

# Press release: Groceries sector survey shows GCA action drove big improvements

Increased scrutiny and intensive engagement from the Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA) is the common factor among all retailers identified by groceries suppliers as 2018's biggest improvers.

The groceries sector survey – carried out by YouGov for the GCA – puts Tesco, Morrisons, Asda and the Co-operative at the top of the improvement table for Code compliance in a year of strong progress across all regulated retailers.

There were over 1,000 responses to the survey. The results were released at the GCA's annual conference held in London. The theme was "Strong Progress; Fresh Challenges".

The Adjudicator, Christine Tacon, said: "My 2018 survey tells a very positive story and it is no coincidence that the four most-improved retailers this year have each faced increased GCA scrutiny and heightened levels of GCA engagement through investigations and case studies.

"Indeed, I am delighted to report significant improvements across all regulated retailers. In each successive GCA survey, suppliers have scored retailers' compliance with the Code. In 2014, the percentage reported as complying 'consistently well' or 'mostly' ranged from 58 to 90%. This year, the range is 84% to 97%, with only two retailers scoring less than 90%.

"The 2018 survey is proof that my collaborative, business-focused approach gets results."

This year only four out of ten suppliers reported having experienced a Code-related issue – down from a high of eight out of ten in 2014, and a huge improvement on 2017 when 56% of suppliers reported having experienced an issue. The incidence of all Top Issues is also on a steep downward trend, with delay in payments – reported by only 19% of suppliers – being the highest-ranking issue in 2018. Compare this to 2014, when the percentage of suppliers reporting the GCA's Top 5 Issues ranged from a high of 45% to 33%.

Ms Tacon said: "The results of the survey together with information I have received from suppliers and trade associations mean there is no pressing candidate for inclusion as a current Top Issue. But this doesn't mean my job is done – far from it. I know there are fresh challenges waiting for me.

"I can confidently say that for two reasons. One is that my current investigation into the Co-operative Group will generate future work with all regulated retailers, although of course I cannot yet know what form that will take. The second is that additional retailers will soon be designated by the Competition and Markets Authority.

“The CMA has told me that it has written to a number of retailers to identify those with a UK annual groceries turnover of more than £1 billion. It expects to designate one or more additional retailers by the end of August.

“Bringing these new retailers up to speed and ensuring a consistent level of Code compliance across the entire regulated cohort will be challenging and exciting work. I am looking forward to it very much.”

One continuing challenge revealed by the survey results is the 45% of suppliers who have still not had any Code training – a figure that rises to 67% among micro suppliers and 58% among small suppliers.

Ms Tacon said: “This remains an area of concern for me. Half of suppliers are not trained so they are less likely to have the confidence to speak up. The results of my survey show that speaking up can bring real benefits. I urge them to get trained in the coming months.”

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## [Press release: Analysis from independent review into building homes published](#)

A review of house building has called for changes to the current system to ensure new homes are built faster and for thousands more British bricklayers to be trained to help meet government targets.

Sir Oliver Letwin was commissioned by the government to examine what could be done to speed up the slow rate of house building on major sites.

His [study](#), published today (25 June 2018), warns developers are slowing the system down by limiting the number of new built homes that are released for sale at any one time.

The practice is designed to prevent a glut of new built homes driving down prices in the local market and is known as the ‘absorption rate’.

However the report suggests that developers could increase the choice of design, size and tenure of new homes without impacting on the local market and therefore speed up the rate at which houses are built and sold.

The report concludes that “...to obtain more rapid building out of the largest sites we need more variety within those sites”.

The analysis also suggests a shortage of British bricklayers will have a “significant biting constraint” on government plans to boost the number of new homes built from 220,000 a year to 300,000.

To meet the shortfall the analysis calls for 15,000 more bricklayers, almost a quarter of the size of the current workforce, to be trained over the next 5 years.

It suggests that to “raise production of new homes from about 220,000 to about 300,000... the government and major house builders work together ... on a 5 year ‘flash’ programme of pure on the job training.”

Rt. Hon. Sir Oliver Letwin MP said:

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the Review Panel’s work to date in analysing all possible reasons behind the slow build out of housing sites. It is clear that the main cause for delay is the absorption rate. We found that if house builders were to offer more variety of homes and in more distinct settings then overall build out rates could be substantially accelerated.

Secretary of State for Communities, Rt. Hon. James Brokenshire MP, said:

We want to help people onto the housing ladder, and so I would like to thank Sir Oliver and the expert panel for their excellent work. I was particularly interested to see that increasing the choice of design, size and tenure of new homes in helping to speed up build out rates and help deliver the homes we need and communities want. I look forward to receiving the final report in the autumn.

Sir Oliver and the panel visited 15 large sites – of between 1,000 and 15,000 homes – in areas of high demand in London, the South East, West Midlands and the North West.

The government commissioned this Independent Review as part of its comprehensive plans to deliver a housing market fit for the future and build the homes that communities need.

Sir Oliver Letwin and his panel will submit final recommendations on improving build out rates in the autumn.

See the [draft analysis](#), published today.

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**[News story: Dame Carol Black Appointed as British Library Chair](#)**

## **Dame Carol Black**

Professor Dame Carol Black is Principal of Newnham College Cambridge and Expert Adviser on Health and Work to NHS England and Public Health England. She chairs the board of Think Ahead, the Government's fast-stream training programme for Mental Health Social Workers and is a member of Rand Europe's Council of Advisers, the Strategy Board for the Defence National Rehabilitation Centre, and the Advisory Board of Step up to Serve.

As Principal of Newnham Dame Carol is on several committees in Cambridge University: the Equality and Diversity Committee, the Advisory Board of the Centre for Science and Public Policy, and the Strategic Working Group on Access and Participation. She is a Deputy Vice-Chancellor, patron of the Women's Leadership Centre in the Judge Business School, and a member of the University's Leadership Network.

Dame Carol has compiled three independent reviews for the UK Government: of the health of the working-age population in 2008 as National Director for Health and Work; of sickness absence in Britain in 2011 as co-chair; and of employment outcomes of addiction to drugs or alcohol, or obesity, in 2016.

Professor Black is a past-President of the Royal College of Physicians, of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, and of the British Lung Foundation, and past-Chair of the Nuffield Trust for health policy. The Centre she established at the Royal Free Hospital in London is internationally renowned for research and treatment of connective tissue diseases such as scleroderma. She has been a Trustee of the National Portrait Gallery.

The role is remunerated at £35,180.00 per annum. This appointment has been made in accordance with the [Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments](#). The appointments process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Under the Code, any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years must be declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation, or candidature for election. Dame Carol has declared no such political activity.

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## **[News story: Five point pledge on Heathrow ahead of historic vote](#)**

The Transport Secretary today (25 June 2018) described Heathrow expansion as the biggest transport decision in a generation, as he made a 5-point pledge to the country.

Ahead of the Commons vote, Chris Grayling urged MPs to seize the opportunity of targeting vital new overseas markets for British business and creating

thousands of jobs.

And he promised any possible expansion would be governed by 5 key pledges:

- no cost to taxpayers – the new runway scheme will be privately funded and the government will work with industry to keep airport charges down
- a massive economic boost to the country – new international routes, more than 100,000 new jobs, doubled freight capacity and benefits of up to £74 billion to passengers and the wider economy
- guaranteed benefits for the whole of the UK – commitment to about 15% of new slots for domestic routes, new rail links, and new global opportunities for regional business
- environmental protection built-in – expansion to be delivered within existing climate change and air quality obligations and a new ban on scheduled night flights
- cast iron legal protection on commitments – Heathrow's pledges to be legally enforceable, with punishment of unlimited fines or grounded planes if promises are broken

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

This is a momentous vote that has been 50 years in the making and represents the biggest transport decision in a generation.

Successive governments have wrestled with the issue of Heathrow expansion but never before has Parliament held a vote on this project.

At stake are thousands of new jobs and the country's ability to compete on an international stage and win new global trade.

We can be absolutely clear that this project will be privately financed and there will be no cost to taxpayers. And there will be cast iron legal protection to ensure the vital community and environmental measures are delivered.

I hope colleagues from across the House will now put aside party and political differences to take a decision in the long-term national interest.

Today's vote follows a [government decision](#) on June 5 to officially support the expansion of Heathrow through a new north-west runway – put forward in a proposed [Airports National Policy Statement](#) (NPS).

If approved, it will see the construction of the first full-length runway in the south-east since the Second World War.

The NPS sets out how Heathrow expansion would provide an extra 16 million long-haul seats by 2040 – opening up new markets for British business and in-bound tourism.

And it takes into account [public and industry feedback](#) and [recommendations made by the Transport Committee](#) to ensure that airport expansion in the south-east will be delivered in a way that is cost-efficient, sustainable and in passengers' best interests.

This includes a world-class package of [compensation and mitigation measures](#) to support those affected by the expansion, with up to £2.6 billion for compensation, noise insulation and community amenities, which could include improvements to parks and leisure facilities.

These are reinforced by plans for a 6.5 hour scheduled night flight ban and [noise restrictions](#) which will be legally enforceable.

To make sure the whole of the UK benefits, the government has committed to about 15% of slots for [domestic routes](#). While many of these will be delivered commercially, government has for the first time set out that it would use [public service obligations to ensure existing and new routes are safeguarded](#). This includes the potential for slots to be ring-fenced and exempt from air passenger duty, which can save passengers £26 on the cost of a return domestic ticket.

The government is confident that the scheme can be delivered within our obligations under the [Climate Change Act](#), and [development consent](#) would only be granted on the basis that the new runway is delivered within existing [air quality obligations](#).

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## [Press release: HS2 launches plans for unprecedented 'green corridor' stretching alongside the railway](#)

The scale of planned works will be largest ever undertaken by an infrastructure project in the UK, with a network of environmental projects stretching from London to the North of England.

Along the Phase One route, which covers 216km from London to the West Midlands, the green corridor will encompass:

- 7 million new trees and shrubs, including over 40 native species, specific to each location. The new native woodlands will cover over 9 square kilometres of land.
- Over 33 square kilometres of new and existing wildlife habitat – equating to an area the size of 4,600 football pitches. That's an increase of around 30% compared to what's there now.
- Tailor-made homes for wildlife, ranging from bat houses to 226 new ponds for great crested newts and other amphibians.

- Earthworks and landscaping which will re-use around 90% of the material excavated during construction.
- The potential to support community projects and develop amenity spaces such as access routes, public parks, open spaces and nature reserves.

Work on the pioneering initiative is expected to set new standards for how Britain and the rest of Europe builds the next generation of major infrastructure projects.

As the corridor is being delivered, HS2 is encouraging local people and organisations to get involved in everything from landscape design to tree planting. This includes supporting local environmental projects through its various community funds.

In a related announcement today, the government confirmed a £2 million extension to the HS2 Woodland Fund, so it can cover Phase 2a of the railway, from the West Midlands to Crewe. The fund is designed to help landowners near to the route directly create new native, broadleaf woodlands and restore existing ancient woodland sites. This is in addition to the extensive 'green corridor' plans and community funds that are already in place along the wider route.

Mark Thurston, Chief Executive of HS2 Ltd, said:

Alongside improving connectivity, boosting the economy and unlocking new jobs and opportunities, I'm determined to ensure that HS2 also works for the environment and local communities.

This starts by doing everything we can to reduce our environmental footprint and minimise the expected impact of our construction work. Longer-term, we'll be leaving behind a network of new wildlife habitats, woodlands, and community spaces, helping to create a lasting legacy along the route.

We've already got to work by supporting a range of community projects and creating a series of new habitats, including planting over 230,000 trees so far. We'll be calling on local people and organisations to get involved as the 'green corridor' starts to take shape.

Nusrat Ghani, HS2 Minister, said:

Our unique and beautiful countryside is one of our nation's greatest assets. As we deliver the new high speed railway our country needs, for economic growth and better journeys for passengers, it is imperative we set a new standard for preserving, protecting and enhancing our diverse woodlands and wildlife.

HS2's Green Corridor is one of the most significant tree-planting and habitat creation projects ever undertaken in this country. To

support that vision, the government is providing an additional £2 million for the Woodland Fund, to support native species and help more people enjoy more new green spaces than before.

The appearance of the green corridor will be tailored to the surrounding environment, with native tree species used to ensure that the new woodlands reflect the unique landscape and ecology of the different regions the line passes through.

As the corridor is gradually delivered, HS2 is encouraging local people and organisations to get involved. This includes supporting local environmental projects, through its various funds including the £45m Community & Environment Fund and Business & Local Economy Fund.

Full details are covered in HS2's official ['More Than a Railway' booklet and animation](#), both available on its website today.