



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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### House of Lords Written Answers

#### **Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme: VAT**

**Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots (Conservative)** [HL10240] To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to amend the present ability to reclaim VAT under the Listed Places of Worship Scheme.

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** Listed places of worship represent some of the nation's finest heritage, and HM Government recognises the need to preserve and maintain such hallowed buildings. The Listed Place of Worship Grant Scheme aims to mitigate the cost of doing so and to support listed and protected buildings for the benefit of present and future generations.

There are presently no plans to amend the eligibility criteria for the scheme, but we keep them under review. We have also been working to ensure that the accessibility and uptake of the scheme is improved, particularly through the development of a new website and application process. Officials maintain regular contact with key people and organisations representing listed places of worship, and continue to welcome feedback on the operation and effectiveness of the scheme. I was pleased to visit St Peter and St Paul's church in Albury, Surrey, earlier this year to hear how the Listed Places of Worship grant scheme helped them to carry out repairs to the church roof.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-18/hl10240>

*Information about the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, referred to above, can be read at <https://listed-places-of-worship-grant.dcms.gov.uk/>*

#### **Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme: VAT**

**Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots (Conservative)** [HL10241] To ask His Majesty's Government what was the value of VAT relief given under the Listed Places of Worship Scheme in each of the past two financial years.

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** The Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme (LPWGS) was established in 2001 to provide grants towards VAT paid on repairs

and maintenance to the nation's listed churches and cathedrals. The scheme, which presently handles around 7000 claims per annum, applies to all faiths and denominations and is delivered UK wide. It is currently funded through a combination of £17 million from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's core baseline, together with £25 million available from HMT reserves (so a total of up to £42m total each financial year).

Historically, the scheme has operated with an underspend each year. However, efforts are underway to reduce underspend, including via a new LPWGS website and comms outreach campaign. Initial data since the launch of the website in July 2023 suggests a gradual increase in uptake and grants being made.

The LPWGS website provides details of the annual spend of the scheme, but does not provide details of previous years' allocations. See here:

<https://listed-places-of-worship-grant.dcms.gov.uk/about-us/>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-18/hl10241>

Information about the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, referred to above, can be read at

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## Israel

**See the report of a UN debate concerning the “Concluding Convention on International Terrorism” that is included in the Other Relevant Information section below.**

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## Other Relevant Information

### United Nations

#### **Describing New, Emerging Threats, Speakers Deliberate over Concluding Convention on International Terrorism, as Legal Committee Begins Seventy-Eighth Session**

... Before the Committee was the Secretary-General's report “Measures to eliminate international terrorism” (document A/78/221), which contains information on measures taken both on national and international levels, based on the submissions from Government and international organizations.

During the day-long meeting, speakers discussed new and emerging terrorist threats, including those posed by the rise of attacks based on xenophobia, Islamophobia and racism. Many also expressed concerns over the use of digital technologies, cyberspace and artificial intelligence for terrorist and arm groups' purposes. ...

**Zahra Ershadi (Iran), speaking for the Non-Aligned Movement**, said that terrorism should not be equated with the struggle of peoples under colonial or alien domination and foreign occupation, for self-determination and national liberation, nor should it be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group. ... She further voiced concern over the misinterpretation and misrepresentation of religions by terrorist groups to justify terrorism and violent extremism in an effort to instil hatred in young people while glorifying brutality and violence. ...

**Thomas Ramopoulos, representative of the European Union** ... said that despite

international efforts, the threat of terrorism and violent extremism has not diminished but continues to evolve. Politically motivated terrorism, including from the far-right and far-left, and the potential exploitation of new technological developments for terrorist purposes amplify this challenge. ... “Agreeing on a clear definition of terrorism is crucial,” he stressed, emphasizing the importance of the negotiating process in the Council of Europe on a revised pan-European legal definition of “terrorism” for the purposes of the 2005 Warsaw Convention ...

**The representative of Iran** ... expressed regret over the politicization and selective approaches of some States to label and accuse other States of allegedly supporting terrorists. ... Noting that Iran has long been a victim of terrorism, he recalled the terrorist attacks against its high-ranking officials, including Qasem Soleimani, Commander of the Quds Force, and Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, a scientist and Deputy Minister for the Ministry of Defence ... He also condemned the attempts in certain European countries to instigate violence against Muslims by desecrating mosques and the holy Qur’an. ...

**Mr. Boaroman (United Kingdom)** said that his country’s focus remains on degrading and defeating Da’esh and its affiliates as well as Al-Qaida senior leadership and their affiliates, as well as also tackling the threats of extreme right-wing terrorism. ... The United Kingdom has recently refreshed its counter-terrorism strategy – CONTEST – to ensure that its response remains agile in the face of an evolving threat, integrated to reduce risk and aligned to ensure that States continue to deliver together against a common threat. Pointing out that terrorist groups exploit weak States as sanctuaries, he also noted that some States seek to utilize these groups to advance their interests. ...

**Noam Cappon (Israel)** underscored that “the history of Israel and the Jewish people is one of resilience in the face of unrelenting acts of terrorism and violence.” Against this backdrop, he called for a stronger focus on countering terrorist acts driven by anti-Semitic motives. Stressing that the best defence against this threat lies in sharing knowledge, experiences and best practices, he detailed the contribution of Israeli experts to several United Nations counter-terrorism programmes. Drawing attention to indoctrination of children on social media, he recalled a side-event hosted by his country in collaboration with the World Jewish Congress during the recent Counter-Terrorism Week. He went on to express concern that the current practices to address terrorist financing are insufficient. The Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy should be adaptive and responsive to such challenges. While it is important to agreeing on a global definition of terrorism, the conditions to adopt a convention on this matter are not in place yet, he noted. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/gal3685.doc.htm>

**Measures to eliminate international terrorism: Report of the Secretary-General (A/78/221)**

<https://undocs.org/en/A/78/221>

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## **Relevant Legislation** \*\* new or updated today

### **UK Parliament**

#### **Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3475>

#### **Education (Non-religious Philosophical Convictions) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3186>

## **Holocaust Memorial Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3421>

## **Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3325>

## **Online Safety Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3137>

## **Nakba Commemoration Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3461>

## **Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3217>

## **Private Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3188>

## **Same Sex Marriage (Church of England)**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3438>

## **Schools Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3156>

## **Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/terrorism-protection-of-premises-draft-bill-overarching-documents>

## **Universal Credit (Removal of Two Child Limit) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3163>

## **Universal Jurisdiction (Extension)**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3454>

## **Scottish Parliament**

### **Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill**

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill>

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## **Consultations**

\*\* new or updated today

**\*\* closes in 2 days**

**A Human Rights Bill for Scotland** (closing date 5 October 2023)

<https://consult.gov.scot/equality-and-human-rights/a-human-rights-bill-for-scotland-consultation/>

**The future of population and migration statistics in England and Wales** (closing date 26 October 2023)

<https://consultations.ons.gov.uk/ons/futureofpopulationandmigrationstatistics/>

**Management of burial grounds, application for burial, exhumation, private burial and restoration of lairs: regulation in Scotland** (closing date 17 November 2023)

<https://consult.gov.scot/burial-cremation/regulation-burial-scotland/>

**Statutory inspection of burial authorities, cremation authorities and funeral directors** (closing date 17 November 2023)

<https://consult.gov.scot/burial-cremation/statutory-inspection-burial-authorities/>

**Funeral director licensing scheme for Scotland** (closing date 17 November 2023)

<https://consult.gov.scot/burial-cremation/licensing-funeral-directors-scotland/>

**Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) [Northern Ireland]** (closing date 24 November 2023)

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/consultations/relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse-consultation>

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438