I should like to thank you and members of the Foreign Affairs Committee for the opportunity to give evidence earlier this week about the UK Government’s response to the recent hurricanes that directly affected the Overseas Territories of Anguilla, British Virgin Islands (BVI) and the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI).

I undertook to write to you in reply to your question about the state of infrastructure in those three Territories and the number of personnel that remain deployed.

As the Committee is aware, grave damage was sustained to infrastructure across all three Territories. In Anguilla, following the immediate humanitarian response, UK funding assistance enabled electricity to be restored across the island before Christmas which was almost two months ahead of initial estimates. UK assistance also facilitated the recertification of the airport. On the back of this, most hotels and restaurants have either reopened or have plans to do so shortly. Visitor numbers remain depressed so there is work to be done to remarket the destination. Work on other public infrastructure, including schools, lags behind although children are being educated in a two shift system. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is working with Anguilla on an agreed list of projects and is in the process of recruiting an infrastructure advisor to work with the Government of Anguilla on the overall shape and management of the grant funding that has been made available.

In BVI, the government estimate that 70% of homes now have power. Work by the BVI Electricity Corporation is being supported by a UK funded contractor which will reduce the grid reconnection time by two months, though a clear date for full restoration is still not in place (currently estimated to be April). Approximately 90% of customers have access to water, though it remains non-potable until the reservoirs are repaired due April 2018. Sewage infrastructure remains in a fragile condition and the network is not capable of meeting demand. A number of UK-funded programmes will support the repair of a resilient network in both areas. Of the 20 state schools on BVI, nine re-opened for limited educational services on 6 November.

Some schools are temporarily housed in tents and a shift system is still in place for high school students. The international Airport on Tortola is now open to commercial flights. Most sea ports are open and the majority of ferry services have resumed operations. Little progress has been made on housing repairs with people still in shelters four months on. We have agreed a programme to support training to improve the flow of workers into the construction sector and are in discussion with BVI about options for further UK support. We also funded surge deployments from police forces in the UK and other OTS, which have now drawn down and have been replaced by a programme of infrastructure and additional capability support for the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force.

Reasonable progress has been made to restore the TCI to its pre-hurricane state. Providenciales, the main island for business and tourism, is back to normal with hotels, restaurants and services functioning as before and schools open. The major airlines have resumed operations to TCI and tourist numbers are on a level with previous years. The other islands are recovering more slowly. Grand Turk, is still without internet connectivity and general telecommunications coverage is poor. However, cruise ships have returned in good numbers helping to boost the local economy. TCI has engaged with the private sector on delivery of its recovery efforts.

Prison infrastructure, particularly in BVI and TCI, remains fragile and the UK is working with both Territory governments to ensure that the respective facilities are secure and that staffing levels provide a safe and secure environment for both staff and inmates. Across all three Territories we continue to provide technical assistance on areas of local recovery priority, including to address remaining challenges around communications infrastructure on
TCI and BVI, and are working with local authorities to ensure they have sufficient supplies for the control of vector borne diseases.

At the height of the crisis the following numbers of staff were deployed to the three affected OTS:

**Anguilla (Total 26)**
FCO: 12 including three to assist the Governor's office  
DFID: Six  
MoD: 74  
UK Police: Four  
Public Health England (PHD: Two

**BVI (Total 106)**
FCO: 20 including two to assist the Governor's office  
DFID: Six  
MoD: 408  
UK Police: 55  
HM Prison and Probation Service: 24  
PHE: One  

FCO: 12 including two to assist the Governor's office  
DFID: Five  
MoD: 242  
PHE: Three  
Prison Officers from HMG partner SERCO: 22  
Additional personnel were deployed throughout the region to support operations in the OTS and to assist with the response in other countries.

The number of additional personnel that remain in the OTS is greatly reduced as the focus has shifted to recovery. No additional personnel remain on Anguilla. The figures for BVI and TCI are:

**BVI (Total 25)**
- One Military infrastructure adviser  
- 15 Police training and assistance personnel  
- Nine personnel attached to the implementing partners of projects supported by the UK government  
- 11 SERCO personnel at HM Prison Grand Turk along with five technical advisers

During our session the Committee referred to the ten Overseas Territories on the UN's List of Non-Self Governing Territories, and asked what the UK is doing to get them delisted. I be looking into this and consider our policy on this topic closely in the near future.

The Committee also raised the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and I can now confirm that the FCO has provided the Committee with a memorandum setting out the key issues around
the ICJ election. The Department is conducting a lessons learned exercise, to include recommendations for future handling of similar elections. I will be happy to discuss some of the main themes from this exercise at the evidence session on this issue in February.

Finally, the Committee asked about same-sex marriage in Bermuda. I will write to you shortly to address this, noting that Mr Bryant has secured an Adjournment Debate on the issue in the House of Commons on 29 January.

LORD AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON  
Minister of State for the Overseas Territories  
Prime Minister's Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict