

£30 million boost to help unlock land for new homes

In a speech at the Chartered Institute of Housing's annual conference, Cabinet Office Minister Lord Agnew has announced today (9 September 2020) that the government is boosting its Land Release Fund (LRF) and the One Public Estate (OPE) programme with an additional £30 million to help release surplus land for housing and support local economies to bounce back from the pandemic.

The LRF will offer councils the opportunity to bid for £20 million for remediation works and infrastructure to bring their surplus sites forward for housing. The LRF targets small sites with a focus on supporting SME builders.

The LRF currently supports 73 council projects which are on track to release land for more than 6,000 homes by next March. Examples include:

- **Broadland District Council in Norfolk:** awarded funding to deliver improvements such as site highways works and the implementation of a surface water drainage strategy and pumping station. 22 homes at Rosebery Road, Great Plumstead have now been completed by Broadland District Council's housing company.
- **The Griffin regeneration area in Blackburn:** awarded funding to carry out new highways access and land remediation work to accelerate the release of brownfield land for 140 new homes. This has helped to make the site viable, supporting regeneration of the local area and bringing forward a much-needed scheme of new family homes for rent and sale.

The OPE programme will provide £10 million, supporting the earliest stages of development. New and existing partnerships will be able to bid for practical support to deliver ambitious property programmes in collaboration with central government and other public sector partners, which deliver homes, jobs, efficiencies and improved public services.

The Burnholme development in York is one example, supporting the delivery of a modern health and wellbeing hub with new homes and spaces for education, health and worship.

Cabinet Office Minister Lord Agnew said:

By taking a fresh look at how we use buildings and release surplus public property and land, the One Public Estate programme has helped to create thousands of new homes and jobs and breathed new life into communities.

As we look forward, across Government and local authorities, we will continue this work to make sure we deliver the vital public services people need while providing value for money for taxpayers.

Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP said:

Delivering much-needed new homes across the country is central to the mission of this government.

This new funding will help councils right across England to turn unloved, unused land into new homes and communities where they are needed most. It is an important part of how we are working with local government and the housing industry at every level to support our recovery from the impact of the pandemic.

Cllr James Jamieson, Chairman of the Local Government Association, said:

Councils continue to lead their communities through the coronavirus crisis, working closely with other local partners including health and emergency services.

One Public Estate will play a crucial role as we move into the next phase and help with the local and national economic recovery. This additional funding will support councils to make better use of their assets, including their spare land and property, to help join up local services.

This in turn will create new savings and efficiencies, as we look towards the future of local public services after the pandemic.

Funding will be allocated in the current financial year and is now available for bids.

Today's announcement builds on measures to transform unused land to deliver much-needed new homes, including the announcement last month that the government is investing £360 million in Mayoral Combined Authority areas through its £400 million Brownfield Fund. This will deliver 26,000 new homes while protecting greenfield sites.