malaria Report 2023*. Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240086173> [Accessed 12 June 2024].

2027¹² is a positive step. An inquiry should look at how the UK builds on this research and development to ensure UK innovation feeds into effective malaria programming.

Vaccination Programmes

The UK can also enhance its contributions through support for vaccination programmes. The UK's ongoing support for global initiatives like Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, will be instrumental in making malaria vaccines accessible for low-income countries and continued funding is therefore essential. With trials showing up to 77% efficacy for the R21/Matrix-M vaccine when used alongside other key anti-malaria tools,¹³ we know that effective programming is possible. The committee should look at how the UK can support global health systems and health programming, to ensure UK aid is working effectively to tackle malaria and other global health challenges.

Purpose of inquiry

The primary aim of this inquiry is to identify strategic actions to ensure significant progress is made towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal of ending the malaria epidemic. It will aim to do this by analysing and understanding the current state of progress against malaria, as well as the work that the UK has done through the FCDO and other government department bodies, such as DSIT, to tackle this disease.

The inquiry will provide a comprehensive assessment of current achievements, gaps, and future opportunities, aligning the UK's efforts with global malaria eradication priorities. It will also seek to examine how effective action against malaria can also help to address other development challenges that the government is focused on, including poverty, education, and the women and girls agenda, ensuring the FCDO and other departments are delivering effectively on malaria as well as other significant global issues.

The inquiry could also seek to deliver:

- Analysis of the effectiveness and impact of Product Development Partnerships (PDPs) in advancing R&D for global health challenges.
- Comparison and evaluation of regulatory pathways: assessing the expedited process for COVID-19 vaccine Prequalification (PQ) status versus the lengthy approvals process for malaria vaccines.
- Exploration of the current toolbox and pipeline of innovative technologies and interventions for malaria control and other global health challenges.
- Recommendations of strategic actions for the UK government to enhance its support and leadership in global health R&D. This includes optimising regulatory pathways to expedite vaccine approvals, fostering innovation through collaboration and investment in R&D, and ensuring alignment with international efforts to achieve global health goals.

12 House of Commons Library. (2023). *Research and development funding*. Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn04223/#:~:text=Using%20this%20new%20method%20total,briefing%20on%20R%26D%20funding%20policy> [Accessed 12 June 2024].

13 Aderinto, N., Olatunji, G., Kokori, E., et al. (2024). A perspective on Oxford's R21/Matrix-M™ malaria vaccine and the future of global eradication efforts. *Malaria Journal*, 23(1), 16. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12936-024-04846-w> [Accessed 12 June 2024].

Relevant Member experience

This proposal would be able use the knowledge and experience of a range of Members of the House in different ways.

Different members will have their own expertise on global health, including malaria research and control programmes specifically, which will be crucial to contextualising the debate, as well as those bringing knowledge of public health policy and globally health financing.

Wider experience from parliamentarians who have demonstrated interest in the Sustainable Development Goals and international development more broadly will be incredibly valuable, as they will be able to thoughtfully analyse how working on this area contributes to the broader agenda on development. Similarly, those with previous engagement on health-related inquiries, as well as experts from the fields of healthcare and the life sciences, will be able to bring their expertise to comment on how the UK's innovative research development and the need for stronger global health systems ties into the work of tackling malaria.

Finally, members with experience of working within government or shadow teams on these or similar issues will have valuable knowledge and expertise into how the government has effectively delivered in this area before, and how they might be able to build on the work of the inquiry, as well as external developments, to further the UK's work against this disease.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

While the policy areas focused on by this proposal are largely covered by malaria, work against this disease and on global health generally is a perfect example of how different departments can work together to help achieve development outcomes, and how development outcomes can have benefits for a range of government departments.

The role of British-backed research and development in improving health outcomes and meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals intersects connects the work of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office with the life science brief held by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. The overall agenda of improving health security, and the threat of not building global pandemic resilience and how the work of the UK Health Security Agency fits into that is of course relevant to the Department of Health and Social Care.

Malaria is a disease that significantly impacts low- and middle-income countries, detrimentally affecting their economies and preventing individuals from breaking out of poverty cycle and increasing their productivity. Tackling malaria, as well as addressing other development challenges, would help to increase GDP for these countries, which could in turn help to increase trade for Britain—showing relevance to the work of the Department for Business and Trade.

Although the proposal would largely cover area that the FCDO deals with, malaria is an issue that can have significant ramifications for the world and for the UK and impacts the work done by various other departments, and it is important that the committee addresses this area.

10-month time frame

The inquiry can be effectively conducted within a 10-month period, with the following phases:

- Initial assessment and data collection (2 months).
- Stakeholder consultations and evidence gathering (3 months).
- Analysis and drafting of recommendations (3 months).
- Final report preparation and dissemination (2 months).

Additional comments

There are only six years left until the 2030 deadline of the Sustainable Development Goals is reached, and most if not all of the goals is off track. By the time the next election is held, we will likely be within 1-2 years of this deadline being reached, and there will be little time for action that could meaningfully change the outcome of the goals. However, right now Britain has an opportunity to review where it stands against the sustainable development goals and reinvigorate action towards achieving the goals.

As one of the goals that is off track, the fight against malaria still requires significant efforts if we are to reach our goal and save millions of lives from this disease. But with the recent deployment of the latest vaccines, as well as next-generation bed nets and other tools, there is all real opportunity. This proposal would be a timely opportunity to review the UK's work to address malaria and analyse ways for it to continue leading the way towards eradication of this disease.

This proposal is supported by Baroness Hayman.

RITCHIE OF DOWNPATRICK

Proposal 12: Letter from Lord Kempson

Evaluation in Government

Description of proposal

How do we know whether government interventions actually achieve their intended outcomes? Government tries to answer this by carrying out evaluations of its policies. These are quantitative or qualitative studies which attempt to find evidence for ‘what works’ in policymaking. *The problem is, Government only evaluates a tiny proportion of its overall work—so in many areas, Ministers and officials are operating without evidence and making policy in the dark.*

Government interventions often come at huge public expense—and whilst much attention is usually given to the announcement of the intervention and the policy itself, not enough focus is put on whether these myriad programmes ever actually achieved their intended outcomes. Did they, instead, have unintended consequences? Did they effect change or achieve nothing? We need to better evaluate policy to better inform future decisions.

The use of evaluation in Government is at the very core of this mission. Successive governments have made significant progress in increasing the effectiveness of evaluation. I led efforts as a Government Adviser to establish the Evaluation Task Force, which works within the Cabinet Office Delivery Group.

Following on from the work that has been undertaken, a review needs to be carried out—by parliamentarians independent of the executive—to assess the extent to which evidence and evaluation are at the heart of government policymaking—and connected questions, such as the effectiveness of current methods of evaluation.

Given recent events such as Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine, and the effect they have had on the public purse—and the impact on public perceptions—it is crucial that we ensure that every penny of government spending is effectively evaluated so that the British public is getting value for money in the services they receive.

It is also crucial for trust in politics that people can see the connection between government actions and outcomes.

Purpose of inquiry

The overarching aims of the inquiry would be to discover whether the current mechanisms for evaluation in government are working as effectively as they could be, what progress the government has made through the use of evaluation in ensuring effective spending decisions, and exploring recommendations the committee has for improving current processes.

More detailed ways of achieving these aims could include:

- Exploring the extent and nature of evaluation activity currently carried out in central Government and the public sector.
- Assessing the progress of Evaluation Task Force since its conception in 2020, looking at a) what it has achieved and b) what more it could do to ensure effective future spending decisions.
- Assessing the workings of the various evaluation players in government—how they work together and if this could be better streamlined.

- Understanding how different government departments use methods and guidance for evaluation.
- Understanding the availability of quantitative and other resource for carrying out evaluation.

Relevant Member experience

There are a number of highly experienced Members of the House who have sat at the heart of government policy-making and as such have made key spending decisions and understand the extent to which evaluation is working and being carried out in the civil service.

There are also experienced Members of the House from the private sector who also have hugely valuable perspectives on efficiency and the use of evaluation to ensure the best quality and most cost effective outcomes.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

As the aim of evaluation is to improve decision making in all government programmes, this proposal addresses every government department.

No10, His Majesty's Treasury and the Cabinet Office play key roles in ensuring sufficient evaluation—so the work would focus on these departments.

10-month time frame

Yes. Through the 20 x 1-hour evidence sessions the committee will be able to gather evidence from experts in this area, as well as from those currently working on government evaluation such as key figures in the Cabinet Office Delivery Group.

Additional comments

As the revising and scrutinising House of Parliament, the House of Lords is the ideal place for this inquiry. When it comes to delivering on our role of scrutinising government action and spending decisions, assessing the use of evaluation in government decisions is key.

KEMPSSELL

Proposal 13: Letter from Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

Fungal health, security and prosperity

Description of proposal

The proposal is to review the role of fungi in the UK's overall health, security and prosperity agenda. This would include:

- (1) **food security**, the role that fungi already make and might further play in developing sustainable agriculture for enhanced crop yields, and the threat of reduced yields arising from a damaged soil and leaf microbiosphere;
- (2) the **biological security** threat, including to human health, arising from fungal disease and fungal antimicrobial resistance;
- (3) the **implications of climate change** for the UK in both food and biological security as regards fungi;
- (4) the **current and future state of fungal diversity** as a part of the broader issue of biodiversity in the UK environment; and
- (5) the possibilities for the bioscience sector in increasing the **understanding of the threats and opportunities** of healthier and more productive interactions between humans and fungi.

This inquiry would complement existing strategies and reports while addressing gaps and omissions in the food security and biosecurity landscapes. For instance while the UK Biological Security Strategy (2023)¹⁴ contains 39 instances of the word “antimicrobial” (including its references), its focus is almost entirely on antibiotics. The words “fungal”/“fungus”/“fungi” and “antifungal” do not appear even once.

The Action Plan for Confronting Antimicrobial Resistance 2024–2029¹⁵ notes “Antifungal resistance is being driven by antifungal use in crop protection products and fungal spores can be transmitted as airborne particles” but has little detail.

This inquiry would provide cross-cutting insights into this priority area through a unique fungal lens which remains deeply underappreciated and unexplored, despite this Kingdom's central place in our wellbeing. According to World Health Organisation data¹⁶, “fungal infections receive less than 1.5% of all infectious disease research funding”; however, fungal infections cause 1.7 million deaths per annum globally.¹⁷ This lacuna in our biosecurity preparedness should be addressed.

Human interactions with fungi are not all doom and gloom. Though we are at risk from certain pathogenic fungi, we also benefit hugely from the role of mycorrhizal fungi in agriculture and the maintenance of our natural environments. As the Royal Horticultural Society points out:¹⁸

14 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1161970/UK_Biological_Security_Strategy.pdf

15 <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/664394d9993111924d9d3465/confronting-antimicrobial-resistance-2024-to-2029.pdf>

16 <https://apps.who.int/iris/rest/bitstreams/1474282/retrieve>

17 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7278517/>

18 <https://www.rhs.org.uk/biodiversity/mycorrhizal-fungi>

“Mycorrhizas are fungal associations between plant roots and beneficial fungi. The fungi effectively extend the root area of plants and are extremely important to most wild plants, but less significant for garden plants where the use of fertilisers and cultivation disrupts and replaces these associations.”

No policy document has outlined an appreciation for the state of the UK soil microbiosphere or stimulated specific study into how it is being affected by fertilisers or biocides. By using the unique convening power of a Special Inquiry Committee, relevant experts can be asked to contribute to a landmark document to inform future research priorities and environmental targets.

The inquiry could also consider, for example, the current and potential applications of engineering biology in the fungal space to address food production and soil amendments. This would align with and bolster the UK’s International Technology strategy (2023)¹⁹, which highlights engineering biology as a priority research area.

To return to the threat of fungi, the UK Food Security Report (2021)²⁰ does mention fungal pathogens, though only 3 times in 322 pages; climate change is specifically highlighted as a driver of this threat:

“Warmer temperatures can also encourage fungal diseases such as potato blight (in combination with higher relative humidity)” (p. 139)

There is a need for a concerted consideration into how UK food and biological security will be affected by climate change and pollution arising from widespread fungicide use. A Special Inquiry Committee is uniquely well placed to explore this complex yet crucial issue, drawing upon the wealth of expertise in UK academia, industry, and Civil Service.

Purpose of inquiry

The principal aim is to identify the risks and opportunities presented by fungi in Britain, across sectors, and to put issues around fungi more at the centre of policy and political thinking. Expert consultation would enable the production of a report which would bolster existing strategies, particularly regarding biosecurity and food security (as explained above), addressing gaps in these strategies to ensure the security of Britain in an age of shocks.

This inquiry directly addresses all 3 aspects of the “Triple Planetary Crisis”²¹ as defined by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. It explicitly seeks to: understand how climate change will affect fungi and their role in food and biological security; the threat posed by fungicide use & pollution on antifungal resistance in agriculture and health; and the role of both of these drivers on the loss of soil microbes include mycorrhizal fungi key to food security.

The inquiry works towards several UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG2 (“Zero hunger”), by considering food security implications of fungi in the UK; SDG3 (“Good health and well-being”) by considering the health &

19 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1144576/uk-international-technology-strategy-web-version.pdf

20 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1077015/United_Kingdom_Food_Security_Report_2021_19may2022.pdf

21 <https://unfccc.int/blog/what-is-the-triple-planetary-crisis>

biosecurity threats of fungal disease and antifungal resistance to the UK; SDG 13 (“Climate action”) by explicitly considering the impact of climate change on the aforementioned outcomes in the UK; and SDG 15 (“Life on Land”) by considering the state of fungal biodiversity in the UK microbiosphere.

Relevant Member experience

The House of Lords is replete with Peers whose experience would be invaluable in evaluating the contributions of relevant interdisciplinary experts. There are a considerable number of Peers who have worked towards establishing closer links between academia and Government, translating research into policy. Their ability to convene relevant stakeholders, as well as their professional networks, would be helpful to gathering the best evidence. In addition, many experts in medicine, health, agriculture/ecology, and existential threats sit in the House of Lords. This investigation could draw upon their wealth of experience in these areas to produce a suitably considered report.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

As this proposal considers the role of fungi in both health and agriculture, as well as innovation opportunities in these spaces and the impact of climate change, it is inherently cross-departmental and interdisciplinary. This proposal would draw on the expertise of stakeholders in multiple Government departments, including (but not limited to):

- the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC);
- the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA);
- the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT);
- the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ);
- the Department for Business and Trade (DBT);
- the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

Notably, valuable input could be received from transdisciplinary and cross-Governmental agencies such as the Office for Life Sciences (DHSC and DSIT), the Government Office for Science (DSIT), the Animal and Plant Health Agency (DEFRA)

10-month time frame

Yes, a meaningful inquiry into this topic can be carried out by the end of November 2025. Through 20 x 1-hour sessions, the Committee would be able to gather evidence from experts across the Government departments listed above; academia; the third sector (civil society organisations); and industry.

Additional comments

The proposal directly addresses all 3 aspects of the “Triple Planetary Crisis”²² as defined by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.

Urgent action on food security and depletion of soil microbes has been urged repeatedly: by religious leaders;²³ the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation²⁴

22 <https://unfccc.int/blog/what-is-the-triple-planetary-crisis>

23 <https://youtu.be/7O3DbzS-d10>

24 <https://youtu.be/KJeOijUhf2g>

and World Food Programme²⁵; Prime Ministers of India²⁶, Barbados²⁷, Antigua & Barbuda²⁸, Palestine²⁹ *inter alia*; and the populace at large.

This proposal is supported by Baroness Freeman of Steventon and Baroness Willis of Summertown.

BENNETT OF MANOR CASTLE

25 <https://youtu.be/rNyx6cxT3oQ>
26 <https://youtu.be/RWgofBcjXhM>
27 <https://youtu.be/hjwwWHzXhMI>
28 <https://youtu.be/YxjWcayW1fM>
29 https://youtu.be/vKU_GIZosG8

Proposal 14: Letter from Baroness Smith of Llanfaes

Future Proofing the United Kingdom's formal relationship with the European Union through exploring the needs of young people and future generations

Description of proposal

The current UK-EU Trade and Co-operation Agreement³⁰ was signed in December 2020 and is due for review in 2026. The year of 2026 will also mark a decade since the Brexit referendum was called and took place.

Those who are aged 25 or younger (in 2024) did not have the opportunity to express their views in the referendum. This represents over 30% of the overall UK population³¹.

As we look to the future and the types of international relationships we hold, it is essential that the UK must consult and acknowledge the views of young people and what their aspirations are for our international relationships.

It would be for the Committee to decide on the specific topics to be covered but the following themes might be considered:

- Work
- Cultural exchange (languages)
- Study (exchange schemes for schools, colleges and universities, work-based learning through global companies)

Purpose of inquiry

This committee would be tasked with gathering the views of young people on the future relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union. Following the completion of evidence sessions the committee would draft and publish recommendations ahead of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement Review.

On September 12th 2024, during Questions in the Lords Chamber, it was confirmed that the Review would be conducted by the Minister for the Constitution and European Union Relations³².

Relevant Member experience

There are several Members that have experience of the workings of the European Union and there are Members that have contributed to furthering the interests of young people.

Members who have been MEPs

The following current members have previously been members of the European Parliament (MEPs):

30 https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/relations-united-kingdom/eu-uk-trade-and-cooperation-agreement_en

31 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes estimates of the population for the UK. In July 2024, it published the most recent dataset which contained the estimates for mid-2022. Those aged 0–25 made up 30.23% of the overall UK population as of June 2022.

32 Column 1640, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2024-09-12/debates/3640431C-AA6A-4452-A714-2D6B33993F26/Erasmus>

Title	Name	Years position held
Balfe, L	Richard Balfe	1979–2004
Billingham, B	Angela Billingham	1994–1999
Bowles of Berkhamsted, B	Sharon Bowles	2005–2014
Callanan, L	Martin Callanan	1999–2014
Cashman, L	Michael Cashman	1999–2014
Crawley, B	Christine Crawley	1984–1999
Duncan of Springbank, L	Ian Duncan	2014–2017
Dykes, L	Hugh Dykes	1974–1977
Foster of Oxton, B	Jacqueline Foster	1999–2004
		2009–2019
Fox of Buckley, B	Claire Fox	2019–2020
Hannan of Kingsclere, L	Daniel Hannan	1999–2020
Hooper, B	Gloria Hooper	1979–1984
Inglewood, L	William Fletcher-Vane	1989–1994
		1999–2004
Kamall, L	Syed Kamall	2005–2019
Khan of Burnley, L	Wajid Khan	2017–2019
Kilclooney, L	John Taylor	1979–1989
Kirkhope of Harrogate, L	Timothy Kirkhope	1999–2016
Ludford, B	Sarah Ludford	1999–2014
McIntosh of Pickering, B	Anne McIntosh	1989–1999
Mobarik, B	Nosheena Mobarik	2017–2020
Morgan of Ely, B	Eluned Morgan	1994–2009
Nicholson of Winterbourne, B	Emma Nicholson	1999–2009
Quin, B	Joyce Quin	1979–1989
Rawlings, B	Patricia Rawlings	1989–1994
Swinburne, L	Kay Swinburne	2009–2019
Taverne, L	Dick Taverne	1973–1974
Teverson, L	Robin Teverson	1994–1999
Truscott, L	Peter Truscott	1994–1999
Wellington, D	Charles Wellesley	1979–1989

Members with links to European institutions

Six current members have been EU commissioners:

- Lord Tugendhat (Conservative)
- Lord Kinnock (Labour)

- Lord Patten of Barnes (Conservative)
- Lord Mandelson (Labour)
- Baroness Ashton of Upholland (Labour) (Baroness Ashton was the first EU high representative for foreign affairs)
- Lord Hill of Oareford (Conservative)

Current members who hold a degree from an EU member state (source: Dods people Individual profiles, accessed 23 September 2024):

Member	Institution name
Earl of Glasgow	Sorbonne, Paris
Lord Campbell-Savours	Sorbonne, Paris
Lord Darzi of Denham	Trinity College, Dublin
Lord Petitgas	Ecole Supérieure de Commerce, Paris
Viscount Hanworth	Amsterdam University, the Netherlands
Baroness McIntosh of Pickering	Aarhus University, Denmark
Lord Verdirame	Bologna University, Italy
Lord Hunt of Wirral	Montpellier University, France
Lord Strathcarron	Grenoble University, France
Lord Johnson of Marylebone	Institut d'Etudes Européennes, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium

Additionally, there are 143 members who list 'European Union' as a focus areas on their parliamentary page. Some of these will be Members already listed above.

Members who have experience of consulting with young people:

- Baroness Owen of Alderley Edge
- Earl of Clancarty
- Baroness Smith of Newnham
- Baroness Benjamin

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

While responsibility for the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement Review lies primarily with the Minister for Constitution and European Union Relations, the details of our changing relationship with the EU will include agreements/schemes that cross departmental boundaries. Such as education schemes and employment schemes. The UK-EU Trade and Co-operation Agreement Review will also have implications for devolved governments and local government.

10-month time frame

Yes—the recommendations would be published before the UK-EU Trade and Co-operation Agreement Review begins in early 2026.

Additional comments

The British Youth Council (BYC) has closed after 75 years. It was set up by the Foreign Office in 1948 but became an independent charity in 1963. BYC was a

youth-led charity that encouraged young people under the age of 25 to get involved in their communities and democracy locally, nationally and internationally. BYC's flagship programmes included the UK Youth Parliament, the Youth Voice programme and the Youth Select Committee. There is a gap widening in the already limited opportunities for young people to engage with decisions being made in Parliament. This Committee could be seen as a framework on how to engage and consult with young people on matters of public policy.

I have not formally asked members for support for the proposal, however I have met with members from across the House to discuss the idea informally. I believe that a mix of European Union expertise sitting alongside members who understand how to consult and involve young voices in their work would create a strong and effective committee. Due to the topic/nature of the inquiry I would hope that the work would also increase the House's direct engagement with young people.

SMITH OF LLANFAES

Proposal 15: Letter from Baroness Watkins of Tavistock

Home based working in the UK

Description of proposal

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimated that 12% of adults worked from home at some point during the week. Due to the stay at home orders during the pandemic, working from home increased dramatically, peaking at 49% in early 2020.³³ However, since the reversal of working from home guidance, the rates of home working have not returned to pre-pandemic levels, with the prevalence of home working fluctuating between 25% and 40% since 2022.

Home working is not however distributed evenly among society, with the ONS reporting that hybrid and home working are more common among people who earn more money, have higher education, and are from higher socioeconomic backgrounds.³⁴ This is likely reflective of the disparities in the workforce, highlighted in a 2020 YouGov report, between people with occupations that allow home working, such as administrative and managerial positions, and those that do not, such as those working in health care, education, hospitality and retail.³⁵

Few people want to return to office working full time, and many companies have downscaled workspaces to account for a hybrid workforce. Hybrid working can be greatly beneficial and offer greater flexibility to people who need it, such as parents of young children. It can also be financially beneficial, for example by reducing childcare costs or travel costs. Yet, jobs that only offer remote working may have detrimental effects on mental and physical health, for example from increased social isolation and reduced physical activity.³⁶ Moreover, many people, especially those in rented or shared accommodation, lack the space required to have a productive home working space.³⁷ Therefore, it is likely that the detrimental effects of home working are impacting those who already face inequity in society more than those who do not.

This enquiry will investigate the effects of home working, it could explore topics such as:

- Are there disparities among people who can and cannot work from home?
- What are the effects of home working on existing inequities in society?

33 ONS. Characteristics of homeworkers, Great Britain: September 2022 to January 2023 [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2024 Jun 14]. Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/characteristicsofhomeworkersgreatbritain/september2022tojanuary2023>

34 ONS. Characteristics of homeworkers, Great Britain: September 2022 to January 2023 [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2024 Jun 14]. Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/characteristicsofhomeworkersgreatbritain/september2022tojanuary2023>

35 YouGov. Many more middle class workers able to work from home than working class workers [Internet]. 2020 [cited 2024 Jun 14]. Available from: <https://yougov.co.uk/economy/articles/29665-most-middle-class-workers-are-working-home-full-ti>

36 Royal Society for Public Health. Disparity Begins at Home How home working is impacting the public's health [Internet]. 2021 [cited 2024 Jun 14]. Available from: <https://www.rsph.org.uk/static/42c4c5b3-1810-4381-b54f629eb3407c36/Workingfromhomepolicypaper2221.pdf> and Gueguen G, Senik C. Adopting telework: The causal impact of working from home on subjective well-being. *Br J Ind Relat*. 2023 Dec 5;61(4):832–68.

37 Royal Society for Public Health. Disparity Begins at Home How home working is impacting the public's health [Internet]. 2021 [cited 2024 Jun 14]. Available from: <https://www.rsph.org.uk/static/42c4c5b3-1810-4381-b54f629eb3407c36/Workingfromhomepolicypaper2221.pdf>

- What are the positive and negative effects of homeworking on physical and mental wellbeing?
- What are the positive and negative effects of homeworking on wellbeing specifically among young people joining the workforce?
- What are the benefits and barriers of homeworking for parents?
- How do possible inequities in homeworking impact productivity and the economy
- What evidence is there for the longer-term effects of home working?

Purpose of inquiry

The inquiry will provide an in-depth assessment of how the change in working patterns has affected different occupations and different sections of society, with a focus on physical and mental well-being. It will also explore strategies that have been used to mitigate negative effects and enhance the positive effects of hybrid and fully remote working. As well as focusing on individual level effects, it will consider how homeworking's wider impacts on equity and wellbeing affect societal productivity and the economy. Reports will aim to provide recommendations on how the public and private sectors can reduce inequities in the effects of home working on wellbeing.

Relevant Member experience

This inquiry will span a range of diverse areas for which members of the house are extremely knowledgeable. It has also been shown to be a topic of importance to the house, with debates on home working being held on 4th July 2022³⁸ and 1st February 2024³⁹.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

The issue of home working and well-being is relevant to many departments, for example:

- Department of Work and Pensions
- Department of Health and Social Care
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport (Equalities)
- The Treasury
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

10-month time frame

Yes.

Additional comments

I have spoken to a range of Noble Lords who support the concept of an inquiry into this subject including members with trade union experience and those who have been employees and employers in both the private and public sectors.

WATKINS OF TAVISTOCK

38 <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2022-07-04/debates/D065BEB8-066D-4ADA-8830-12EBEB61D370/WorkingFromHome>

39 <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2024-02-01/debates/E000AF92-E4CB-41BD-96F0-F17061F28352/CivilServantsWorkingFromHome>

Proposal 16: Letter from Viscount Hailsham

House of Lords

Description of proposal

I suggest that a Select Committee should be appointed to consider the matters set out in the terms of reference that appear below.

I appreciate that the issues have been the subject of previous reports, inquiries and debates.

However, I would suggest that in view of the Government's Bill to exclude the hereditary peers, together with the other proposals contained in the Labour Party Manifesto, the issues that I identify require fresh and urgent consideration.

I am confident that a Select Committee could complete its report within the stated time.

As to declarable interests; I have none apart from those that I mentioned in the debate on the Kings Speech.

I have long advocated an elected Second Chamber.

On two occasions I tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to be elected to the Lords in a by-election for hereditary peers.

My wife and I will be 80 during the likely lifetime of this parliament. We will thus be affected by some of the proposals set out in the Labour Party's manifesto.

Terms of Reference

HOUSE OF LORDS SELECT COMMITTEE. A Select Committee to be appointed

- (a) To recommend measures that will by the end of this parliament reduce the size of the House of Lords, to a size broadly similar to the size of the House of Commons.
- (b) To advise whether the "The House of Lords (Hereditary Peers) Bill" raises any issues of constitutional or other concern.
- (c) To advise as to the future manner of appointment of peers, as to the period of time for which such peers should be appointed and / or entitled to participate in the business of the House of Lords.

HAILSHAM

Proposal 17: Letter from Baroness Lister of Burtersett

Human rights in everyday life: building a human rights culture and literacy in communities and public services

Description of proposal

During oral questions recently, the Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Justice referred to ‘reinvigorating an appreciation of human rights’ in view of ‘the new focus on and enthusiasm for human rights’ (25 July, col 619). Yet in recent years knowledge and the practice of human rights have become rusty in the face of their frequent disparagement. The Minister also spoke of ‘promoting human rights as British values’ as a means of ‘rebuilding public trust in our political system’—a goal that has taken on a new urgency in the wake of the Summer’s disturbances, which threatened the human rights of Muslims and migrants in particular. Some of those caught up in the violence and hatred are believed to be expressing frustration at feeling overlooked, being poorly treated and lacking voice, contributing to loss of any faith they may have had in conventional politics.

The proposed inquiry would aim to explore the contribution that the building of a human rights culture into the relationship between the state—central and local—and members of society could make in improving that relationship and in rebuilding public trust. It would include socio-economic and cultural as well as civil and political rights, reflecting the human rights principle of the indivisibility of such rights. By a human rights culture we do not mean an abstract legalistic notion but an ethical approach to the delivery of public services, centred on the belief in human dignity that lies at the heart of a human rights approach. This would help to address what members of marginalised groups often experience as dehumanising treatment.

It would be for the Committee to decide on the specific topics to be covered but the following might be considered:

- The provision of public information on basic rights and freedoms.
- Education in human rights in schools and universities (as suggested by Lord Carter during OQs, col 620), linked to the contribution that could be made by a commitment to children’s rights.
- Training of public officials and professionals so as to inform decision making and treatment of service users.
- What a human rights culture would look like in terms of both the treatment of service users and decision-making.
- The treatment by public services of marginalised groups such as people in poverty, racialised minorities (including Gypsies, Roma and Travellers), refugees and asylum-seekers, disabled people.
- The delivery of everyday public services eg health, housing, social services, social security.
- The contribution that human rights might make to the government’s proposed child poverty strategy.
- The regimes governing care homes, prisons, detention centres and immigration holding centres.
- How a human rights culture might help to rebuild trust in politics including through enabling the voices of users to be heard and listened to.

The inquiry could seek evidence from a range of organisations (including but not confined to human rights organisations), academics, and if possible some service users (including those from marginalised groups). The experiences of the devolved nations could also provide useful insights.

Purpose of inquiry

- (1) An understanding of the extent to which a human rights culture currently informs public policy and what the potential is for strengthening and expanding such a culture.
- (2) Illumination of the contribution a human rights culture could make to improving the relationship between state and citizen/society member and to rebuilding trust in the political system,
- (3) Insights into the potential role of education and training in the development of a human rights culture.
- (4) A set of practical recommendations—both short and longer term—stemming from the above.

Relevant Member experience

The proposal would be able to draw on the experience and knowledge of a wide range of members including in the areas of human rights law, public services and benefits and migration (in particular the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees). It would complement the work of the Joint Committee on Human Rights but would not duplicate it as their enquiries tend to focus on legislative scrutiny and narrower topics than that envisaged here. Members would also be able to contribute from their experience of many relevant APPGs. Members from the devolved nations might also be able to contribute from their knowledge of their stronger emphasis on human rights in public services.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

While responsibility for human rights lies primarily with the Ministry of Justice, the point of the proposal is to underline the relevance of human rights for all government departments responsible for providing services to the public either directly or indirectly through local government. As well as crossing departmental boundaries it has implications for local government and can learn from the devolved nations.

10-month time frame

Yes and there may be scope for interim reporting so as to influence the new government.

This proposal is supported by Lord Carter of Haslemere, Baroness Campbell of Surbiton, Baroness Hussein-Ece, the Lord Bishop of Chelmsford and the Lord Bishop of Manchester.

LISTER OF BURTERSETT

Lord Carter of Haslemere adds in support of the proposal:

I strongly support this proposal. Building a human rights culture has never been more important or relevant to today's challenges.

Sir Peter Gross's Independent Review of the Human Rights Act in 2022 strongly recommended embedding a human rights and civic and constitutional rights culture in our schools and universities.

A Special Inquiry into human rights in everyday life will help to initiate such a programme.

CARTER OF HASLEMERE

Proposal 18: Letter from Baroness of Nicholson of Winterbourne

Inclusion of Music as a STEM subject in Primary Schools

Description of the proposal

The Proposal is for a Special Inquiry Committee to acquire, research and report to the House the latest findings of the working of the human brain, for the sole purpose of unearthing the probability of music as a core topic in primary schools in partnership with maths and IT. If the findings confirmed the innate value of music as an inborn human capability, as the research seems to suggest the Committee could determine its probable impact on the mental health of children and make suitable recommendations for Government to consider. This proposal fits the government's stated policies of preventative medicine and inclusion.

From the Worcester Fragments until very recently the UK has been alive with music through life-long teaching and performance; and in consequence, as contributing to the economy with jobs, training, and futures. The loss of music as a core discipline, especially in primary schools, giving absolute exclusive, priority to STEM subjects, overlooks, ignores and thereby fails the nation's school children through the exclusion of a topic that enhances their success in STEM subjects throughout their school career. The Inquiry Committee would examine whether the narrowing of the public sector school curriculum to prioritise STEM only fails in the continued enhancement of health and education of the nation, particularly of children, by ignoring the fact that music and maths are two sides of the same coin.

The government's philosophy is inclusive. However, STEM, its educational frontrunner is innately competitive. It's counterpart, music, is cooperative, not competitive, and thus offers true inclusion in which every child from every background and all physical and mental conditions can participate. It is therefore important for the mental health of children that both STEM and music are taught to the same high level of excellence to make up for the non-inclusiveness of STEM and strike the balance which involves everyone. In contrast, madrassa attending children will miss music completely without exposure in primary school since a rarely supported hadith forbids music and dance. Indeed, the way that music, particularly singing brings people together may be a significant shaping of children and young people in their becoming citizens who understand the importance of common life within which individuals and groups can flourish. The Committee would examine this too.

Purpose of inquiry

The Inquiry would be trying to achieve clarity of vision on whether incorporating music as core subject alongside maths, IT and English would halt or slow down the rise in mental health referrals of children to the NHS and child mental health generally; through analysing and investigating from all angles the newest findings in this field of work from international sources.

The Inquiry would recommend the most cost effective and easiest ways of building music in at primary level in the public sector.

Relevant Member experience

Their Lordship's House is made up of an extraordinary bundle of qualifications and experiences related to this proposal. From the Astronomer Royal through the Bishop's Bench (47% of UK Primary School are supported by the Church of

England and others by the Catholic and Methodist Church, with additional input from LDS, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism and others) the House is unique in offering this extraordinary range of capabilities relating to the subject of the proposal.

Non official outside interest of the Members whose work must cover almost every relevant institution globally will give exceptional access to novel information enabling the Committee to present a set of findings that will be of outstanding value internationally.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

Mental health of children is the responsibility of Department of Health but as the government has recently declared, the Department of Education is a lead agency. Each department is in charge of its own responsibility, but cross cutting research incorporating the latest findings of other national and international universities and medical colleges organisations are now putting forward a strikingly different findings reflecting the activity of the brain and the consequential impact on human behaviour and capacity. These findings are too valuable to be allowed to fit into the normal departmental constraints, particularly since any outcomes would have budgetary implications at a time when there is no apparent resource. This proposal has the opportunity of identifying different resources as well as coming up with low cost and inventive proposals which may not be readily obvious or available to hard pressed government departments.

10-month time frame

Yes.

Additional comments

Spaces will be required to reintroduce music into primary schools. A focus on group singing could be under supervision and teaching of peripatetic musicians and through making partnerships with local spaces, such as churches and other musical institutions in which children can practise and perform, since participation makes the difference and gives children good mental health.

This proposal is supported by Lord Aberdare, Lord Boateng, Baroness Keeley, Lord Knight of Weymouth, the Lord Bishop of Leicester, Lord Mann and Baroness Thornton.

NICHOLSON OF WINTERBOURNE

Proposal 19: Letter from Baroness Hayter, Baroness Hoey, Baroness Jenkin of Kennington, Baroness Ludford, Lord Moynihan, Lord Triesman and Lord Wasserman

Inclusion in sport—to review sports bodies’ policies of female inclusion in amateur and elite sports, with reference to the definition of biological sex as compared to gender, and to make recommendations.

Description of proposal

- (a) review practice on biological, DSD and transgender women, and any impact on fairness and safety in women’s sports,
- (b) review the policies of international and domestic sports bodies,
- (c) make recommendations.

Sports receive Treasury and Lottery funding through UK Sport (elite) and Sports Councils (grassroots). Female participation at every age and level falls significantly behind men’s. Consequently, Sports Councils and many National Governing Bodies (NGBs) seek to increase female participation funding—though without being explicitly about biological women. The Inquiry could assess the impact of such initiatives on women’s participation, including whether the data measures born women’s activity, as children were given the options “Boy/ Girl/ Other/ Prefer not to say” and Sport England’s “Active Lives Survey” asked how respondents “think of yourself: Male/ Female/ In Another Way”.

In 2021 the Sports Council Equality Group (SCEG) reviewed scientific literature⁴⁰ its guidance urging NGBs to review their policies, pointing out that “the inclusion of transgender people into female sport cannot be balanced regarding transgender inclusion, fairness and safety in gender-affected sport where there is meaningful competition”.⁴¹

The Inquiry could review international sports governing bodies policies since domestic bodies operate such rules.

Many NGBs permit men identifying as women in female contests, including contact sports (football, hockey), and some combat sports (taekwondo, wrestling) which pose safety risks, and unfairness for females. The Committee could investigate how NGBs consulted women and interested parties—both for and against using biological sex as the definition of male/ female categories.

There are high-profile cases, such as American swimmer Lia Thomas (moderate male swimmer who won a female championship), Welsh cyclist Emily Bridges (junior male record-holder seeking access to GB women’s team), as well as girls and women at parkrun and national championships⁴². In Paris, two “women” boxers (Imane Khelif/Lin Yu-Ting) disqualified from IBA world championship allegedly for having “XY chromosomes”, both won gold⁴³, whilst 51-year-old father-of-two Valentina Petrillo (who won 11 national men’s titles) became the Paralympics’ first trans track athlete, qualifying for the women’s 400m T12 semi-final—denying a woman a place.

40 <https://movingtoinclusion.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Transgender-International-Research-Literature-Review-2021.pdf>

41 <https://movingtoinclusion.co.uk/our-joint-work/transgender-inclusion-in-sport-guidance/>

42 Fair Play For Women’s report

43 Lin Yu Ting and Imane Khelif won every single match 5-0 on their way to gold. Their respective records were 5-0, 5-0, 5-0, 5-0.

While moves to increase trans participation are welcome, allowing men in women's teams appears detrimental to women. The Inquiry could examine how trans athletes could compete without jeopardising the fairness of female sport.

While some sports (including rugby) have restored the integrity of the female category, others (cricket, cycling) have not yet decided on grassroots participation (born men being welcome in "women only" rides), while some athletics accept biological men in women's races.

The Inquiry could hear from Sports Councils and NGBs about their legal advice and whether they accept the EHRC position⁴⁴ regarding single-sex exceptions in the Equality Act, and could also consider the related issue of single sex changing rooms, which the Act permits on the basis of biological sex.

The scientific evidence of men's participation in female sports could be examined, with consideration given to whether rules should be adopted on when "women" and "men" refer to biological sex rather than gender.

Purpose of inquiry

The major goal is:

- to identify best practice, based on science, evidence and consultation with all relevant views,
- to provide a non-judgemental forum for an open, transparent, expert and wide-ranging debate to produce recommendations to government, local government, sports' governing bodies, schools and grassroots organisations on how to handle legitimate conflicting demands and safeguard women's sports.

It could enable sports' governing bodies to hear divergent views and help resolve tensions in achieving both maximum inclusion and also fairness, drawing on the NGBs' responses to the new SCEG guidance.

The impact on inclusion of all affected groups within those sports which have adopted different policies in response to the SCEG guidance would provide vital input to the committee.

Relevant Member experience

The Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology published a POSTnote on transgender athletes in September 2022⁴⁵. This provides a sound knowledge base on which the committee can build although this is a fast-moving area; many of the world sport governing bodies cited there have since changed their policies.

The committee could draw on present and former Members with experience in sport at a high level, and/or in sports governance, including Lord Moynihan⁴⁶,

44 <https://url.uk.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/wqqICRO3xsvjwKR1H9fPtvrITt?domain=equalityhumanrights.com>

45 <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0683/POST-PN-0683.pdf>

46 Former: Minister for Sport, chair, [British Olympic Association](#); Sports Aid Foundation, governor, Sports Aid Trust; Member, Sports Council, Central Council for Physical Recreation's Enquiry into Sponsorship of Sport, Steward, British Boxing Board of Control; President, British Biathlon Union and of the [Welsh Amateur Rowing Association](#); Chairman, [Paralympic World Cup](#).

Baroness Grey-Thompson⁴⁷, Lord Coe⁴⁸, Lord Triesman⁴⁹, Lord Reid⁵⁰, Lord Holmes of Richmond⁵¹, Lord Willis and Baroness Hoey⁵² as well as those with Cabinet experience at the Department of Education, such as Baroness Morris of Yardley and Lord Blunkett.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

Whilst sports funding comes under the DCMS, schools (where all sports start) is a Department of Education responsibility, whilst the provision of local sports facilities falls to local government and thus the MHCLG.

Recommendations regarding wide inter-departmental responsibilities for sport and recreation were highlighted recently by the Special Committee on a National Plan for Sport and Recreation. Such cross-departmental responsibilities could be considered by the Committee.

10-month time frame

Yes.

Much research exists but has not been discussed in public nor have sports bodies been offered the chance to explain their policies.

The 2021 Sports Council Equality Group (SCEG)⁵³ reviewed the scientific literature.⁵⁴

Information on international sports governing bodies is readily available from the Centre for Human Rights in Sport in Geneva and the Council of Europe.

Having reviewed published domestic and international material, the Committee would have a readily available source of witnesses, both the authors of leading studies from across the spectrum of opinion such as transwoman Joanna Harper⁵⁵ and Dr Emma Hilton⁵⁶; Medal winning athletes who question trans inclusion in women's sports (such as Sharron Davies MBE, Daley Thompson CBE, Mara Yamauchi, Karen Pickering MBE).

47 Chair, Sports Wales, 16 Paralympic medals, 30 [world records](#); won the [London Marathon](#) six times. Former Member, National Disability Council, English Lottery Awards Panel.

48 Headed the [London bid](#) to host the [2012 Summer Olympics](#); Chairman, [London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games](#). President, [International Association of Athletics Federations](#) (IAAF); Chair, [British Olympic Association](#)

49 Formerly: head of the body responsible for all forms of football in England, Member, global football committee (IFAC) which sets the Rules of the game, Senior Vice Chair, UEFA International Competitions Committee; Board member, the Premier League which impacted the finance of football including the women's game.

50 Former Chairman, [Celtic Football Club](#)

51 Often described as "Britain's most successful Paralympic swimmer", with 9 gold, 5 silvers and 1 bronze medals. Director of Paralympic Integration, responsible for the organisation of the 2012 Paralympic Games in London.

52 Former athlete and Minister for Sport

53 <https://movingtoinclusion.co.uk/our-joint-work/transgender-inclusion-in-sport-guidance/>

54 <https://movingtoinclusion.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Transgender-International-Research-Literature-Review-2021.pdf>

55 Harper J, O'Donnell E, Sorouri Khorashad B, McDermott H, and Witcomb GL. How does hormone transition in transgender women change body composition, muscle strength and haemoglobin? Systematic review with a focus on the implications for sport participation. *Br J Sports Med*, 2021.

56 Hilton EN and Lundberg TR. Transgender Women in the Female Category of Sport: Perspectives on Testosterone Suppression and Performance Advantage. *Sports Med*, 2020.

Additional comments

There has been no national debate involving sports people, funders, sports bodies and politicians. Yet it is of vital importance to the future of women's sports, and an open and scientific discussion is urgent given the fury seen in Paris after the acceptance of the boxers (Imane Khelif and Lin Yu-Ting) was justified by IOC Press Spokesman, Mark Adams, because "they are women in their passports"⁵⁷ whilst IPC President Andrew Parsons appeared delighted about Valentina Petrillo's success, commenting that transgender athletes "are breaking barriers everywhere".

A full debate on the definition used for Men and Women is needed in the light of the IOC President, Thomas Bach, claiming it's impossible to determine who was a woman, and that past acceptance of gender should suffice. This helps no-one, neither the XX females who feel cheated, nor those who apparently "failed" a gender test and were then attacked for being allowed to compete by the International Body. These athletes should not be the ones to have to front this debate. This is particularly true of such DSD athletes (as opposed to trans people) who might have spent a large part of their early lives living and being treated as female.

Sadly, the toxic nature of the debate has meant that such a full, open and consensual discussion has not taken place, with many of those concerned about trans-inclusion feeling their views have not been heard.

The 2024 Fair Play for Women Report noted that managers, coaches and athletes opposed to transgender inclusion felt silenced within their own sports and NCBs, and reports women saying:

"No one enters anymore ... They know it's pointless." "When you sign up for women's football you don't sign up for this." "I was devastated walking off, and in tears." "I've received insulting messages, regularly called a Nazi, all for the simple belief that women should be able to compete against other women". "A lot of us now can't speak up for fear of being called transphobic. It was our space and now we've lost it. So slowly the numbers have dwindled."⁵⁸

Thus a major contribution a Special Inquiry could make would be to hear from all relevant stakeholders, the pro trans inclusive activists and those questioning this, in a consensual, open and tolerant forum

**HAYTER, HOEY, JENKIN OF KENNINGTON, LUDFORD, MOYNIHAN, TRIESMAN
AND WASSERMAN**

57 Press Conference, 30.7.24; Thomas Bach, IOC President, said they were women because of their passports and that they had competed as women before (3.8.24).

58 <https://fairplayforwomen.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/How-inclusion-in-sport-is-harming-women-and-girls-by-Fair-Play-For-Women-14-Jan-2024.pdf>

Proposal 20: Letter from Lord Boswell of Aynho*Intergenerational social relations within the UK**Description of proposal*

I would like again to propose a topic relating to intergenerational social relations within the UK. I am personally lucky to live within striking distance of my three daughters and a total of four granddaughters, but am increasingly conscious of my good fortune, in terms of propinquity, relative affordability and a shared culture.

BOSWELL OF AYNHO

Proposal 21: Letter from Lord Empey

Long term sustainability of public sector pensions

Description of proposal

It used to be the case that public sector pensions got higher contributions because public sector wages tended to be lower than those in the private sector. I submit that this is no longer the case.

A committee could 1) establish the facts about levels of public sector pay compared to private sector pay and 2) examine levels of public sector pensions compared to equivalent private sector pensions and 3) estimate the costs and long-term implications should the levels of public sector pensions exceed private sector pensions.

Purpose of inquiry

Establish the sustainability and affordability of public sector pensions at current levels.

Relevant Member experience

With experts on pensions and finance available in the House, together with those with Trades Union experience representing public sector workers, and Members who have business backgrounds in the private sector, I believe that we have many Members who have an interest in such pensions and can bring their experience to bear on this subject.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

It crosses all Departmental and all public sector boundaries.

10-month time frame

I believe so.

EMPEY

Proposal 22: Letter from the Lord Bishop of Manchester

Lower Income Country Debt Relief

Description of proposal

An inquiry on lower-income country debt relief could investigate the impact of the burden of debt on countries and propose steps the UK could take to alleviate this burden.

Now is the right time for this inquiry. 25 years on from the Jubilee 2000 Campaign and with just half a decade remaining until the target deadline for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, an inquiry would review past interventions, evaluate the current situation for lower-income countries, and propose practical recommendations for future interventions.⁵⁹

A quarter of a century ago the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative was launched, which led to billions of dollars of debts being cancelled for lower income country governments. This allowed those Governments to significantly increase spending on health and education as a result. Churches, youth groups, civil society organisations and charities in the UK and globally were at the heart of a movement that advocated for this change, and the UK government played a leadership role in the G7.

Despite these successes, external debt payments in lower income countries are now at their highest point in 25 years.⁶⁰ No mechanisms were created to prevent future debt crises or make debt restructuring easier. External debt payments are on the rise again, primarily to Western private lenders, who account for 46% of external debt payments by lower income country governments.⁶¹ There is no effective mechanism for tackling this issue, as the G20's Common Framework for Debt Treatments, introduced in 2020, has faced several challenges.

High debt burdens hamper the scope for governments to invest in advancing the SDGs and tackling the climate emergency. More than 50 lower income countries are in debt distress or high risk of being so.⁶² Debt payments weaken the scope for governments to invest in essential services to meet the basic human needs of their populations. 32 African countries spend more on paying external debts than they do on healthcare.⁶³

The UK is well-placed to explore options for alleviating private creditor debt burdens: 90% of the debts to private creditors of the 73 countries eligible for the Common Framework are governed by English law.⁶⁴

An inquiry would be an opportunity to learn from recent legislation and policies. The UK introduced the Debt Relief (Developing Countries) Act in 2010.⁶⁵ While this legislation had some positive effects, it did not offer a long-term solution to debt. Likewise, the Common Framework is a mechanism to assist countries seeking debt relief, but has barely been used by eligible states.

59 <https://www.imf.org/en/About/Factsheets/Sheets/2023/Debt-relief-under-the-heavily-indebted-poor-countries-initiative-HIPC>

60 <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/our-work/between-life-and-debt>

61 <https://debtjustice.org.uk/press-release/lower-income-country-debt-payments-set-to-hit-highest-level-in-25-years>

62 <https://unctad.org/news/global-public-debt-hits-record-97-trillion-2023-un-urges-action>

63 <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/news/between-life-and-debt>

64 https://debtjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/The-UKs-role-in-supporting-the-G20-debt-suspension_04.20.pdf

65 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/1336/made>

There have also been developments in New York, where some other debts are governed, with two bills on debt legislation were considered in 2024 and the sovereign debt champerty bill passing the New York State Senate.

An inquiry would be an opportunity to:

- Evaluate policies and legislation past and present, 25 years on from Jubilee 2000
- Understand the current debt burden and impact on lower-income countries
- Explore options for global and domestic interventions that the UK government could advance

Purpose of inquiry

The new Government committed to prioritising tackling unsustainable debt in its election manifesto. An inquiry would be able to inform how best this can be done. It would scrutinise the benefits and drawbacks of recent Government approaches, and propose practical solutions to tackle the crisis.

An inquiry would provide the opportunity for parliamentary debate and scrutiny, and to hear from stakeholders including lawyers and academics who have developed draft legislation. Members of the Committee could learn from legislators from the New York Assembly, where parallel legislation is being explored, and those involved in passing the Debt Relief (Developing Countries) Act 2010. These key witnesses were not heard from at the 2022 IDC inquiry (see below).

The inquiry could achieve:

- **The impact of high debt burdens on lower-income countries:** develop an authoritative picture of how high debt levels impact individuals and communities in affected countries. This could include impacts of high debt on climate, social services and hunger. Members could hear evidence from representatives of Global South civil society organisations from debt-distressed countries, including those who have engaged with the Common Framework. There are learnings from this process which have not been examined in full by any parliamentary Committee.
- **25 years of debt relief policy:** an assessment of past and current policy and legislation governing debt forgiveness and restructuring. An inquiry could examine the successes and pitfalls of HIPC, as well as more recent developments such as the establishment and progress of the Common Framework, which has delivered very limited relief so far. A thorough review of global and domestic policies would inform recommendations for the future.
- **What's next:** practical proposals for next steps which the UK could take to alleviate debt distress, including legislative options, set within a review of previous approaches and international proposals.
- **Global cooperation beyond the Common Framework:** ahead of the 4th Financing for Development Conference due to taking place in 2025, the inquiry could also look into how the UK government might engage in multilateral negotiations to move towards the establishment of a UN sovereign debt work out mechanism.

Relevant Member experience

During the merger of the Department for International Development and the Foreign Office, and when cuts were made to the international development budget in 2021, members' expertise on international development and lower income country debt has been clear. Members of the International Relations and Defence Committee have demonstrated sustained expertise on international development matters, including in their 2020 inquiry on the UK and Sub-Saharan Africa.

The expertise of parliamentarians with particular links among communities affected by high levels of debt would be useful in ensuring the inquiry was consulting with affected communities. The inquiry would also benefit from the expertise of senior advocates for development, former government ministers and civil servants, faith leaders, and those with expertise in economics.

Several current Members of the House of Lords were active for and participated in debates on lower income country debt relief during the Jubilee 2000 campaign. These debates were between 20 and 30 years ago: for the inquiry to draw on the living memory of Members, it would need to take place soon.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

Key relevant departments for this inquiry are:

- FCDO: a commitment to government action on debt relief is a key strand within the FCDO-led White Paper on International Development published by the former government in 2023 with cross-party support. The new government's general election manifesto commits to renewing expertise and focus within FCDO on 'tackling unsustainable debt'. There are FCDO officials who work on this topic with a development lens, in collaboration with Treasury.
- Treasury: Treasury has ultimate authority on debt and there are Treasury officials closely engaged, working in collaboration with Treasury.
- DESNZ: has ultimate responsibility for climate negotiations, while collaborating with FCDO which leads on the international development dimensions. At COP29 and beyond, there is an expectation that countries that are historically high emitters, including the UK, make ambitious pledges in relation to the mobilisation of climate finance. Advancing debt relief for lower income countries is something that DESNZ and FCDO could look into as part of that offer.

10-month time frame

Yes.

Additional comments

As a Bishop of the Church of England, I am a member of the global Anglican Communion, which includes 42 autonomous and independent-yet-interdependent national, pan-national and regional churches in communion with the See of Canterbury. In my role as a parliamentarian and a Bishop, I hear from members of the Communion across the globe who feel the need for debt forgiveness acutely. An inquiry on this topic would express renewed solidarity and momentum for ending extreme poverty by 2030.

The IDC published a report on Debt Relief in Low-Income Countries after a 2022 inquiry.⁶⁶ However, there have been various developments since the IDC considered sovereign debt in 2022, which would enable the Lords committee to undertake a fuller consideration of the timeliness and effectiveness of the current debt architecture than was possible 2 years ago. One further country, Ghana, has applied to restructure its debts under the Common Framework, bringing the total to four. Zambia and Ghana have reached in principle agreements with official and private creditors. Suriname and Sri Lanka have reached deals outside the Common Framework. The implications of these deals could be examined. This inquiry also only had three oral evidence sessions, whereas an SIC would be able to explore this issue in more depth.

As chair of USPG, one of the leading Anglican Global Mission Agencies with over 300 years of experience, I am regularly in conversation about supporting churches in highly indebted countries.

+ DAVID MANCHESTER

66 <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/6664/debt-relief-in-lowincome-countries/>

Proposal 23: Letter from Baroness Deech, Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee and Baroness Noakes

Measures used by the BBC to assess its impartiality, balance and accuracy in media coverage of the Israel-Gaza conflict

Description of proposal

Following repeated public questioning of the BBC's adherence to standards of impartiality, balance and accuracy in its coverage of the Israel-Hamas war, and related wider Middle East conflict, culminating in the release of the Asserson Report, there needs to be a review by this House into the action and role of the national broadcaster.

The Asserson Report has found that the BBC was 4 times more likely to link Israel to war crimes than Hamas. This proposal would see a special inquiry committee ascertain exactly what the BBC are doing to respond to incidents of biased reporting to ensure impartiality, balance and accuracy in its coverage.

Previous investigations into BBC reporting have routinely been overlooked. The 2006 Review chaired by Quentin Thomas sought to evaluate Middle East coverage and found that "the range of stories and perspectives was too narrow" and often "included an absence of historical background and deficiencies in the wider Middle East context." Similarly, the Serota Review 2021 aimed to scrutinise the BBC's editorial processes, governance and culture. The investigation found that although the situation had improved, there still existed a "culture of defensiveness" around BBC reporting and that "there remains a tendency to rush into immediate defence of BBC content and an unwillingness to admit mistakes, especially in the face of external pressure."

In relation to the current conflict, the Asserson Report found key trends that BBC coverage routinely downplayed October 7, excused acts of terror as well as more frequently referred to Hamas as a health ministry than a proscribed terror organisation. The report documents systemic failures in the BBC Editorial complaints process and also systemic problems in BBC management, including a lack of the management controls and systems required to enable the BBC to properly fulfil its mandate. Breaches of the Editorial Guidelines also include the failure to warn the audience when contributors are members of Hamas or affiliates; failing to warn when broadcasting from an area of reporting restrictions and journalists frequently expressing personal opinions. On 10th September, BBC Chairman Samir Shah told the House of Lords' Communications and Digital Committee that the board would seriously consider a review into the coverage of the Israel-Hamas War. This Special Committee will analyse the mechanisms in place to assess BBC impartiality, balance and accuracy to ensure that any forthcoming review will be constituted with a due degree of impartiality; that its scope is adequate and that its recommendations are not similarly overlooked.

Purpose of inquiry

The inquiry would seek to analyse the measures in place by the BBC to assess, monitor and where necessary adjust the impartiality and balance of coverage relating to controversial subjects and major matters, using the example of the Israel-Hamas war and to identify regulatory and structural changes that might improve future performance. The House of Lords Special Inquiry Committee will act as an external body to hold internal BBC processes to account and make certain that the recommendations of further reviews are not overlooked.

Relevant Member experience

The cross-cutting nature of such an inquiry would benefit from the expertise of many Members of the House, including academics, lawyers, historians, policymakers and journalists. The Middle East conflict is a highly complex issue which the House of Lords could seek to address whilst also drawing on the relevant individual strengths within the House to analyse the BBC reporting framework.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

Conflicts—such as the Middle East—and the affect they have on the UK, are multifaceted. There is the obvious place it holds within the FCDO, but as extremism—encouraged by the conflict—spills onto our streets it also sits within the interest of the Home Office. Likewise, the ‘information war’ and discourse takes places so much online and as such involves the Department for Media, Culture and Sport.

10-month time frame

Yes, there is sufficient time to hold these sessions.

DEECH, FOSTER OF AGHADRUMSEE AND NOAKES

Proposal 24: Letter from Lord Aberdare and Lord Birt

Meeting critical UK skills needs

Description of proposal

The total number of UK skill-shortage vacancies identified by the ONS has grown from about 91,000 in 2011 to 531,000 in 2022. This represents a major national problem, affecting virtually every sector, acting as a brake on productivity, and holding back the economy.

The proposed committee will focus on the UK skills landscape as a whole, highlighting mismatches between the skills needed by employers to deliver national policy and economic goals and those actually emerging from the current education and training system. It will build on the good work done in recent years by a number of other parliamentary committees (such as the current inquiry of the House of Lords Industry and Regulators Committee on “Skills for the future”, with a focus on apprenticeships and training), while seeking to pull together a comprehensive system overview of the mismatch between demand and supply across the whole economy. It is particularly timely in view of the recent launch of Skills England and the government’s Curriculum and Assessment Review.

The committee will:

- Develop an overall picture of the most significant current skills challenges and future skills needs faced by employers across the UK in areas seen as critical for achieving key policy and economic goals (such as digital/AI, net zero, health, housing, infrastructure, the creative industries, etc).
- Highlight gaps in meeting these challenges through current education and training provision at all levels, and changes that are needed to ensure a better match between education outcomes and employer needs.
- Note other factors to be taken into account in addressing skills challenges, such as the role of migration policy in gaining access to skills needs not adequately met within the UK.
- Define principles to underpin an overall national skills strategy, taking into account the needs of different regions, different sectors, different government departments and policies, and different individuals (at different stages of their careers) in a more integrated way.
- Identify examples of good practice in addressing employer skills needs in different circumstances and settings.

Witnesses contributing to the inquiry would include: employers, both large and small, across a range of key sectors, almost all of which are currently seriously affected or concerned by skills shortages; educators at all levels, primary, secondary, further, higher and adult; training providers; local and national government, including combined authorities; representatives of employer representative bodies and others involved with local skills improvement plans; and academic and policy experts working in this field.

Purpose of inquiry

The committee would aim to highlight broad issues relating to skills policy on a national scale and set out general principles for addressing them in a more consistent, cross-departmental, cross-sectoral, cross-regional fashion. It could also seek to understand why so many skilled workers left the workforce after the

pandemic, as compared with other countries, and how the large numbers of young people aged 18-24 who are not in work, education or training might be attracted to acquiring an employable skill. It would seek to define an overall framework for a skills policy capable of meeting national needs while allowing flexibility for different departments, regions and sectors to pursue their own priorities.

Relevant Member experience

Members of the House of Lords have an unrivalled breadth of expertise and experience in skills-related fields, both on the employer side and in relation to education and training, and across a wide range of sectors. At a time when the new government recognises the importance of skills issues, and is looking for ways to tackle them effectively, a House of Lords committee could offer uniquely valuable input to this process.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

Skills challenges are inherently cross-departmental. The proposed committee would help to highlight skills challenges that are common to all or many departments, and outline possible ways to address them without unhelpful fragmentation and complexity.

10-month time frame

This committee's task would be to develop a broad overall picture of the skills landscape, and the main challenges it presents in terms of both demand for and supply of skills. It would build on much work already done by other parliamentary committees, mostly focused on more specific areas of skills policy, rather than a broad holistic overview. The committee's findings might well lead to ideas for further investigation by House of Lords committees.

Additional comments

We have also been presenting a case for an ongoing House of Lords select committee on skills and productivity, to look in more detail and on an ongoing basis at the many skills-related issues fundamental to a successful economy. This proposal for a special inquiry committee would be an important first step to outline the terrain to be covered by such a committee, and some of the most important specific issues to be addressed.

ABERDARE AND BIRT

Proposal 25: Letter from Baroness Valentine

Nurturing harmonious communities

Description of proposal

To grow our understanding of how government and public bodies encourage and support resilient and cohesive communities.

The Southport killings in July 2024 sparked sporadic acts of violence and disorder in over 35 places around the UK. This was the most serious disorder in the UK since 2011. Places across the UK, from Belfast to Plymouth to Rotherham, saw considerable targeted violence and the major destruction of property. But this was simply a flash point. We know that some of our “forgotten” places around the United Kingdom suffer from systemic health, crime, education and employment issues.

This inquiry would examine how government and other public bodies can support community cohesion to reduce the chances of riots reoccurring but also to build the foundations for healthy communities longer term.

The inquiry would particularly focus on communities that have higher levels of:

- Deprivation
- Young people
- People from minority ethnic groups

And would entail visits to some of these places that feel disconnected from Westminster, including at least one of the areas where riots took place.

Evidence⁶⁷ suggests that those who live in more deprived areas, young people or people from minority ethnic groups, are more likely to live in areas with higher crimes rates. Below are some proposed topics that different evidence sessions could explore:

- What makes a cohesive community?
- What interventions can government make that truly make our communities more cohesive?
- What role do local and devolved government have in making our communities more cohesive?
- How can devolved government ensure it reaches ‘left behind’ communities?
- How can central government empower local stakeholders to take action?
- Does this look different in the devolved nations?
- What role do other public bodies e.g. schools have in this?
- What roles do community organisations have in this? Why are some more successful than others in this area?
- Where in the UK are the levels of community cohesion lowest? Why?
- What role do employers have in enhancing community cohesion?
- What can we learn from international experience?

67 <https://www.health.org.uk/evidence-hub/our-surroundings/safety/inequalities-in-likelihood-of-living-in-high-crime>

Purpose of inquiry

The inquiry would seek to improve understanding of effective, long term and practical ways to nurture community cohesion, and to understand what government and other public bodies might do to enable this.

Some examples of the types of interventions that could be delivered include:

- (a) The role of government as major employer and infrastructure owner. For example in Blackpool, the government's role in building a better future is not just about distributing regeneration funding. The government have relocated 3000 Department for Work and Pensions and other Civil Service staff from edge-of-town sites to a new Civil Service Hub, diversifying the economy of the town centre and putting people at its heart.
- (b) The development of a national social cohesion strategy that is both long-term and strategic, whilst simultaneously rooted in a bottom-up approach involving communities. Examples of this could include how local authorities can work with schools to run programmes that improve links with different groups of parents, pupils and different groups within the community, and putting in ward-level resource to encourage different faith and community groups to work together.
- (c) Championing local purchasing by business, public bodies and all layers of government to provide opportunity and training for local SMEs, as was done by the Olympic park authority.

Relevant Member experience

Many members of the House have knowledge and experience of:

- Community cohesion
- Local and devolved government
- The voluntary sector
- Crime reduction and reoffending
- Education

It would utilise this knowledge and experience in the context of a current and ongoing challenge that is faced across all areas of the UK.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

The purpose of the inquiry is to investigate how government and other public bodies can support community cohesion. This would impact on policy relating to number of different departments, such as:

- **Department for Education**—the role of schools
- **Levelling Up, Housing and Communities**—the role of local government and the devolved nations
- **Business and Trade**—stimulating local economies and skills building
- **Ministry of Justice**—Reducing levels of crime
- **Department of Health**—mental health challenges

10-month time frame

Yes

VALENTINE

Proposal 26: Letter from Lord Lipsey

Opinion Polls

Description of proposal

In the nearly 20 years since I chaired a Lords Committee on opinion polls, polling has been transformed. A brand-new technique increasingly dominates the market, using huge samples and predicting individual seat results. Only problem: 2024 was a disaster for the polls which gave Labour 40% of the vote when they polled 33%—way outside the margin of error. This did not stop polling companies proclaiming triumph. Are polls now voodoo polls? Is the reporting of polls by new media unreliable?

Purpose of inquiry

A broader understanding amongst the political classes of what polls do and what polls don't do. A step-change improvement in the reporting of polling.

Relevant Member experience

We are mostly politicians and therefore mostly fixated on polls as an indicator of party popularity. Our membership includes some real poll experts—Robert Hayward and Chris Rennard spring to mind. And many members have experience of how parties (mis) use polling to influence their choices of policies to offer the electorate.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

Polling is everywhere. It influences whole of government policies for example immigration (Rwanda). It is important in casting light (if it works) on government policies on the widest stages eg do people want more public spending even if it means higher taxes.

10-month time frame

Under a good chair, this is not a stretching target.

Additional comments

This is precisely the kind of inquiry which could have great influence on much of politics and much of policy. Members of the Lords because of its relatively non-partisan nature are well placed to assess these changes and cast light on polling's strengths and weakness.

LIPSEY

Proposal 27: Letter from Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots

Planning for the UK's Demographic Future

Description of proposal

To investigate the need for, and value of, a cross Governmental body—possibly constituted along the lines of The Office for Budget Responsibility—which would undertake independent transparent evidence based analysis of the trade offs—both long and short term—resulting from population change, to assess the ability of governments to respond to them and to report at least annually to Parliament.

Purpose of inquiry

To discuss and analyse how best to respond to the concerns of the two thirds of the settled population who, according to recent polling, believe that first the country is overcrowded—with consequences inter alia for the future delivery of public services, the availability of housing, the maintenance of social cohesion, continuing food and water security the loss of open space for recreations and leisure and the impact on our ability to meet our climate change goals and second that the government should be planning to meet these challenges and report regularly to Parliament.

Relevant Member experience

The Members of the House have a range of skills and experiences which makes the House uniquely well equipped to undertake an investigation of this sort.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

All parts of government are impacted by population change but no part of government is tasked with providing any strategic overarching analysis.

10-month time frame

Yes. The Committee is not likely to provide all the answers but it will begin a conversation—for too long successive governments have been reluctant to encourage public discussions and debate about our demographic future. As a result, successive governments have presented the public with a series of faits accomplis, which has led to a polarisation of views and the creation of a toxic atmosphere which has prevented any mature informed debate.

Additional comments

Demographic planning is too easily misrepresented as being an attack on all immigration. In actuality demographic planning is about the ability of a country to absorb increases in population—whether these come from the natural increase (excess of births over deaths) or from new arrivals; and what this means for the “settled” population—18% of whom are from the minority communities—who also have their rights.

The Committee will have noted the importance of this issue to the general public from the amount of time devoted to it in the recent General Election.

It is time for this issue to be addressed in a calm evidence based way, failure to do so may mean that wilder spirits may make the running.

This proposal is supported by Baroness Casey, Lord Lilley, Lord Lisvane, Viscount Craigavon, Lord Leigh of Hurley, Lord Mackenzie of Framwellgate,, Lord Bridges of Headley and Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe.

HODGSON OF ASTLEY ABBOTTS

In support of Lord Hodgson's proposal Lord Lilley wishes to add:

The House of Lords is one of the few bodies which can bring the relevant expertise to bear in a dispassionate manner to an issue of paramount importance which straddles both immigration and the long term implications of the decline in the birthrate.

LILLEY

Proposal 28: Letter from Lord Fuller

Quantifying the economic impacts of meeting the UK's ambitions to reach Net Zero by 2050

Description of proposal

The Country has a legal obligation to reach NetZero by 2050. It is a worthy objective but the Economic impacts of meeting that objective have not been reliably quantified nearly 16 years after the Climate Change Act 2008 was passed. We are approaching half-way there and yet there is still no consensus of the costs.

This is a complex area in a contended space. There are competing measurement standards. There are competing methodologies. There are certainly difference in Political approach.

At some stage the national discourse needs to progress from the generalities of describing the march to NetZero in qualitative terms and towards identifying some real tangible numbers and valuation methods. Existing plans focus on the practical or possible ways of reducing carbon emissions but the real-life costs and unintended consequences are not always described—or are based on scaling-up expensive pilot plants or approaches.

The economic impacts of reaching NetZero may not be solely financial. Impacts might be expressed in terms of jobs created or lost, energy security foregone and other difficulties and opportunities. We also need to bring order to the wild-west of various competing 'standards' some domestic, others International upon which global trade will be based.

The House of Lords has the expertise and convening power to bring order and structure to the debate so that, in the years to come we can set-out the nature of the economic impacts, the principles for measurement and the likely quantum of the mountain that the nation must climb and the opportunity costs of making that move.

Purpose of inquiry

I do not see this as an opportunity to re-run debates over whether NetZero is a good idea or not. This is not about re-hashing the debate of the social & environmental costs of NOT meeting the targets. I do see that the House can make an important contribution to setting out the quantum of financial and economic cost of meeting the deadline and set out the valuation principles and standards that others can follow as we continue on the path to 2050.

Relevant Member experience

The House contains a wide range of members with expertise. There are economists, environmentalists, bankers & financiers all of whom could contribute. We have a former deputy Chairman of Shell plc, decarbonising food production will attract interest from farmers and landowners.

I see this as a quantitative and numbers-led opportunity to add to the previously qualitative and generalist discourse on this matter.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

Helping the UK understand the economic impacts transcends nearly every department, not just the bespoke Net Zero department. We have the ability to

scrutinise the competing priorities of the Treasury, Business, Local Government, DEFRA for the most part and other departments to a lesser extent, for example DCMS would be impacted by the costs of upgrading public swimming pools.

10-month time frame

It is certainly an enormous subject but setting out the principles, issues and options that should be in scope and identifying why we have been unable to get a consensus around the economic impacts should be achievable.

Additional comments

I attach a proposal for a Special Enquiry Committee to investigate the economic and financial costs of meeting Net Zero by 2050. We are approaching half-way to the deadline since the Climate Change Act was passed but we still have no idea of the financial costs to the economy of hitting the target.

I do not want to question WHETHER we should be meeting NetZero. That debate has been settled. But, as a nation we do need to know what meeting NetZero will cost in human, economic and financial terms. That is a debate that has not been had.

I do think we have the convening power to set the terms of the debate with quantitative approaches, standard setting and asking the big thinkers from within the House, from across the departments and in industry and academia to re-establish the terms of debate and discourse so our nation knows what's coming.

I am a new member of The House. My experience here is limited. But I do think that this would be an important piece of policy work and one which would enhance the reputation of the House for Scrutiny and addressing one of the most important issues of the age in an organised and authoritative manner.

FULLER

Proposal 29: Letter from Baroness Young of Old Scone

Safeguarding England from the growing impacts of climate change—making progress on the adaption challenges

Description of proposal

Much of the focus on the climate change emergency has centred on reducing carbon emissions (mitigation). The Cinderella issues has been adaptation, how the nation can become more resilient to the impacts of climate change which are already upon us, such as increased flooding, extreme rain events and storminess, heatwaves and droughts with their associated health and public safety issues. As levels of CO₂ continue to rise globally, these impacts are growing, with this year's excessive rains and last year's very high temperatures certain to recur more frequently with significant social, health, economic and environmental costs. Under current policies, it is estimated that the total cost of climate change damage to the UK is projected to increase from 1.1% of GDP at present to 3.3% by 2050 and 7.4% by 2100. In stark terms, unless we act more systematically and vigorously, deaths will increase alongside significant economic and environmental loss.

The government's Third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3) released in July 2023 sets out the current plans to adapt to climate change over the period 2023–8, including adapting infrastructure (for example, flood risk management, utilities and transport networks), supporting local authorities, business and farmers in adapting to climate change impacts and protecting the natura environment. NAP3 has been widely criticised. The Adaptation Committee of the Climate Change Committee (ably chaired by Baroness Brown of Cambridge) has carried out a detailed assessment of the programme and the Climate Change Committee has concluded, on the basis of this assessment, that “it falls far short of what is needed” and called for an urgent refresh of the NAP3 and the UK's adaptation action more broadly. Meantime, the High Court has ordered a judicial review of the NAP3, though the results of the hearing have not yet been delivered.

The Adaptation Programmes have now been running for over 10 years and though progress has been made in some sectors, action overall has been markedly insufficient. A special inquiry committee would not consider where the NAP is falling short as this has already been well identified by the Adaptation Committee's assessments and the submissions to the judicial review. It would identify and consider issues fundamental to increasing the effectiveness of the nation's climate change programme:

- Identifying the barriers to progress
- Identifying the root causes of these barriers
- Clarifying objectives and targets for each of the key players (including national government and its agencies, local authorities, utilities, business, land managers and farmers and individuals)
- Considering how an acceptable level of risk should be agreed and targets or standards set in line with this.
- Considering what changes to policy, process, leadership, responsibilities, funding mechanisms and legal and governance frameworks are necessary to develop and deliver clear pathways with achievable timescales to overcome the barriers and deliver an urgent step change in effective action.
- Considering other countries' approaches to ensuring action on adaptation

The next Climate Change Risk Assessment will aim also to improve cross-government ways of working and governance structures to deliver effective adaptation action. This inquiry would provide significant insights to this.

Purpose of inquiry

The inquiry would diagnose why progress is lagging in improving the nation's climate change resilience and offer solutions improve the planning and delivery across all stakeholders. It would provide a significant input to the National Adaptation Programme process and hold the government accountable for leading delivery. It would help make a step change in reducing the human, health, economic and environmental costs of climate change in England.

Relevant Member experience

This inquiry would draw extensively on the following areas of skills and knowledge which are well represented across the House:

- Business
- Environment and sustainability
- Infrastructure, utilities and transport
- Agriculture and land management
- Local Government
- Economics, fiscal and taxation instruments R
- Regulation
- Cross government working
- Theory of change
- Public Engagement
- International climate change policy

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

The challenge of adapting to the already growing impacts of climate change can only be met by substantial cross-departmental working. That has already been recognised by commentators on the previous National Adaptation Plans. Though currently the responsibility for adaptation and NAPs lies with Defra, progress can only be delivered if MHCLG, Energy Security and Net Zero, Transport, Business, Health and the Treasury are involved and committed. Any machinery of government or delivery process changes will require Cabinet Office involvement. In addition, progress will also need to enfold a range of non-ministerial departments and agencies, including OFWAT, the Environment Agency, the Committee on Climate Change, NHS England, the National Infrastructure Commission, Natural England and Network Rail. This inquiry is one that is best suited to the attention it would only receive by a House of Lords Special Inquiry Committee. Due to restrictions on remits and the departmental nature of them, it would be difficult—if not impossible—for a House of Commons Committee to undertake an inquiry in the same depth and with the same breadth as this proposal.

10-month time frame

Yes. There has been much analysis of adaptation action in general and the NAPs in particular by the Adaptation Committee and others such as the Grantham

Institute. Previous Select and other Committees reported on specific relevant areas and are listed in the Appendix. These would provide useful analysis. What is now needed is strategic conclusions on why progress is not being made and what policy, structural, governance and other changes are needed to ensure delivery at pace, to meet this increasing challenge.

Additional comments

I am grateful for the support given by Baroness Brown of Cambridge, Chair of the Adaptation Committee and Chris Starks, recent Chief Executive of the Climate Change Committee in shaping this proposal.

Appendix

Relevant previous reports from parliamentary committees

1. House of Lords

The Horticultural Sector Committee examined the impact of climate change, alongside biodiversity loss, on the horticultural sector.

2. House of Commons

- Public Accounts Committee, ‘Government resilience: Extreme weather’, 19 April 2024, HC 454 of session 2023–24
- Following an inquiry into extreme weather and government resilience, the committee concluded: To strengthen resilience to national risks, including extreme weather, the government needs to focus more on medium- and long-term prevention and preparation, including, appointing a chief risk officer to consider cross-cutting and system-wide risks. Government needs to set out clear roles and responsibilities for citizens, the voluntary sector, the public and private sector; be explicit about the level of resilience it wants to achieve and how it will get there; and speed up the development and implementation of its approach to resilience investment.
- Environmental Audit Committee, ‘Heat resilience and sustainable cooling’, 31 January 2024, HC 279 of session 2023–24
- Following an inquiry into heat resilience and sustainable cooling, the committee concluded the UK needed a “comprehensive national heat resilience strategy [...] to draw together all of the recommendations outlined in our report and ensure coordinated action on all fronts”.
- Environmental Audit Committee, ‘Environmental change and food security’, 8 December 2023, HC 312 of session 2023–24
- Following an inquiry into environmental change and food security, the committee’s report focused on “food security in terms of the UK’s ability to provide enough food for its population, in a sustainable way”.
- Environmental Audit Committee, ‘The UK and the Arctic environment’, 13 October 2023, HC 1141 of session 2022–23
- Report considering the effects of a changing Arctic on the UK, following an inquiry into the subject.
- Environmental Audit Committee, ‘Accelerating the transition from fossil fuels and securing energy supplies’, 5 January 2023, HC 109 of session 2022–23

- Report considering climate change impacts and extreme weather in the UK and climate security.
- In addition, the Defence Committee has considered the security implications of climate change, for example in a report on ‘Defence and climate change’ and another on the changing climate in the Arctic.

3. Joint committees

- Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, ‘Readiness for storms ahead? Critical national infrastructure in an age of climate change’, 27 October 2022, HL 74 of session 2022–23
- Report noting that the UK’s critical national infrastructure was “very vulnerable to extreme weather and other effects of climate change, such as sea level rises”.

4. Other bodies

- Climate Change Committee, ‘Progress in adapting to climate change: 2023 report to Parliament’, 29 March 2023
- Report providing the committee’s biennial report of progress in preparing for climate change as required under the Climate Change Act 2008. It provides an assessment of progress at the end of two National Adaptation Programmes, the statutory programmes required to help prepare the country for climate change. See also selected additional reports on the theme of adaptation.
- UK Health Security Agency, ‘Climate change: Health effects in the UK’, updated 15 January 2024 (multiple reports on the health effects of climate change)
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, ‘Climate change adaptation reporting: Third round reports’, updated 9 August 2023 (collection of reports from organisations invited to report under the third round of the climate change adaptation reporting power)
- National Audit Office, ‘Resilience to flooding’, 15 November 2023
- Met Office, ‘2023: A year of new climate records’, 22 August 2024

5. Earlier committee reports focused on adaptation in particular include:

- House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, ‘Coastal flooding and erosion, and adaptation to climate change: Interim report’, 1 November 2019, HC 56 of session 2019
- House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, ‘Heatwaves: Adapting to climate change’, 26 July 2018, HC 826 of session 2017–19
- House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, ‘Climate change adaptation’, 11 March 2015, HC 453 of session 2014–15

This proposal is supported by Baroness Brown of Cambridge, Lord Deben, Baroness Hayman, Lord Krebs, the Lord Bishop of Norwich, Baroness Parminter, Lord Randall of Uxbridge and Lord Whitty.

YOUNG OF OLD SCONE

Proposal 30: Letter from Lord Foulkes of Cumnock

Scams and how to prevent them.

Description of proposal

I have become increasingly aware of the growing problems of scams which result in loss of finance, professional duplicity and other deceptions which particularly affect older people but are increasingly widespread and affecting growing sections of society. They involve banking, insurance, medical and clinical psychology and, no doubt, others I have not identified. There are those where banking details are sought on the phone or on line and where some people have lost many thousands of pounds. In the other area some people have posed as doctors and got away with it for many years and I understand this has also been happening with pseudo clinical psychologists.

Purpose of inquiry

The Inquiry would first identify the nature and the scale of scams, including those that we may not be fully aware of and suggest ways of countering them, through information and education, extra powers to scrutiny bodies and possible legislation.

Relevant Member experience

We have members with particular knowledge and experience in all of the areas concerned.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

Many different departments and agencies are involved in the areas to be identified and dealt with.

10-month time frame

Yes.

FOULKES OF CUMNOCK

Proposal 31: Letter from Lord Dubs

Should there be more devolution in England?

Description of proposal

Power and decision-making in England is highly centralised around Westminster. Outside Westminster, England is an uneven patchwork of local government power, shared out variously between mayors, County and District Councils. While we now have a devolution settlement in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland there is a political vacuum as regards devolution in England.

The aim of this inquiry would be to investigate the balance of power in England between Westminster and England's regions, to establish if current power arrangements and service delivery are optimal and to evaluate how they could be improved. The inquiry would examine the drawbacks and benefits of existing models and previous devolution proposals.

This proposal is relevant to the devolution of power to regions, combinations of local authorities and/or Local Authorities and would help the Labour government deliver on its manifesto commitment to "deepen devolution settlements for existing Combined Authorities" and to "widen devolution to more areas, encouraging local authorities to come together and take on new powers".

Purpose of inquiry

Although this enquiry would be essentially concerned with devolution in England, there would inevitably be some issues that would affect the balance of power between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The inquiry would cover everything from setting up new structures to devolving power and/or service delivery responsibilities to Local Authorities, or combinations of Local Authorities, and regions.

The inquiry would have to consider other examples of devolved structures, such as in Germany, Italy and Australia. It would also examine previous attempts to establish devolved centres of power, including the last Labour government's proposal, drawn up by Lord Prescott, to establish regional elected assemblies, although this was rejected in a referendum by the voters of the North East.

It would explore the potential for a new constitutional settlement, either based on existing centres of power, such as Local Authorities, or on new ones. It would examine whether it would be right to consider new regional elected bodies or a combination of new bodies and existing structures.

Relevant Member experience

This House is ideally placed to carry out an inquiry of this kind because of the breadth of knowledge of its members, among whom are former Council leaders, government ministers including those who have had responsibility for the three devolved administrations and representatives of business and trade unions.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

Emphatically, this proposal crosses every departmental boundary apart from defence and foreign affairs.

Finance and taxation are obviously crucial elements and one key issue would be the extent to which devolved authorities should have income-generating powers.

The delivery of NHS services, including social care, is another crucial element and one key issue would be the creation of a National Care Service. Would it be better if cooperation with the NHS were to be at national level or through local arrangements linking health and social care? Labour's manifesto commits to the delivery of local social care services developed through local partnerships.

10-month time frame

Yes.

Additional comments

As a Northern Ireland Minister, I took the Northern Ireland Act through the Lords and I was therefore involved in many discussions about the powers of the future Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly. I still recall the debates that resulted in the separation of powers as they are today for example broadcasting and social security remained in Westminster and health, education, transport and agriculture were devolved.

DUBS

Proposal 32: Letter from Lord Ravensdale, Baroness Morris of Yardley, Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay and Lord Storey

Social Mobility

Description of proposal

Social mobility was last considered by the House of Lords in a special inquiry committee in 2015. It remains a defining issue for the UK because, compared to other countries, the most disadvantaged in the UK are less likely to climb the income ladder and the economically advantaged tend to stay at the top⁶⁸. It is therefore a critical issue for the government to consider in meeting its aspirations to build a fairer society in the UK.

Since the last inquiry, there have been several developments which have exacerbated the situation, including the Covid-19 pandemic and rises in inflation. Recent social unrest in the UK may also be a symptom of the underlying issues. As well as the proposal standing on its own merits, these developments and the changes to the national situation mean that it is time for the House to consider this critical issue for the nation once again.

The determinants of social mobility are broad and complex. The social mobility commission used four drivers in its assessment of social mobility⁶⁹:

- (1) Conditions of childhood
- (2) Educational opportunities and quality
- (3) Work opportunities
- (4) Social capital

To provide focus for this inquiry on a wide-ranging subject area, it is proposed that the inquiry focusses on interlinked items 2) and 3). The inquiry would focus on young people and would undertake an assessment of how educational and work opportunities can be improved, and how they could be better integrated to help drive social mobility within the UK.

The inquiry touches directly on significant areas of 3 different government departments (MHCLG, DfE and DWP) as well as the work of many others, which makes it particularly well suited to being a House of Lords inquiry.

Purpose of inquiry

The inquiry would aim to use the expertise within the House to investigate the reasons for low social mobility within the UK, in particular the transition from school to work, and provide recommendations to government to help remedy the situation.

The inquiry would be aiming to help the government achieve a step change in a long-standing social problem in the UK, benefitting young people and society as a whole in the future—ultimately demonstrating a measured improvement in social mobility in the coming decade.

68 State of the Nation 2022: Chapter 2—Mobility outcomes

69 State of the Nation 2023: People and Places, Chapter 4

Relevant Member experience

Social mobility is a complex issue that has been championed by governments over many decades. Because the factors and determinants of social mobility are so wide ranging, the broad expertise in the House is ideally suited to tackling this question.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

The inquiry touches directly on significant areas of 3 different government departments (MHCLG, DfE and DWP) but also the broader work of many others (e.g. libraries at DCMS; the role of the Armed Forces at MoD; work by DBT to broaden the base of entrepreneurs) which makes it particularly well suited to being a House of Lords inquiry.

10-month time frame

Yes—this is a focussed topic area for which an inquiry could be completed by the end of November 2025.

***RAVENSDALE, MORRIS OF YARDLEY, PARKINSON OF WHITLEY BAY AND
STOREY***

Proposal 33: Letter from Baroness Boycott

The Declining Appeal of Parenthood

Description of proposal

The Office for National Statistics (ONS)⁷⁰ recently reported that “total fertility” in the UK (calculated based on the birthrate across different age groups) fell to 1.49 children per woman in 2022.

Without significant immigration, that is well below the rate of 2.1 needed to maintain a steady population and support the ageing population.

This Inquiry will examine the causes of this shift as well as think about the implications of it.

Whilst economic factors surrounding the cost of living (and specifically high childcare costs) have been well documented, the declining appeal of parenthood at a more cultural level has not.

As they become more educated and healthcare better available, people tend to have fewer children, and to do so later in life, if they do so at all. Becoming a parent is increasingly understood as a choice that needs to be considered carefully, carried out diligently, and weighed up against other choices, including relationship satisfaction or career success.

With the emergence of ‘child-free’ identities becoming more established, this Inquiry will investigate the appeal (or otherwise) of contemporary parenthood.

Purpose of inquiry

This inquiry will bring together evidence to inform policy and shape the development of equitable and efficient services as well as policy interventions that genuinely support families as well as society more widely.

Relevant Member experience

We would welcome the substantive expertise of Members in the fields of demography, health care and education with a focus on gender and inequality. However, we would be particularly keen to draw on the life-experience of members who have, for example, delayed or avoided parenthood, or those who have become grandparents in later life and/or who have experience of intra-family negotiations around childcare and care for older family members.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

We propose to take a holistic view of the issue of social reproduction by calling on experts across a range of specialisms, including academia, policy and third-sector organisations to consider the environmental, economic and cultural implications of this international demographic trend in declining fertility rates.

In addressing early parenthood holistically (rather than through, for example, ‘maternity care’ or ‘Early Childhood Education’) we will bring together innovative perspective on parents’ well-being and fertility trends. Improvements in this area have an unusual capacity for far-reaching effects: promoting family and community health, responsible citizenship and the potential to enhance human flourishing.

70 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/bulletins/birthsummarytablesenglandandwales/2022refreshedpopulations>

10-month time frame

Yes.

Additional comments

I think this enquiry would be ideally suited to the Lords as it requires a combination of factual evidence with much reflection and thought. Why is this happening? What can we do? There is no denying how critical this is for our future generations yet as an issue it barely considered beyond the bare facts.

BOYCOTT

Proposal 34: Letter from the Lord Bishop of Gloucester

The purposes of imprisonment

Description of proposal

An inquiry committee is needed to agree the purposes of imprisonment and thereby inform criminal justice policy across a range of agencies. Without clarity on what prison is for, the different parts of the criminal justice system and its wider stakeholders project different views and expectations onto the system, confusing efforts to reimagine and build an effective, well-functioning prison system. The committee will explore how a clearly-defined purpose of imprisonment would aid policy makers and practitioners. It will also look at the important task of engaging the public in considering the purpose of prison. If a statutory statement of the purpose of imprisonment were aligned with community views, this would enhance public confidence in the work of the courts and the prison estate. At present, the public express little confidence in the courts and prisons, in part as a result of the lack of clarity around the purpose and use of imprisonment. A clear Parliamentary statement on this issue would also benefit prisoners who would better understand why they have been imprisoned.

The Inquiry would consider how best to approach defining the purposes of imprisonment today. It will consider that a definition of the purposes of imprisonment does not exist in English Law.

Depriving someone of their liberty is an action taken by courts with caution and care. His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service's strategic objective is to:

“carry out sentences given by the courts, in custody and the community, and rehabilitate people in our care through education and employment.”⁷¹

Detailed scrutiny will be required of other jurisdictions who have directed the courts on this issue. The UN Standard Minimum Rules for the treatment of prisoners (the so-called Mandela rules) specifies the purposes of a sentence of imprisonment and a number of jurisdictions such as New Zealand have also legislated guidance for courts and the community more broadly regarding this issue.

Purpose of inquiry

The aims of the inquiry should be threefold:

- (1) Agree a purpose of imprisonment for policy makers to consider.
- (2) Assess how a legislative definition might aid sentencers, the Sentencing Council, policy-makers, Prison Governors and Officers in their roles.
- (3) Explore how the purposes of imprisonment might be communicated to the general public.

Relevant Member experience

The House has many experienced members who are well placed to inform the next steps to tackle this crisis. This includes former Lord Chancellors, Court of Appeal and Supreme Court Judges, Professors of Law, practicing Barristers, victims' representatives and inter alia.

⁷¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-prison-and-probation-service/about>

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

The prison crisis demands a cross-governmental approach that aligns with the key interests of several Departments. Discussions will include the Ministry of Justice, the Treasury and the Home Office, all of whom will have important contributions to make.

10-month time frame

This work is possible within the timeframe.

This proposal is supported by Lord Bradley, Lord Carter of Haslemere and Lord Farmer.

+ RACHEL GLOUCESTER

Additional comment from Lord Carter of Haslemere

I strongly support a special inquiry committee on the purposes of imprisonment. It is one of the most topical of current issues and critically important for prison capacity, human rights, reoffending rates, and taxpayers' money. There are few things which tick all those boxes.

Remarkably, there is no statutory or other provision which squarely focuses on the purpose of imprisonment. We only have statutory purposes of sentencing, but they don't guide the judge on whether to send a person to prison and what should happen to the offender in prison. It has never been more important to address this question.

CARTER OF HASLEMERE

Proposal 35: Letter from Baroness Scott of Needham Market

The Societal and Economic Impact of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) in the UK

Description of proposal

Current NHS figures—which are massively outdated—indicate that Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) affects some 250,000 people across the UK. The number is around 1.3m if we take into account the number of people with Long Covid whose symptoms directly mirror ME, including the hallmark post-exertional malaise. Despite over a million people living with ME and ME-like symptoms, people are frequently met with scepticism and prejudice. In the worst cases, people with ME are deprived of vital medical care.

Owing to enduring issues people with ME face having their illness properly diagnosed and recorded by medical professionals, the true scale of the disease is not fully understood. The committee would seek to understand why misdiagnosis is still so common and the ways it can be prevented to help build a clear picture of ME in the UK.

We have no clear understanding of the scale of ME and ME type symptoms. Historically, research into ME has been severely underfunded, having received only £8.05m in the past decade. Finding a cure for ME has the potential to bring upwards of a million people back into the workforce and eliminate its £3.3b annual costs in welfare payments. Against the backdrop of constrained budgets, the committee would explore how research funding for ME can be allocated strategically to deliver meaningful results for this and other similar diseases.

Common symptoms linked to ME—including severe, debilitating fatigue that does not improve with rest, post-exertional malaise, sleep disturbance and cognitive difficulties—makes work difficult for many and impossible for some. This has an affect on productivity and economic growth. The committee would seek to understand how those with less severe cases of ME could be supported to work flexibly and explore measures to protect people with more severe cases from being forced to work when they are not fit to do so.

ME's debilitating effects result in many people having to rely on welfare. This introduces further complications for people with ME and other fluctuating conditions as capability assessments often struggle to capture the varying severity of the illness over time. The committee would explore the ways in which welfare assessments can better accommodate fluctuating conditions such as ME.

On World M.E. Day 2022, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced the Government's intention to develop a cross-government Interim Delivery Plan on ME/CFS for England, aligning with other devolved nations of the UK. The final plan, once published, will be a welcome step forward for the ME community but is focused on treatment and not the wider issues outlined above.

Purpose of inquiry

The Government's Delivery Plan on ME/CFS is expected to be published before the inquiry would start. The inquiry would seek to complement the delivery plan by filling in the gaps in policy that it fails to cover, particularly on these key points in the context of ME:

- Employment

- The welfare system
- Research funding
- Diagnosis and coding

The final report would recommend meaningful changes for policy makers to allow for a more accurate understanding of the prevalence of ME in the UK, the scale of its economic and societal impact, and a clear roadmap for reducing these.

Relevant Member experience

There are members of the House with backgrounds in both medicine and research who could make a huge contribution to this work. Many more have long experience of the issues raised by long term ill health especially the benefit system and employment. There are members with a background in the economics of ill health and with expertise in employment issues.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

The inquiry will assess the significant impact of ME on employment and workforce. Given that many individuals with ME are unable to work full-time or at all, this issue spans the responsibilities of the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), and His Majesty's Treasury (HMT).

Many people with ME face significant barriers in accessing appropriate social security support and the inquiry will examine the adequacy of existing assessment processes, aiming to identify and address gaps as well as addressing the need for coordinated policies between DHSC and DWP that facilitate workforce re-entry and retention for those living with ME.

Despite the significant impact of ME on public health, research into its causes, treatment, and management remains severely underfunded and comprehensive data on ME is currently lacking. The inquiry will explore how to improve data collection and sharing mechanisms between DHSC and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) to support research, healthcare planning, and public health interventions. The inquiry will look into coordinating a research funding strategy involving DHSC, DSIT, and HMT, aimed at increasing the allocation of resources to ME research.

10-month time frame

The proposed inquiry should be capable of uncovering compelling evidence and of reaching significant conclusions within the available time.

SCOTT OF NEEDHAM MARKET

Proposal 36: Letter from Lord Cromwell

UK engagement with space—opportunities and issues

Description of proposal

Space is a substantial and growing area of economic opportunity for the UK, as well as an increasingly contested zone—yet it is too often considered as beyond our earthly concerns.

Life on earth is in reality increasingly reliant on what goes on in space—from personal/commercial vehicle and shipping navigation to communications, from payment systems to meteorology, from defence to environmental monitoring. There is no department of government, or indeed government itself, that is not already dependent on, or involved in some way with, space-based activities.

State actors were previously the only participants in space. There is now increasing commercial involvement—whether launch and transport (for example taking astronauts to the space station), tourism or resource prospecting.

The typical ‘new frontier’ problems apply. Millions of pieces of ‘space junk’ now circulate at high speeds in the previous near-earth orbits causing damage, endangering the services that earth relies on and putting astronauts at very real risk. As each fragment—many untracked—impacts something, numerous further fragments are generated. There is growing awareness of this problem and perceptions that cleaning up space pollution is an economic opportunity in itself.

Space law needs to catch up—Cold War era treaties were general and signed by an incomplete set of state actors in an era of no commercial space activity. There are substantial opportunities for the UK as a leading centre of legal expertise, in particular maritime law (the oceans are a globally shared resource similar in some ways to space) to lead the way on the production and delivery of space law for the modern era. Some initiatives are already underway to promulgate regulations and licensing but an international legal framework is essential to regulate the safe and equitable use of space. This UK advantage needs to be explored and grasped now.

Purpose of inquiry

The committee would examine and clarify matters, including:

- Current importance of space and future **economic opportunities** for the UK
- UK’s place and potential role in the **regulation of space and space law**
- How space-related issues and opportunities could be better included in **UK national strategies** and government departments
- The role of space issues in **education and vocational training**—from STEM subjects to business incubators; from AI to legal expertise
- How best to **engage society** in the issues and opportunities of space

The committee would produce specific and practical recommendations in each of these areas, and others that arise during the course of the committee’s work.

Relevant Member experience

The House contains pockets of knowledge and engagement.

I am well-networked on space issues across both Houses and in the diverse areas of policy-making, the space industry, defence etc.

The Committee to draw in expert witnesses from across the sector—businesses initiatives in UK (from start-ups to established companies; from space junk clearance to defence; public (e.g. space catapult and launch facilities) and private); think tanks as well as UK Government officials and ministers responsible for space industries.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

DSIT is the department of the relevant Minister

That said, there is no department of government, or indeed government itself, that is not already dependent on, or involved in some way with, space-based activities.

10-month time frame

Yes. The 5 areas listed above could be covered within 20 sessions, in some cases as a single session, in other cases in more than one session.

Additional comments

Space is too often seen as beyond our concerns, but is a multi-billion Pound industry growing in the UK and elsewhere with a range of activities and opportunities.

Like many terrestrial ‘new frontiers’ it is also of potentially existential concern both environmentally- as orbits become choked—and in terms of defence—as space becomes contested and militarised.

It also has important implications for education and training that need to be addressed now.

Much of the above is not understood as widely as it should be, and the committee would produce focussed and specific outputs and recommendations from its work.

I hope that it is of interest and I am of course available for any queries or clarifications. I would also welcome any comments or suggestions to shape or focus the committee most effectively.

This proposal is supported by Lord Willetts.

CROMWELL

Additional comments from Lord Willetts

I strongly support Lord Cromwell’s proposal for a Special Inquiry Committee on Space.

Space is a critical part of national infrastructure. Many services, both public and private, now use Space. Some are dependent on it. Applications range from telecommunications to monitoring climate change, observing disasters to work out the help that is most needed, and assessing threats to national security. Space is the most effective way to observe what is happening on our world. But its range and significance is not appreciated by organisations which may already use it and other opportunities are not being taken. The breadth of expertise in the Lords would be well-suited to enable a review of the way we use Space now and how we can use it in future. The Special Inquiry need not be focussed on Space technologies but instead look outwards to Space’s usefulness in many areas of our national life.

The Lords has an excellent Science and Technology Committee as indeed does the Commons. But neither has applied this broad perspective to Space and neither appears to have any plans to do so.

It would be very relevant now. One reason is the intense interest in the Government in using technology to deliver better public services more efficiently. Space should be part of this. Moreover there is a key inter-ministerial meeting of the European Space Agency scheduled for November next year, the first such meeting since 2022. More than half of Britain's civil spending on Space is delivered through this Agency and an enquiry on how to ensure this money is well spent in ways to maximise wider benefit would be very topical and relevant to policy.

My role as Chair of the UK Space Agency informs my support for this proposal.

WILLETTS

Proposal 37: Letter from Lord Teverson

UK Seas: A Health Check

Description of proposal

Our oceans are our most interconnected eco-system, making up over 70% of the earth's surface and often described as the 'lungs of the earth' producing up to 80% of atmospheric oxygen and acting as a carbon sink absorbing CO₂. Ocean health is critical not only for tackling climate change and restoring nature but also for human health. Yet oceans are coming under increasing pressure, taking the brunt of global heating, with warming oceans and acidification creating toxic algal blooms and 'dead zones' and causing havoc to marine life. The true state of ocean deterioration goes unnoticed by most people often happening away from our immediate shores—with pollution from oil and gas extraction, chemicals, plastics, overfishing, shipping and heavy industry all contributing.

Despite the Government pledging to protect 30% of sea for nature by 2030 at COP15, and legally binding targets in the Environment Act 2021, progress has been slow with many of the UK's marine protected areas lacking adequate management plans for nature recovery or effective monitoring and enforcement. Delays to the delivery of updates to the UK Marine Strategy combined with fragmented governance are hampering joined up plans for recovery of the marine environment. The OEP in its recent advice to Government on its review of the Environmental Improvement Plan identified as one of five priority actions the need to 'speed up action in marine environments' and found that at present domestic commitments fall short of what is needed to achieve its targets and commitments.⁷² It also recommended setting out clear mechanisms for reconciling competing demands for use of land and sea.

This inquiry could be cross cutting, taking a stock take of the health of UK seas (both around the British Isles and its overseas territories), look at what the driving causes of damage are, what data is being collected to inform analysis of progress, what the barriers to progress are and recommend what changes the government will need to implement to speed up progress to achieve its 30x30 and other targets,

This could include:

- **Examining whether our MPA network** is delivering to protect our marine environment and what more needs to be done; including whether bottom trawling should be banned in MPAs.
- **Identifying what more needs to happen to deliver sustainable fisheries** and what is driving ongoing overfishing in the UK.
- **Looking at the impacts of pollution**—plastic, chemical and sewage—and how is this monitored and enforced.
- **Examining how to balance demands on the sea—such as fossil fuel extraction, space for renewables, cabling and port infrastructure and shipping—and how this links into** delivery of our legally binding climate and nature targets.
- **Clarifying climate impacts** and the positive contribution healthy UK seas can make to adaptation and blue carbon storage, bringing economic and health and wellbeing benefits to coastal communities.

⁷² <https://www.theoep.org.uk/report/oep-submits-advice-governments-review-its-environmental-improvement-plan>

- **Looking at the role of UK seas in delivery of our international commitments and responsibilities.**

Purpose of inquiry

The inquiry would have the aim of drawing together the different demands on UK seas which are impacting ocean health and delivery of wider goals and targets, assessing the policy gaps and identifying both why there has been a lack of progress and also where there is a lack of alignment between sector specific policies and wider targets. One example of this lack of alignment is where the decisions to set fishing quota limits consistently above scientifically recommended levels are leading to overfishing in UK waters hampering recovery of fish stocks and impacting marine ecosystems. Another example is the lack of monitoring and enforcement of oil spills by oil and gas regulator OPRED.

Compiling in one place evidence based recommendations for government to improve ocean health is not something a committee of either House has attempted, at least in recent years, and taking place at half-way through the decade to 2030, would re-focus government's attention on tackling this critical issue which is integral to human and planetary health, as well as our economy.

Relevant Member experience

Marine and water related issues is an area which the House has demonstrated not only interest in, but expertise, and has a track record of improving legislation on. We have experts on energy infrastructure, climate and environment, fisheries, ecology, regulation and trade to name but a few.

This inquiry would benefit from the depth of view a Lords Committee is able to give a topic area, considering difficult areas and competing interests in an independent and transparent way.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

It will not be possible to deliver progress towards healthy UK seas without joined up cross-departmental and cross-sectoral working (with 4 UK administrations and multiple non-departmental public bodies involved the governance of the UK's marine areas). This inquiry would cut across several departmental briefs, including Defra (fisheries and MPA management), the FCDO (for the international aspect), DESNZ (energy infrastructure, delivery of climate change and adaptation targets), the devolved offices, Trade department (shipping), MCHLG and Transport (both significant causes of water pollution run off affecting coastal communities), Science, Innovation and Technology (regulations for pollution, chemicals etc). As well as commitment to progress from the above departments, organisations such as the MMOs, Natural England, Crown Estate and JNCC will also be part of delivery of solutions.

It would be difficult for a commons committee to look at this issue in such a comprehensive way, due to their departmental specific remits.

10-month time frame

Yes, although it is a big topic, there is a wider community outside of parliament which is working on these issues, and as such a wide pool to draw evidence on. An inquiry of this scope would suit the focus that only a special inquiry committee would be likely to give it.

Proposal 38: Letter from the Lord Bishop of Oxford, Lord Bethell, Lord Clement-Jones, Baroness Harding of Winscombe, Baroness Kidron and Lord Knight of Weymouth

What does a good digital childhood and adolescence look like?

Description of proposal

Every parent in the United Kingdom faces the question of when and whether to buy their child a smartphone. Families weigh the consequences of when to give access to the digital world and social media and how to limit that access once given. Every school in the country needs to have a policy on access to smart phones during the school day: the policy implications for heads and governors; multi academy trusts; local authorities; teachers and pupils are enormous. The Online Safety Act became law last year but implementation is only just beginning through Ofcom's published Codes of Practice which need to be laid before Parliament.

There is widespread agreement that access to the digital world brings benefits but also risks. Each person only has one childhood. It is vital that advice and policy is based on the best scientific research. There is a widening public debate on what a good digital childhood looks like but as yet no clear consensus. Professor Jonathan Haidt published *The Anxious Generation* in April, 2024 arguing that access to the digital world should be regulated and restricted because of the risks to teenage mental health and the development of the adolescent brain. Professor Lucy Foulkes has just published *Coming of Age: How Adolescence Shapes us* which argues for greater freedom and disputes Haidt's conclusions. Which advice is to be trusted? What do children and young people themselves want and what policy do they believe they need to be safe and flourish online?

Purpose of inquiry

This one year enquiry will be focussed deliberately on what a good digital childhood looks like in 2024 and in the coming decade given the present state of social media; regulation; safety by design; knowledge of child and adolescent development and the advent of new technologies including generative AI.

The aim of the enquiry will be to develop a positive vision of a good digital childhood and adolescence as the basis for recommendations to government; policy makers; regulators; technology companies; parents and families and young people themselves.

Relevant Member experience

The enquiry will make full use of the range of expertise available to the House of Lords drawing on social scientists, psychology, technologists; healthcare professionals; educators and the faith communities.

The enquiry will take evidence from children and young people themselves and develop a programme of direct engagement as well as a wide range of experts in healthcare; education and related fields.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

The enquiry will address policy covered by at least three government departments: DSIT in the governance of new technology, the implementation of the Online Safety Act through Ofcom; and the balance between ethics and innovation; the Department of Health enabling the flourishing of children and young people in a digital age and understanding the mental health crisis among adolescents; the

Department of Education in developing workable policies in relation to technology and mobile phone use in schools.

10-month time frame

Yes. A call for evidence can be taken from academics and charities working in the field, from children and young people; from schools who are pioneering new approaches; from parents; from different jurisdictions across the world; from DSIT, the Department of Education and the Department of Health; from technology companies and from Ofcom.

Additional comments

As Bishop of Oxford, I have been part of a one year Select Committee enquiry on Artificial Intelligence and a member from 21-24 of the House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee. I have worked over the last year with a cross party group of peers on the revision and implementation of the Online Safety Act.

**+ STEVEN OXON, BETHELL, CLEMENT-JONES, HARDING OF WINSCOMBE,
KIDRON AND KNIGHT OF WEYMOUTH**

Proposal 39: Letter from Lord Wills*Whether the country's regulatory regimes are still fit for purpose*

Over recent months, Ofcom, Ofwat, Ofgem and the ORR have all faced mounting criticism for their failures to control prices adequately and enforce standards. The inquiry would investigate how far these criticisms are justified, and in so far as they are, how far regulatory failure is the result of the remit in a changing world, how far it is down to the calibre of leadership, and how far it might be the result of inadequate funding, among other relevant factors.

These regulatory failures affect everyone in the country, sometimes catastrophically, the House contains a broad range of experience and expertise which could contribute powerfully to such an inquiry, the policy areas cross Departments, it should complement the work of existing Committees and I see no reason why the work should not be completed in 10 months.

WILLS

Proposal 40: Letter from Baroness Kramer

Whistleblowing

Description of proposal

Whistleblowers blow the whistle because they want to protect the public from harm. They believe that the law will investigate wrongdoing, hold those responsible to account and protect them from retaliation. As examples after example demonstrates this is not how the law works.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, known as the whistleblowers bill, sitting within the Employment Rights Act 1996 was intended to provide redress for workers who had been subjected to detriment as a result of making protected disclosures via the employment tribunal.

The failures of this legislation are well documented, exemplified most notably by the treatment of the Sub Post Masters.

There are a number of glaring issues in that the law fails to recognise that every citizen can be a whistleblower and that it fails to make provision for the investigation of allegations of wrongdoing or hold anyone to account. The Post Office Horizon scandal is but one example of how whistleblowing falls between the cracks of the whistleblowing framework and how that framework fails to address this issue.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act while well intentioned has failed because it is purely concerned with employment rights and not the public interest. Principally there is no mechanism to address evidence of wrongdoing, and in over 26 years not a single case has been passed from the Tribunal Service to a regulator or police. Whistleblowers are left to find their own way through a complex and multifaceted regulatory structure with no power and no financial support if they choose to pursue their concerns.

Evidence confirms that 96% of the cases heard in the employment tribunal are unsuccessful even in the many cases where the ET upholds some or all of the protected disclosures because it is almost impossible to prove that the detriment arose because of the whistleblowing. Many cases fail because the whistleblower is not deemed to be a worker, indeed many people who raise concerns are not workers in the sense of the law.

A recent survey by the whistleblowing charity Protect found that fewer than a third of the people questioned were aware of the law, who was protected and how to access protections.

I am proposing that the definition of whistleblowing, the treatment of the concerns raised and whether the employment tribunal is the right forum should be the principal objective of the special enquiry.

Purpose of inquiry

- (1) Determine of the effectiveness of the legislation to protect whistleblowers.
- (2) Determine the effectiveness of existing law as a deterrent to wrongdoers.
- (3) Determine the level of understanding of the role and responsibilities of Parliamentarians in the whistleblowing process.

- (4) Determine the role of members of the House of Lords when confronted with a whistleblowing situation or a whistleblower seeking assistance and support.

Relevant Member experience

Members of the House of Lords are in a unique position. They have had the benefit of being able to examine and challenge evidence related to all of the major scandals. Most recently the House has debated Post Office Horizon, Hillsborough, the contaminated blood scandal, maternity care scandal, the PPE scandal and ongoing scandals including those associated with mis-selling across the banking sector and the disbarring of junior doctors as whistleblowers. In addition, the child sexual abuse scandals, the grooming gangs and county lines scandals, and now Harrods have demonstrated just how invisible the whistleblowers who are often also victims are to the police.

Each of these scandals have been exposed by whistleblowers, many of whom have paid a high price for speaking up, including many of the journalists, who have lost their careers, relationships and homes. Those who qualify under the law as whistleblowers have been let down because the law excludes them. Bringing together expertise from all of sectors will enable the committee to identify and investigate the complexities of the interconnecting issues that challenge whistleblowers, the challenges facing the prescribed persons and others who have to manage both the whistleblowers and the concerns they raise.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

Every government department has a whistleblowing policy. Evidence available concludes that few of these departments have read or understand the policy, or how to access the policy to blow the whistle.

The annual report published by the Department of Business and Trade, and Employment Tribunal figures are inconsistent with other data available. These inconsistencies and the well documented fear of retaliation undermines the potential for people to speak out.

The proposal will shine a light on the gaps in existing regulations and enable the committee to identify proposals to improve effectiveness and deliver economic efficiencies by removing duplication and identifying waste.

10-month time frame

The Committee can call upon NGO's and other specialists working in this field to assist including the APPG for Whistleblowing that has looked at aspects of the issue. Legal professionals who specialise in representing whistleblowers, regulators and victims will all be prepared to assist the inquiry.

Additional comments

MP's are prescribed persons who have duties and responsibilities when whistleblowers approach them for assistance, they have some protection. Members of the House of Lords are not prescribed persons and have no protections when whistleblowers approach them. This special investigation is an opportunity to address the vulnerability and risks arising to members as a result of the gaps and inconsistencies in the legislation.

The inquiry will undoubtedly identify weaknesses within the existing whistleblowing framework across the Parliamentary estate as well as within the legislation. These findings can be used to improve the framework and prevent future disasters and scandals and protect members from falling foul of the law.

KRAMER

POST-LEGISLATIVE SCRUTINY PROPOSALS

Proposal 41: Letter from the Lord Bishop of St Albans

Agriculture Act 2020—Post-legislative scrutiny

Description of proposal

The Agriculture Act⁷³ sets out measures to increase transparency and fairness in the supply chain for farmers and food producers. It does this by introducing new requirements on collection and sharing of data; by placing fair dealing obligations on business purchasers of agricultural products; and by introducing new measures on Producer Organisations. The Act also gives Ministers powers to intervene in agricultural markets in exceptional conditions, such as to provide farmers with financial support or operate public intervention and private storage aid schemes.

Aspects of the Act that warrant scrutiny include:

- Part 1 Chapter 1 (Clauses 4, 5 & 6) which relate to new financial assistance powers, and reporting and monitoring on the impacts of financial assistance given. Reports about financial assistance given have to date been produced annually, and are simply historical in nature. There is scope within the legislation for these reports to be produced earlier, and more frequently, which would make them more ‘real time’. Queries from sector-representing organisations about what exactly has happened to ex-Basic Payment Scheme monies would fall under this.
- Part 1 Chapter 2, which relates to Direct Payments after EU Exist, including phasing out direct payments and power to provide for delinked payments and lump sum payments in lieu of relevant payments. At the moment no detail has been provided on how these payments will be phased out after 2024, although the reductions in payments need to be agreed annually as set out in the Act. Legislation for the remaining years of the agricultural transition (2025-8) needs to be set. Issues of certainty and business and planning support for the agricultural industry are concerns here.
- Part 2 Chapter 2—Intervention in Agricultural Markets. Under section 20, the SoS may declare exceptional market conditions, justifying the use of powers of section 21, which include provision for financial assistance to agricultural producers whose income is adversely affected by the exceptional market conditions, among other supportive measures. There is need for clarity and review of what triggers a declaration of ‘exceptional market conditions’
 - In 2022, NFU called on DEFRA to launch an urgent investigation into whether a declaration should be made under section 20, following severe disruption experienced by egg producers, resulting in a shortage of eggs on shelves. The situation did not prompt a declaration, raising questions as to what parameters need to be met to justify a declaration of ‘exceptional market conditions’
- Related to the above, Part 3 Chapter 2 (Fair Dealing with Agricultural Producers and Others in the Supply Chain). Significant concerns amongst producers remain regarding supply chain fairness, particularly around animal

⁷³ <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8702/#:~:text=Third%3A%20it%20sets%20out%20measures%20to%20increase%20transparency,and%20by%20introducing%20new%20measures%20on%20Producer%20Organisations>

welfare standards in the UK vs. those in countries of origin for imports. There have been a number of fairness reviews by DEFRA, resulting in little or no action, and a long promised review for the red meat sector has still not been delivered. Broader reflection needed on whether the legislation has succeeded in protecting food producers from unfair trading and standards in supply chains, as originally intended.

Purpose of inquiry

To assess the impact and effectiveness of the legislation according to its original intentions, and consider whether certain powers provided in this Act have been underutilised. In light of the government's recognition that food security is national security, it is vital that this legislation is reviewed to ensure that it balances the aims of food production and environmental protection, as well as providing the necessary support for our food producers in volatile market conditions, and in the wake of Brexit and in future new trade agreements.

Relevant Member experience

The House has a number of members with a deep knowledge of, and interest in, these areas, in all groupings across the House. The enquiry will draw on those with expertise in a number of sectors, including trade, business, agriculture and retained EU law.

On the day of the King's Speech dedicated to the themes of energy, environment and housing, over 25 members who spoke in this debate referenced food security, agriculture, land use and biodiversity and environmental concerns, all of which are topics within the scope of this enquiry.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

The Agriculture Act 2020 legislates and provides for powers involving multiple government departments, including DEFRA, DBT and Treasury. There are also environmental considerations and concerns in relation to the legislation and its effectiveness, covering some of the remit of DESNZ. This enquiry will cover the impact and effectiveness of this legislation in a range of areas; food security, national security, post-Brexit trade agreements, supply chain fairness, agriculture, environment and business.

10-month time frame

Yes.

+ ALAN St ALBANS

Proposal 42: Letter from Lord Curry of Kirkharle

Post-legislative scrutiny of the Agriculture Act 2020

Description of proposal

The Agriculture Act 2020 represented the most radical change in agricultural policy for 70 years primarily through a shift from direct support provided by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to payments for public goods through the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS). Farmers and Growers can apply to participate in the ELMS and choose from a range of options to deliver environmental benefits in order to receive support. DEFRA describes the ELMS as ‘the cornerstone of the Government’s new Agriculture Policy’. Participation by farmers in ELMS is crucial so that the Government can achieve its environmental targets for clean water, clean air, nature restoration and net zero carbon emissions.

Since the Agriculture Act was introduced in 2020 the global geopolitical climate has changed significantly. The Covid-19 pandemic and impact of the continuing war in Ukraine has placed increasing pressure on international trade and supply chains, leading to volatility and uncertainty.

The impact of climate change on the production of food both globally and domestically is being experienced more acutely, than perhaps envisaged, with extreme weather events occurring more frequently resulting in flooding becoming a regular occurrence on many farms. The impact of this changing weather pattern, coupled with the fact that farmers are no longer being incentivised to produce food, is leading to a significant area of land being taken out of cropping and therefore food production. As a consequence the UK is at risk of becoming more and more dependent on imported food, in many cases produced to lower standards than in the U.K. at a time of global uncertainty.

The combination of these factors is leading to a deep and growing concern about food security.

In addition the Government is committed to introduce a Land Use Framework in order to try and prioritise the many competing demands on land—housing, energy, infrastructure developments, forestry etc. and food production!

The introduction of the ELMS has not been straightforward with many farmers still uncertain about whether to participate. It is complex, often requiring expensive professional advice, is proving a challenge for many tenant farmers and it is still unclear whether it will achieve its purpose of delivering the environmental goods that are essential to the Government’s climate change and nature restoration policies.

In view of these factors; global uncertainty and the impact of extreme weather events, the challenge of implementing ELMS, uncertainty over whether the desired outcomes will be achieved and, a huge, and growing concern about food security which is not included in the Act, that the Agriculture Act 2020 should be reviewed. A recent survey by the National Farmers Union has confirmed that farmer confidence is at its lowest level since records began. President Tom Bradshaw stated ‘Confidence has collapsed after months of devastating flooding, unsustainably high production costs and low market returns, against a backdrop of reduced farm support as we transition to a new Domestic Agriculture Policy’.

Purpose of inquiry

The Agriculture Act includes a transition period from the CAP to ELMS of 7 years from 2020–2027. The Act requires the Government to produce a review of the transition every three years. This inquiry will fulfil what is already in law. It is essential that the policy is reviewed before the end of the transition period in order to intervene, if necessary, and also to help shape post transition policy in the light of experience and in view of the significant changes that have taken place since the Act was drafted. (Outlined above)

Nature restoration and reducing species decline, carbon reduction and achieving net zero, having a secure supply of sustainably produced and safe food are not negotiable objectives. They are critical to Government policies, and the nation, and the ELMS is a key delivery tool. It is essential that it is redesigned to achieve these outcomes.

Farmers are experiencing huge uncertainty, and many are unsure about the financial viability of their businesses, as they face the upheaval that the changes in policy entail. Some of this was inevitable but permanent restructuring and land use changes are now taking place at pace as a consequence of the Agriculture Act 2020, and its implementation through the ELMS, which will be impossible to reverse unless action is taken soon.

It is for this reason that there is some urgency in conducting a Post Legislative Scrutiny Review, recognising that this is sooner than would be normally be the case.

Relevant Member experience

There is widespread concern and interest by Members of the House in this topic. The expertise and deep knowledge of the topic was demonstrated during the passing of the Agriculture Bill. Members will be very enthusiastic to participate in such a committee.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

DEFRA is obviously the Department with lead responsibility in this area but the topic is also a key concern to the Department for Business and Trade, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

10-month time frame

Yes.

This proposal is supported by the Earl of Devon, Lord Cameron of Dillington, Lord Carrington and Lord Inglewood.

CURRY OF KIRKHARLE

The Earl of Devon adds in support of the proposal:

A review at this crucial time for the Environment and for Food Security is essential, and will contribute massively to the future of our nation's health and sustainability.

DEVON

Lord Cameron of Dillington adds in support of the proposal:

Lord Curry's submission was excellent in its comprehensiveness, but would just like to stress the assistance that such an Inquiry could give to the new Government as it juggles the competing interests and priorities for our rural landscape in the run-up to its promised Land Use Framework.

There is a great deal of uncertainty at the moment amongst our farmers and land managers, and it is to be hoped that our proposed Inquiry will be able to shed light for both them and the Government on the best way forward.

CAMERON OF DILLINGTON

Lord Carrington adds in support of the proposal:

As a farmer and landowner, I am well aware of the challenges faced by farmers outside the recurring problems of weather and prices. This proposed enquiry covers not only the effect of changing the support system to ELM schemes but also the growing issue of competing pressures on the use of land from environment to housing and energy. With more than three years of the operation of the Agriculture Act and the current emphasis on housing and food security this proposed Committee is most timely.

CARRINGTON

Proposal 43: Letter from Baroness Browning and Lord Touhig*Post-legislative scrutiny of the 2009 Autism Act**Description of proposal*

Apart from the Mental Health Act, the 2009 Autism Act is the only medical condition that has its own Act of Parliament. This reflects the importance that Parliament accorded it, being supported cross-party, in both Houses.

15 years later there are regular questions and debates in both Houses concerning many aspects of autism, covered by the Act including; diagnostic services, assessment of need; planning transitional needs from children into adulthood; training of staff and the duty of the Secretary of State to keep under review The Autism Strategy.

Since 2009 there have been changes both to children and adults on the autistic spectrum, with more girls being diagnosed than previously thought and more younger children being diagnosed which has led to long waiting times for families.

We believe that the provisions of the Act are patchy around the Country resulting in a postcode lottery. Although much of the Act is subject to Guidance the Strategy places a duty on the Secretary of State for Health and also requires Local Authority Services and the NHS to comply with Section 7 of the Local Authority Services Act 1970. Thus giving the Secretary of State the power of default action. There is no evidence that this power is exercised despite varying standards of compliance around the country.

It should be noted that this legislation applies to England and Wales but not Scotland.

Note. Autism is a life long communication condition that affects the way a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It is a spectrum and can include people with high intelligence and those with learning disabilities. In addition people with autism (including Asperger Syndrome) may experience over or under sensitivity to sounds, tastes, smells, lights or colours. The most difficult challenges are in building relationships and obtaining paid employment.

Purpose of inquiry

To assess the implementation of all aspects of the Act across England and Wales, in order to identify both best practice and serious failures of implementation.

To test if the powers in the Act are being correctly applied and with the passage of time since 2009.

If the Autism Strategy meets the changing needs of the Autism community

Relevant Member experience

Autism is a condition regularly raised by members on all benches. This flows from the fact that there is an APPG for Autism in Parliament and there is a wide range of sub-subjects where members knowledge and experience of autism applies. This includes members with knowledge of medicine and psychiatry; benefits; employment; education; social services and housing.

In addition the House regularly addresses third party reports for debate which involve people on the Autism Spectrum e.g. Winterbourne View (a report on the

long term detention of people in mental health facilities). Or the Mencap report Death by Ignorance (a report of hospital treatment in General Hospitals of people with Autism or Learning Disability).

As a legislative House which passed the 2009 Autism Act there is an inbuilt interest in post legislative scrutiny.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

The Autism Strategy has a particular emphasis on the years between childhood and schooling, adolescence and adulthood leading to independent living or appropriate packages of care. These are cross cutting issues between several departments. Although the department of Health is the lead department Local Government, Housing, Employment and Education are all involved.

10-month time frame

Yes an anticipated 6 month inquiry, The Bill is a very short one but covers several departments.

Additional comments

We are aware that several members of The House of Lords have personal experience within their family circle of autism. Also membership of Autism Charities.

BROWNING AND TOUHIG

Proposal 44: Letter from the Earl of Lytton

Building Safety Legislation & Remediation

Description of proposal

This Special Committee suggestion is for a Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee examining adverse outcomes for some leasehold owners in the application and impact of the Fire Safety Act 2021 (Parts 1, 2, and 3 in particular) and the Building Safety Act 2022 (Parts 4, 5 and Schedule 8 in particular), together with regulations made pursuant to them and their interaction with British Standard PAS9980, with regard to:

- (a) recurring costs of property ownership and occupation;
- (b) market value and marketability of property;
- (c) reliability of outcomes for homeowners as consumers;
- (d) availability and capacity of professional services to act on their behalf.

Rationale: there are believed to be as many as 500,000 residential leaseholders experiencing significant challenges in selling their property, meeting recurring costs, and protecting the value of their investment. Members of the House have received representations from the property sector that attribute some of the difficulties leaseholders face to incompleteness, vagueness and/or variable application of recent building safety legislation, with perverse consequences for leaseholders that include:

- permanently elevated insurance premiums, even on remediated buildings, where prescribed remediation standards do not match insurance underwriting principles;
- enhanced or unclear risks in the marketplace—for example, unquantified liabilities, variable availability of mortgage finance, documentation requirements—making some affected leaseholds effectively unsellable or impaired;
- unclear pathways to remediation funding, slow progress where remediation is known, and differential treatment of liabilities for different classes of leaseholder, even within the same building.

Purpose of inquiry

This Special Committee would:

- (1) contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the House and the wider public of post-legislation issues affecting a significant number of homeowners;
- (2) provide an overdue and objective examination of drivers and outcomes in relation to those properties and homeowners who are adversely affected by measures introduced in the wake of the Grenfell Tragedy;
- (3) better inform future building safety policy and any adjustments to existing policies in this area, particularly in relation to the analysis and objective categorisation of risk;

- (4) help underpin public confidence and stability in a sector where certain risks and outcomes are not receiving adequate focus and attention within parliament;
- (5) Build on the work of the House of Commons Levelling up Housing and Communities Committee—with particular reference to its publications HC1249, HC1063 and HC172—and complement the work of the House of Lords Built Environment Committee;

Relevant Member experience

The UK residential property market is a complex arena of interlinked industries and professions. A holistic approach is needed to evaluate the impact of policy. This proposal draws on the House's breadth of expertise and cross-party interest in construction, safety and risk, market economics, fitness and suitability of housing (including health, wellbeing and social stability implications), tenure issues, building safety remediation, duty of care and consumer protection.

The general subject area of the proposed Special Committee attracted comment from across the House during debates on the Fire Safety Bill, the Building Safety Bill, the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill and the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill; a more objective investigation by a special committee in the areas suggested would draw on and better inform that skill and knowledge.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

As identified in the Grenfell Phase 2 Inquiry, there are multiple areas of cross departmental responsibility in this sector with implications for policy (construction, housing, the economy, financial sector, health, social security and attendant regulation) within MHCLG, Business and Trade, Justice, Treasury, Health & Social Care.

(For the avoidance of doubt, it is not suggested that this committee should preempt the government response to that inquiry though its work may be better informed by any such response).

10-month time frame

The remit of this Special Committee should be tightly framed and focussed principally on the implications for and effects on homeowners as consumers and the market segment they occupy. Thus defined it would be possible to cover the subject area in the timeframe indicated.

Given the complexity and interwoven nature of the UK residential property market, it is suggested that witnesses be drawn mainly from market professionals, sector economists, and cross-disciplinary technical experts, with case study input from leaseholders to illustrate and understand end user issues.

Additional comments

The Liaison Committee will be aware that I have a professional knowledge of and abiding parliamentary interest in this area and have spoken on it on many occasions.

LYTTON

Proposal 45: Letter from Lord Rennard

Review of the impact of the Elections Act 2022

Description of proposal

Major changes to the operation of elections were introduced in the Elections Act of 2022. They will have had impact on the operation of elections conducted in 2023 and 2024.

The requirement for Photo ID at polling stations was controversial and the Electoral Commission has suggested widening the ID requirements.

The Electoral Commission's first Strategy & Policy Statement was made by the Department for Levelling Up and changes were made to the governance arrangements of the Commission. The effect of these changes needs to be considered.

Other changes have been introduced through the Act and more than 16 SIs (running to over 800 pages) which, for example, extended the franchise for UK citizens living overseas, and made changes to arrangements for postal and proxy voting.

Changes and modifications may be required to this legislation in the light of experience.

Purpose of the inquiry

It is important to try and achieve as much consensus as possible in relation to electoral legislation and any changes to it. An evidence-based approach is particularly important.

A Special Inquiry of this kind could take evidence, examine it, and make proposals for any changes considered to be desirable.

Relevant Member experience

Many members of the House have experience of elections and campaigning for political parties.

There were very high-quality debates during the passage of the Elections Act of 2022 which demonstrated this.

Cross-cutting departmental boundaries

The Cabinet Office and the Department for Levelling Up, as well as the Local Authorities which administer all the elections are all involved. The issue of resources required by Local Authorities to safely conduct elections is a significant one.

10-month time frame

Relevant evidence can be taken from local elections and parliamentary by-elections in 2023 and 2024 could be considered immediately and evidence from the UK general election taken afterwards.

It would be important to complete the inquiry by November 2025, or perhaps earlier, to allow any changes requiring legislation to be made in time for elections in 2026. The list of acceptable forms of ID could, for example, be varied.

Yes, the timing would be good, but as will any such inquiries the general election may curtail meetings.

Additional comments

There would be broad interest I believe across the House in this subject.

RENNARD

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Lord Aberdare

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Alton of Liverpool

I am a Patron or Trustee of several charities that have helped victims of genocide and crimes against humanity and advocated on their behalf, including the Coalition for Genocide Response established in October 2019. I am a vice chair or officer of the APPGs on Burma, Rohingya, Hazaras, Uyghurs, Yazidis, Sudan and South Sudan, genocide and international law, justice and accountability. In 2022, I co-authored a book on genocide, entitled 'State Responses to Crimes of Genocide. What Went Wrong and How to Change It', published by Palgrave Macmillan.

Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

Baroness Bennett receives research support from British Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy (BSAC), as part of a training scheme for which two students working on One Health issues receive a stipend.

Lord Bethell

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Birt

I have no relevant interests. But as Chair of a national company, I do have direct exposure to skill shortages.

Lord Boateng

Please note my relevant educational interests declared to the Registrar and in particular I am on the Board of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra which is concerned to support musical education in schools as a pipeline into a career in music.

Lord Boswell of Aynho

No relevant interests to declare except the non-pecuniary one of being a grandparent.

Baroness Boycott

I founded Spare Rib magazine in 1972: we paid scant attention to childcare/ babies etc then and I believe our lack of interest then has played a small part in successive governments failures to provide suitable and affordable childcare in this country (although this is only one of the factors which influence women's choices). But some women—for instance Anne Oakley—were monitoring what was happening, so we have good resources to draw on. I am a mother and a recent grandmother and I have been astonished by how complex the world of 'new motherhood' has become and how badly supported. Time for some serious thinking here.

Lord Bradley

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Bridges of Headley

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe

No relevant interests to declare

Baroness Brown of Cambridge

Chair of the Adaptation Committee of the Climate Change Committee. I also chair Carbon Trust, but our work focusses on mitigation rather than adaptation. I am on the board of Ørsted and Ceres Power, two companies in the climate mitigation area.

Baroness Browning

A Vice President of the National Autistic Society; Officer of the APPG on Autism; LPA of a family member.

Lord Cameron of Dillington

Although I am no longer directly involved, my family does have agricultural and landowning interests in Somerset.

Baroness Campbell of Surbiton

Trustee of the Civil Liberties Trust, which funds projects to ensure Human Rights are respected and protected throughout society, especially in public services.

I am the Patron of 'Just Fair' which is a UK-wide civil society organisation focusing on the human rights of everyday life: our economic, social and cultural rights.

I was also once a Commissioner on the Equality and Human Rights Commission for 3 years from its inception.

Lord Carrington

As a farmer and landowner I have direct experience of the Agriculture Act and the challenges identified in Lord Curry's proposal.

Lord Carter of Haslemere

Trustee of the Prison Reform Trust since January 2024

No relevant interests to declare for proposal 17

Baroness Casey

Chair the Institute of Global Homelessness where we think about movement and migration across the globe and in 2016 I published a Review into Opportunity and Integration in the UK for HMG.

Lord Bishop of Chelmsford

No interests declared

Lord Clement-Jones

Please see Register of Interests

I am a consultant to DLA Piper LLP on AI Policy and Regulation.

Viscount Craigavon

I have been a Member over the years of an APPG, called on Population, Development and Reproductive Health; which has always dealt with the international aspect of these subjects. Those who are interested in the UK aspect are also likely to have and state an opinion on the international aspect; and vice versa.

Lord Cromwell

Per Register of Interests: Member (unpaid), Executive Committee, Earth & Space Sustainability Initiative (ESSI)

Lord Curry of Kirkharle

Trustee of Clinton Devon Estates

Lord Deben

No relevant interests to declare

Baroness Deech

Member of the APPG on UK-Israel

Earl of Devon

I have relevant interests, as declared in the Register, by virtue of my ownership of the Powderham estate, part of which operates as a farming and land management business, both in-hand and tenanted.

Lord Dubs

My experience as a Northern Ireland Minister in the three years running up to the Good Friday Agreement and the establishment of the Executive and the Assembly. I have been a local councillor and an MP.

Lord Empey

I am personally in receipt of a public sector pension arising from my membership of the Northern Ireland Assembly 1998–2011.

Lord Farmer

In case these interests need to be declared, although I have no financial interests, I chaired two reviews commissioned by the Ministry of Justice on the importance of maintaining male prisoners and female offenders' family and other significant relationships, to prevent reoffending and intergenerational crime. These reported in 2017 and 2019 and I stay involved in their implementation. I am also on the MoJ's Independent Advisory Forum on Prisons and Probation.

Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee

An occasional presenter for GB News, occasional columnist for Express online, the Daily Telegraph and the Impartial Reporter (a local newspaper)

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock

No relevant interests to declare

Baroness Freeman of Steventon

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Fuller

My commercial expertise is in the Fertiliser industry which is a carbon-intensive industry and for which proposals to decarbonise will be difficult with downstream consequences for food production—in some way, the impacts on my industry are representative of the economy as a whole. Please see the Register.

Lord Bishop of Gloucester

I am Anglican Bishop for HM Prisons.

Lord Green of Deddington

Co-founder (in 2002) and now President of Migration Watch UK.

Viscount Hailsham

I have none apart from those that I mentioned in the debate on the Kings Speech.

I have long advocated an elected Second Chamber.

On two occasions I tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to be elected to the Lords in a by-election for hereditary peers.

My wife and I will be 80 during the likely lifetime of this parliament. We will thus be affected by some of the proposals set out in the Labour Party's manifesto.

Baroness Harding of Winscombe

My brother is a Non Executive Director of Ofcom

Baroness Hayman

I am a Vice Chair of the APPG on malaria and NTDs. I have been involved in various related global health charities over many years, most recently, I served as a previous Chair of Malaria No More UK, and a previous trustee of Malaria Consortium

Chairman of Peers for the Planet

Baroness Hayter

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts

I have published two pamphlets on this subject area: 1) Britain's Demographic Challenge (2017), 2) Overcrowded Islands? (2020) and put forward a Private Members' Bill entitled "Office for Demographic Change Bill" which was debated in February 2022.

Baroness Hoey

Former U.K. sports Minister

Baroness Hussein-Ece

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Inglewood

Both on my own account and as a trustee I have interests in agriculture, land, forestry, and environmental activities, as laid out in the Register of Interests.

Baroness Jenkin of Kennington

No relevant interests to declare

Baroness Keeley

I was Shadow Minister for Music and Shadow Minister for the Arts 2022–24.

Up to 1989, I worked for IBM as a Systems Programmer, a Systems Engineer and a Systems Engineering Manager.

Lord Kempself

No relevant interests to declare

Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws

I am a director of the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute. Please note all other interests as on the register.

Baroness Kidron

Please see register of interests

AI in Education inquiry

Chair, 5Rights Foundation a charity that works at the intersection of law, rights and digital technology across the globe, with, and on behalf of, children and young people.

Chair, Digital Futures for Children, a joint LSE and 5Rights research centre facilitating for a rights-respecting digital world for children.

Commissioner, Lancet Commission on Mental Health, collating evidence on anxiety, addiction and behavioural disorders associated with digital use— with a specific focus on children.

Advisor to the Institute for Ethics in AI, University of Oxford.

Lord Kirkhope of Harrogate

Whilst a MEP I was involved in a number of regulatory initiatives, including the drafting of the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), the security issues relating to the exchange of data between law enforcement authorities in the EU.

I was involved in the negotiations with the USA on a number of agreements related to technology and the exchange of data.

I have taken an interest in AI as it applies to technological advances since joining the House and have spoken on a number of these issues in the Committee and the Chamber.

Lord Knight of Weymouth

No interests declared for proposal 38

Chair of E-Act Multi-Academy Trust

Chair of STEM Learning

My daughter is a professional opera director who sometimes works in schools for the Royal Opera House and others.

Baroness Kramer

The Protection for Whistleblowing Bill—Private Members Bill

Former vice chair of the APPG for Whistleblowing

Lord Krebs

I am on the advisory boards of the Cambridge Conservation Initiative and the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit. I used to chair the Adaptation Committee but stepped down in 2017.

Lord Bishop of Leicester

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Leigh of Hurley

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Liddle

I have no relevant interests. I have no relevant consultancies. My wife, Caroline Thomson is an adviser to an East African company interested in potential nuclear developments in the UK.

Lord Lilley

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Lipsey

I have no interests in the strict sense. I have however had a lifelong interest in polling including as adviser to Prime Minister Jim Callaghan on the subject; a commissioner of polls for the Sunday Times; as a member of the Pebble Club of leading polling experts and of course what I picked up as Chair of the last Lords polling committee.

Baroness Lister of Burtersett

Baroness Lister's book Poverty (the 2nd edn of which was published in 2021) makes the case for a human rights approach to poverty. She is a patron of the human rights organisation Just Fair.

Lord Lisvane

No relevant interests to declare

Baroness Ludford

No relevant interests to declare

Earl of Lytton

I have no current personal or direct professional interest/involvement in leasehold flats, block ownership or management or consultancy to any such owner or manager. I am a practising though mainly retired Chartered Surveyor.

Lord Mackenzie of Framwellgate

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Bishop of Manchester

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Mann

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Meston

I have worked as a Family Court lawyer and judge.

Baroness Morris of Yardley

I am chair of the Birmingham Education Partnership and as a consultant to them.

Lord Morse

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Moynihan

Please see Register of Interests

Former Governor of the Sports Aid Foundation

Former Member of Sports Aid Trust

Former Member of the Sports Council

Former Member of the Central Council for Physical Recreation's Enquiry into Sponsorship of Sport

President, British Biathlon Union

Former Chairman, Paralympic World Cup

Advisory Board member, Sport 12 Education Ltd

Senior Adviser, InSport Intelligence

Member, International Olympic Committee (IOC) Public Affairs and Corporate Communications

President, Welsh Amateur Rowing Association

Life Member, British Rowing

President, British Water Ski

Fellow, Royal Geographical Society

Trustee, Monmouth Schools' Charitable Trust

Former Chair of the British Olympic Association 2005–2012

Former Minister for Sport 1987–1990

Former Steward of the British Boxing Board of Control

Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne

LRAM, ARCM; House of Commons, Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, Computer Misuse Bill 1990, lectured internationally on the SWIFT banking system, introduced computer software copyright legislation as former-professional into Japan; similar legislation within the EU and the USA; now working with University of Utah, The Huntsman Institute for Mental Health on Mental Recovery and Resilience for Genocide Victims through song. Former Special Envoy for WHO; honorary partner of the WHO and UNESCO.

Baroness Noakes

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Bishop of Norwich

My interests are in the Register. I am a Church Commissioner and the Church of England's lead bishop for the environment.

Lord Bishop of Oxford

Bishop of Oxford: the Diocese of Oxford is a network of more than a thousand churches, chaplaincies and schools across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. Our 285 primary and secondary schools educate more than 50,000 pupils. The enquiry is directly relevant to future policy across our schools and recommendations to children, young people and families. No other relevant interests

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay

No relevant interests to declare

Baroness Parminter

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Randall of Uxbridge

Currently a member of the RSPB council (about to finish) and a trustee of the UK overseas territories Conservation Forum

Lord Ravensdale

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Rennard

No financial interests, but an active member of the Liberal Democrats and its predecessor (the Liberal Party) over 50 years, including considerable experience running election campaigns at every level.

Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Saatchi

No relevant interests to declare

Baroness Scott of Needham Market

Member, APPG for ME

Baroness Smith of Llanfaes

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Bishop of St Albans

President of the Rural Coalition

Lord Storey

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Teverson

I am Chair of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Nature Partnership which takes an interest in our territorial seas around Cornwall and Scilly.

Some years ago I was a board member of the Marine Management Organisation.

Baroness Thornton

I have been the Shadow Minister for Education for two years, and most recently Shadow Minister for the DCMS.

Lord Touhig

*A Vice President of the National Autistic Society
Officer, Autism APPG*

Lord Triesman

I was, until mid-May 2010, the Independent Chairman of The FA, and a Board Member of Wembley National Stadium. I have not held a sport related position for 14 years and 4 months.

Baroness Valentine

Place Director, Business in the Community

Lord Wallace of Saltaire

I have no relevant interests in this topic beyond those of a concerned citizen.

Lord Wasserman

Chairman, Basketball Foundation (formerly BBL Foundation) (a charity; the Foundation encourages the sport of basketball as a means of improving the health, well-being and education of local communities and to promote social inclusion).

Baroness Watkins of Tavistock

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Whitty

No relevant interests to declare

Baroness Willis of Summertown

No relevant interests to declare

Lord Willetts

Chair of the UK Space Agency

Member of the Board of SatixFy plc, a space technology company

Member of the Council of the European Space Policy Institute

Lord Wills

No relevant interests to declare

Baroness Young of Old Scone

Vice President, RSPB, Birdlife International and Fauna and Flora International

Recent chair of the Woodland Trust

Chair, Labour Climate and Environment Forum

Commissioner, Food, Farming and the Countryside Commission

Founder member of the Adaptation Committee of the Climate Change Committee

A full list of Members' interests can be found in the Register of Lords' Interests:
<https://members.parliament.uk/members/lords/interests/register-of-lords-interest>