

# Press release: UK warns Asad against “man-made catastrophe” in Idlib as new UK aid package announced for north-west Syria

The UK is scaling up its support in north-west Syria to meet emergency humanitarian needs in the face of threats of an imminent military offensive by the Asad regime and Russia. In the last week alone, there have been reports of airstrikes against four medical facilities in north-west Syria.

The Syria crisis, now in its eighth year, has left over 400,000 dead and forced half of Syria’s population to flee their homes.

Minister for the Middle East Alistair Burt said:

I am deeply concerned by the escalating military action in Idlib, including reported attacks on a number of hospitals and clinics. In the last couple of years, the Syrian regime and its Russian backers have repeatedly hidden behind the rationale of confronting terrorism to launch brutal, indiscriminate campaigns, killing countless children and civilians in the process. If they do the same in Idlib, they will cause a human disaster that could leave thousands dead and many more homeless.

The UK has been clear that a man-made catastrophe in Idlib is entirely avoidable. We support the urgent diplomatic efforts being made by Turkey and the UN. The Syrian regime and its supporters, Russia and Iran, must uphold the ceasefire they have previously agreed and respect international humanitarian law.

The situation for the three million people in Idlib is already very difficult and risks becoming much worse. Half of those people have already had to flee from elsewhere in Syria, and the last few days have seen thousands more people leave their homes. Today’s UK aid package will save lives by helping to prevent the spread of deadly disease and provide shelter for those that have had to leave everything behind.

The package, from the UK Department for International Development, will support over a quarter of a million people in north-west Syria. Delivered by UN agencies, NGOs and local organisations, it aims to:

- provide clean water and sanitation for some of the most vulnerable families that have had to flee their homes;
- support doctors and nurses that are tackling the spread of deadly diseases and treating those with trauma injuries;

- give shelter to those that have been displaced by the conflict; and
- provide mental health services to children and adults that have lived through the horrors of war.

Since the crisis started, the UK is the second largest humanitarian donor to the response inside Syria and has committed £2.71 billion since 2012, our largest ever response to a single humanitarian crisis.

Today's package is in addition to the UK's existing humanitarian assistance in north-west Syria. During the previous financial year, our support in Idlib Governorate has provided 654,000 people with access to clean drinking water, immunised nearly a million children under the age of five and helped over 300,000 children access education.

#### **Notes to editors**

- The UK's Department for International Development UK is providing £32 million of additional aid to meet emergency needs in Idlib and the surrounding areas.
- £17 million will support emergency preparedness, provided by NGOs and UN agencies, including UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA.
- The remaining £15m will go to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) Turkey Humanitarian Fund to meet emergency needs in north-west Syria.

ENDS

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## **Speech: RESI Conference 2018**

Mark, thanks very much for making me sound like the political equivalent of a fruit fly, that is a great way to start.

"Minister, the conference is in New York" is what I heard, but obviously I am delighted to be here in Newport, with the property industry I know and love I would easily have taken the economy option.

Because for those of you who are furiously googling who the hell is this guy, I was for a while a commercial property developer back in the 1990s as the finance director of a small boutique development firm that built actually quote a lot of industrial space across the UK, JCT design and build, M&E options for tax, it is all familiar stuff to me.

So I guess I come to the job with a smattering of some experience on the development side.

I also had a career in City and local government in central London, and as those of you who operate in that market will know it's very hard for anybody

to avoid the property industry while in local government in the capital.

As a backbencher since 2015 I spent quite a lot of time campaigning on planning issues. I represent the constituency of North West Hampshire, which is all the beautiful land to the west of Basingstoke, which should take something like 20 to 30 thousand houses over the next 30 to 40 years, which is a critical issue for me.

And finally the job I had before this one at the Department for Work and Pensions was the minister responsible for housing benefit, so the dynamics of social housing and affordable housing are very familiar to me as well.

So I come to this job with what politicians call convictions, and what everyone else calls prejudices, about the industry but also some of it born of experience, and the Prime Minister has set me a relatively simple task you'll think, or relatively a simple mission statement, which is more, better, faster.

Those are the 3 words by which I live. Now on that mission, as an industry, thanks to you we are doing pretty well.

And with net additions to the housing stock up 55% since 2010, we're hitting about 217,000 new net additions a year, up from about 134,000 back then.

EPC certificates, I don't know if you follow these leading indicators, but EPC certificates for the first quarter were very good, with about 60 odd thousand up from around 40 thousand as has been the average.

Everything is looking pretty good, and so words I wanted to pass to you, which you don't hear very often, is thank you.

You are increasing your output and obviously the numbers are moving in a good direction and both you and we in government are moving into a serious delivery mode, but there is still loads more to do.

We have to keep up the momentum to deal frankly with decades, and we all know, decades of under investment in housing, exacerbated by the crash back in 2007/8, and we have got to work together to get to those targets of 300,000 a year.

Now the title of this session is innovation and productivity, so I want to talk to you a bit about that because I think there is some critical aspects to it which will help us to reach the 300,000 target.

In particular I wanted to try and scotch 3 of the myths which for the first 6 weeks or so in the job I've heard from a number of quarters.

The first myth which seems to me is a false one is that disruption is not possible in housing, that somehow housebuilding, the housing market is impervious to changes in technology in the way that other industries have been.

From book keeping to banking you have seen the wave of innovation disrupt

those markets amazingly. Now housing does have its own characteristics, it is not a fast moving consumer good in the same way as an iPhone or a book.

People are making all sorts of decisions around their housing which are important life decisions, where they want their kids to go to school, how long will I be on the waiting list for an allotment [political content removed], all these kinds of questions are on people's minds.

But nevertheless I think it would be a big mistake for people in this industry to think that the wind of change, innovation and disruption isn't coming.

I don't want any of you to make the mistake of becoming the Kodak of the house building industry.

And we don't have far to look to another industry which is quite similar which has seen this change: the finance industry,

You know a highly regulated industry like the housing industry, which has over the years conglomerated into a small number of players,

It was only 10 years ago that financial services was dominated by just 5 or 6 large players.

Over the years and decades since we have seen an incredible change in financial services.

People are paying with Monzo, buying currency on transfer wires, getting loans from peer-to-peer lenders, Apple Pay is now eating Visa's lunch on a regular basis. There is something Apple Pay and Google and that are projected having 60% of contactless transactions by 2030.

These are really enormous changes for the financial services industry and that industry is being shaken up by technology but also by talent,

And I think the same is going to be true in housing, and we certainly need it.

We are already seeing some big changes in technology which are going to have an impact on productivity, you go online and Google it, you can find construction robotics in their infancy, but they will accelerate fast.

There are lots of YouTube films of robot brick layers who can build a house 4 times faster than a human can.

Push fit plumbing is revolutionising that industry. Pretty soon we have got near-field electric charging now, we are going to have far-field connectivity which will change the life of electricians up and down the world and will make life easier and quicker from a building point of view.

That will change the landscape and lift some of the barriers to entry.

We also need to see a new wave, frankly, of talent come through in the

industry.

The crash killed a number of small and growing developers and we haven't seen that talent pool emerge yet, but I'm pretty certain that they will and if we are going to improve innovation and productivity in the industry we are going to need to do that.

What will we do as a government to help?

Well we are trying hard to put your money where our mouth is, through the Home Building Fund, which we're targeting SMEs trying to give them the confidence to grow and build, to start even to get going, we are hoping that new wave of house builders will start to come through.

We have championed new modern methods of construction, putting funding behind that too, working with the finance industry to make things mortgageable that come from MMC (modern methods of construction).

We are pushing self and custom build, we think that has huge potential. I learnt just the other day that in Austria that 4 out of 5 houses are self or custom build. It does have potential to be big volume if we can get it right. Kevin McCleod is with us, right? from Grand Designs

It's not just about a financial investment, it's a decision people make about how they want to live, they invest much more in it than just their money.

So pushing some of those growing sea of innovations is great, and our right to build changes and the other bits and pieces, hopefully will help to boost this idea of innovation,

So myth number 1, get ready for change because, whether you like it or not, I think it's coming.

Myth number 2 is actually only the private sector can innovate.

We are trying quite hard as a government, and my predecessors, for all their short lifespan, have put together quite a lot of smart thinking in governmental terms about some of the clever things we can do.

Mostly some of that is what we can do with our money, some of you may have seen the launch yesterday of this Barclays house building fund,

We have gone for significant leverage, so we put in I think £125 million and they have topped it up to a billion, targeted directly at house building, with a tilt towards SMEs.

As I say, we stimulated new markets like the Build To Rent market, back in 2012 it hardly existed, now because of the guarantee structure we provided in a political incentive, we have got something like 125,000 homes delivered or in the pipeline.

In fact just today, we published new guidance from the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) encouraging local authorities to look at this market

and plan for it in their housing allocations.

We have invented new tenures of affordable private rents for people who come between social housing and affordable housing, and then we are looking at changing, or we have changed the policy around employer-led housing, housing for over 55s.

We are open to ideas, we are trying to promote them, we want a thousand flowers to bloom, in terms of tenure, developers, innovation.

We need a big, vigorous, vibrant market to deliver the houses we need. We can innovate and I think you must as well.

And then finally the third myth that I just wanted to squash is this constant battle about quality over quantity.

Those of you who are scholars of Chinese literature will know there is an extremely famous poem in the Chinese canon that was written in the UK.

It was written by a guy called Xu Zhimo, who studied at Cambridge in the 1920s, and he was so awestruck by the beauty of Cambridge and heartbroken to leave

And he wrote this poem called "Leaving Cambridge Again" and it has become a seminal poem in Chinese society. Lots of people in China take their view of the UK from this poem.

And in fact the hotels and shops in Cambridge benefit from it still – they should erect a statue to him from the number of visitors that it still links to go there.

Now I'm not sure that there are many Chinese visitors in this country that will return to China and write poems about a lot of the stuff we have built over the past few years.

I'm not sure everything needs to look like Cambridge, but how many people in this room believe they have built the conservation areas of the future. Probably not that many.

And this is a problem for us, because when we are building this number of houses, if we can get to 300,000, we are not really just building houses we are building neighbourhoods.

Developments of a thousand or 500 units are bigger than most villages,

and we need to think in those neighbourhood terms, we need to think about the place, the design and beauty, where it fits and what we are, frankly, leaving to posterity.

So when they look back on this hopefully golden age of house building, they do so not with a wrecking ball to flatten it all as we are already doing for quite a lot of housing built in the 60s and 70s, but look back at it and treasure it, preserve it and invest in it so that it lasts into the future.

Now in the NPPF, the new planning framework, we are trying to encourage that.

We are trying to get local authorities more confidence to turn things down on the basis of design, stuff that doesn't fit in the local neighbourhood, stuff that people don't like the look of frankly, so we get much more sense of vernacular.

When I was a London Assembly Member, there was a proposal, a plan developed for Chelsea Barracks, some of you may know a huge site in the centre of London.

There was no attempt to create any sense of neighbourhood in this vast site, this very big site in London,

And if you stood in the middle of it you would not know where you were. There was no attempt to link it, or relate it, to the locality.

It didn't look like London and never would.

And as a result, there was a big residents campaign which I played a small part to get it turned down.

We need to recognise that it is perfectly possible for modern, efficient, technology driven design to reflect the local area, and to reflect historical proportion without becoming pastiche.

Critically, from a marketing point of view, and in the end we are all interested in selling houses, as much as anything else, whether it is to invest or as owner-occupiers, design improves acceptability over terms of planning but also in terms of marketability.

How this is stated funnily enough, and as someone who represents a constituency which is something like 60% Area of Outstanding National Beauty and with a large number of houses coming, councils will also tell you that you're much more likely to get permission, much more likely to get marketability, much more likely to get support from everybody around if it looks good, looks like the area, recognises the right materials and gets the design right.

So if we can get those 3 things together, harness innovation, work together to innovate and get design right, then I think we can meet that triple challenge of more, better and faster.

I will do what I can to help you over the time that I am allowed on this earth to do that.

Bring me your ideas. We are open to new thinking, whether it's on finance, whether it's on planning, whatever. As I said before, we want a thousand flowers to bloom.

If we can get to this big, vigorous, vibrant market in which you all compete, and you all allow your talent and your ambition to let rip.

Those of you particularly who are halfway down a huge organisation, have the courage to go out and do your own thing.

We do our best to support you and together we can hit that 300,000 target

Thank you very much.

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## [News story: Manchester seminar: Fulfilling the legacy of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry report – twenty years on \(16 Oct, 2018\)](#)



Seminar audience

16 October, 2018

Featuring

**Kris Christmann** □ Huddersfield University

**Michelle Rogerson** □ Huddersfield University

**Neil Monk** □ Hate Crime Champion □ Victim Support

**Rose Simkins** □ Chief Executive □ Stop Hate UK

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## **[News story: Public asked for views on calorie labelling when eating out](#)**

The government has opened a [public consultation on how to introduce calorie labelling for food and drink consumed outside of the home](#).

The consultation will also seek views on how this could apply to:

- small businesses
- street vendors
- restaurants with fast-changing menus
- online takeaway businesses

Calorie labels are already widely displayed on packaged foods in supermarkets and in some big chains including Wetherspoons and Subway. The new plans are intended to make sure that labelling is applied consistently so that families know how much they and their children are eating when out.

The plans form part of the government's wider strategy to halve childhood obesity by 2030.

Evidence shows that overweight children are more likely to become overweight adults, who have a high risk of developing health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, certain cancers, strokes and heart disease.

The proposals have been welcomed by diabetes experts, who said that three-quarters of the British public have told them that they want more information about what's in the food and drink they buy.

Public Health Minister Steve Brine said:

Families want to know what they are eating when on the go, but in many cafés, restaurants and takeaways this information is not available.

This is not about forcing anyone to eat certain things, or companies to behave in a certain way, but I firmly believe we have a right to know the nutritional content of the food we give to our children.

Type 2 diabetes is on the rise, and is often both preventable and reversible. That's why we are taking action through this consultation, and I would ask everyone to respond with their ideas on how we can make this work.

Helen Dickens, Assistant Director of Campaigns and Mobilisation at Diabetes UK, said:

People living with diabetes and more than three-quarters of the British public have told us that they want more information about what's in the food and drink they buy, to help make healthier choices – especially when they're out and about. These bold, ambitious proposals from government are – if put into legislation – essential to making the healthy choice the easy choice for British consumers.

The UK is facing a type 2 diabetes crisis. With around two-thirds of adults in the UK classed as overweight or obese, and therefore at increased risk of type 2 diabetes and other chronic health conditions, it's really important that we have measures in place that make it easier for all of us to lead healthier lives. These measures are the next vital step in making this a reality and – potentially – beginning to stem the tide of type 2 diabetes.

We look forward to the conclusions of this important consultation, and to seeing how these measures can practically be implemented in the future.

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**[Press release: £25 million accounted for after charity regulator intervenes](#)**



**CHARITY COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**

The Charity Commission has today published a [statement of the results](#) of its pre-inquiry and class inquiry work into “double defaulter” charities between April 2017 – March 2018.

Double defaulters are charities that have defaulted on their statutory obligations to meet reporting requirements by failing to file their annual documents for two or more times in the last five years.

The compliance work involved 80 charities and found that:

- Approximately £25 million of charity income relating to 56 charities has been accounted for as a result of the Commission’s pre inquiry and inquiry work during this period
- A further 24 charities were found to have ceased to exist or did not operate and were therefore removed from the register of charities
- The class inquiry also exercised statutory powers to freeze over £50,000 of unprotected charity funds
- Further enforcement action is being taken against 5 charities, which were part of the class inquiry during this period, as a result of additional regulatory concerns and/or persistent defaulting. These are each now subject to separate inquiries into their governance and activities

**Harvey Grenville, Head of Investigations and Enforcement at the Charity Commission for England and Wales, said:**

The public deserve to be able to understand how their donations are being spent, and see clearly that they go towards their intended causes.

This vital work has ensured compliance issues in over 50 charities have been addressed resulting in over £24 million of charity income now being accounted for. By exercising our powers to protect over £50,000 of charity funds at risk, we demonstrated the robust intervention the public would expect.

Trustees of registered charities with an annual income of over £25,000 are under a clear legal duty to ensure that their charity’s accounts and annual returns are submitted to us on time.

Too many trustees are still failing to file on time or properly notify us when a charity has been wound up. This report should serve as a reminder to other trustees that failure to comply with these duties is regarded as mismanagement by the Commission and can result in regulatory action against a charity or its trustees. Trustees who persistently breach this duty and are unwilling to mend their ways face the very real threat of removal or disqualification.

The full report is available on [GOV.UK](#).

Ends

### **Notes to editors**

1. The Charity Commission is the regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work see the [about us](#) page on GOV.UK.
2. Search for charities on our [check charity tool](#).
3. Under the pre-inquiry stage, charities are issued with a final warning before being placed into the class inquiry. This final warning resulted in 28 charities making good on their default prior to the deadline specified in the final warning.

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