

Press release: Government commits to further support for neighbourhood planning

More communities across England will be able to get free access to expert advice and guidance to help make their neighbourhood vision a reality, Housing Minister Dominic Raab announced today (19 March 2018).

A £23 million fund – being delivered by Locality and Groundwork – will help local groups to develop a neighbourhood plan. These plans give local people a say in the development of their area, including where homes, schools and businesses should be built, how they should look and what infrastructure is needed to support them.

Community groups will be able to access a range of free help including financial support and latest planning expertise from trained professionals, to guide them through the process of preparing a neighbourhood plan.

Housing and Planning Minister Dominic Raab said:

Neighbourhood plans are a powerful tool to help communities shape their local area, making sure the right homes are built in the right places.

It's vital that communities have the right support and advice available to help deliver a plan that meets their own ambitious aspirations. That's why I'm making £23 million available that will help more groups to do this.

Over 2,300 communities across England have started the process of neighbourhood planning, with 530 plans approved in local referendums.

Previous government support has helped around 7 out of 10 of these communities progress their plans, with 365 neighbourhood plans finalised using support provided by the government.

The maximum grant available has also been increased by £2,000 to £17,000, helping communities to access more resources to develop a plan for their area.

Community groups can find out more information about how to apply for funding via a new website at www.neighbourhoodplanning.org. Applications to bid for funding will open on 3 April 2018.

Locality and Groundwork UK were appointed to oversee the fund following a full and transparent procurement process.

Locality will use its expertise, skills and track record advising on development to help communities to reach the full potential of their neighbourhood plan from start to finish.

Their dedicated website will provide clear information on neighbourhood planning and signpost to highly qualified specialists from a range of organisations, including design and engineering professionals at AECOM and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

Groundwork UK has been appointed to administer application process for grant funding, ensuring finance is available for groups to cover the costs associated with producing a successful neighbourhood plan.

[Open consultation: A future framework for heat in buildings: call for evidence](#)

The [Clean Growth Strategy](#) presented major policies and plans that will cut the cost of energy, drive economic growth, create high value jobs right across the UK, and improve our quality of life.

This call for evidence reaffirms that ambition by building on the commitment to phase out installation of high carbon fossil fuel heating in new and existing buildings off the gas grid, during the 2020s. The consultation document explains what we mean by this ambition, and seeks evidence on how we could implement it.

The heating industry has a vital role to play. It is essential for installers, suppliers and manufacturers in the coal and oil sectors to show leadership. Government will listen to, and work with, our experienced heating experts from all sectors of the industry. Our heating industry must retain its position as a world leader, seeing this process as an opportunity to lead the change that is necessary, and not let the world change without them. Phasing out high carbon fossil fuel heating may be a challenge, but it is also an opportunity for new jobs, new skills, and investment in innovation, as well as greater comfort and convenience for our households and businesses. Moreover, what we do now to decarbonise buildings off the gas grid may pave the way for future decarbonisation of the wider building stock.

We are seeking evidence from across society, in particular from both consumers and the heat market:

- those using or working with fossil fuels
- those using or working with low carbon alternatives.

This is essential so that we can explore the options available to take action during the 2020s and build consensus for that action.

[News story: Edmund de Waal OBE reappointed to the Royal Mint Advisory Committee](#)

HM Treasury today (19 March 2018) announced the reappointment of Edmund de Waal OBE to the Royal Mint Advisory Committee. The reappointment will be for a term of five years.

The Royal Mint Advisory Committee on the Design of Coins, Medals, Seals and Decorations was established in 1922 with the personal approval of King George V. Its purpose is to advise the Chancellor of the Exchequer on new designs for United Kingdom coins and to advise other government departments on new designs for official medals and seals. It is classed as an Advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (Lower Tier).

Edmund de Waal is an artist and a writer on the history of art, and has brought valuable expertise on these subjects to the committee. The appointment was made in accordance with the Code of Practice published by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Further information

All appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for appointees' political activity (if any declared) to be made public. Mr De Waal has confirmed he has not engaged in any political activity in the last five years. He is also a Trustee of the Victoria & Albert Museum.

[Press release: Video offers virtual journey through Lower Thames Crossing](#)

Drivers can experience what their journey through Britain's second longest road tunnel will be like once it opens in 2027 following the release of a video by Highways England today (Monday 19 March).

In the new video, Highways England takes drivers on a journey through the two mile long crossing, which will feature two tunnels taking a three lane road under the River Thames between Gravesham, Kent and Thurrock, Essex.

The video also illustrates how the 13 mile route, that will include the tunnel, will link drivers to the M25, the A2 and the A13, including the new junctions and link roads being built as part of the £4.4 – £6.2 billion project.

The animation shows the tunnelled section, the three junctions north of the River Thames and a map of the full alignment of the proposed route. It has been published to provide an early impression of what the road and tunnel could look like once completed in 2027.

[LTC video.](#)

Highways England has also released drawings showing the vertical alignment of the route, which demonstrates where the route is above and below existing ground levels.

Highways England plans to carry out a statutory consultation later this year. The consultation will enable stakeholders and communities to shape the proposed design of the route ahead of a development consent order application for permission from the Secretary of State for Transport to build the Lower Thames Crossing.

Work is continuing on the design ahead of the statutory consultation and the video released today represents the design of the route at the time of production. There have been changes to the route and these and future changes will be reflected in further materials, which will be published in the run up to and during the Lower Thames Crossing statutory consultation.

Highways England Project Director Tim Jones said:

The video fly-through of the Lower Thames Crossing will give people a better understanding of how the proposed road and tunnel could look once built. We are continuing to develop the design based on feedback from stakeholders and local communities so that we put forward a route which maximises the positive opportunities the Lower Thames Crossing could bring, while minimising impacts on communities and the environment. This video does not represent the final design, and we will continue to share our thinking and designs as we approach statutory consultation later this year.

Tim Jones will be speaking to businesses, stakeholders and partners on the Lower Thames Crossing later this week when he presents at the Southend Business Partnership on Thursday to provide an update on this once-in-a-generation project.

Highways England will be responsible for delivering the crossing, which will increase capacity for crossing the Thames east of London by 70 per cent,

easing pressure on the existing Dartford Crossing – currently the only road crossing of the river east of the capital.

The new crossing will be linked to the road network by a new road north of the river, which will join the M25 between junctions 29 and 30, and a new road south of the river which, will join the A2 east of Gravesend.

The Lower Thames Crossing will deliver an £8 billion economic stimulus, and create some 6,000 jobs. The crossing will enable sustainable local development and regional growth leading to a stronger economy and will open opportunities for investment in housing. It will allow businesses to grow, creating more jobs, apprenticeships and training, while also connecting local communities to jobs, leisure and retail.

Around 55 million journeys are made each year on the Dartford Crossing, six million more than it was designed for, and it suffers from closures due to incidents almost daily.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[News story: Restrictions on Croatian workers to expire in June](#)

Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes made the announcement in a Written Ministerial Statement to Parliament.

Legally, the UK could only extend the controls for a final 2 years if there was clear evidence that removing the controls would lead to a serious labour market disturbance. The Government has considered the evidence and with unemployment at near record lows, employment of UK nationals at near record highs and the Eurozone and Croatia forecast to grow strongly over the next 2 years, concluded the economic case for an extension could not be made.

When Croatia joined the EU in 2013, the UK and other member states were able to restrict the access that Croatian citizens had to their labour markets for a maximum of 7 years. The UK is one of a few EU countries (Austria, Slovenia and the Netherlands) which applies such measures. The restrictions have meant that, unless an exemption applied, Croatians needed permission from the Home

Office to work in the UK.

Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes said:

This decision has not been taken lightly, but after careful consideration, we have concluded that there is not enough evidence to satisfy the legal requirements to extend the controls for the final 2 year period.

Net migration of EU citizens has fallen in the last year by 75,000 and since joining the EU in 2013 only around a few thousand Croatians have moved to the UK. Estimates suggest there are below 10,000 Croatian in the UK and by comparison, in 2009 at the same point of transitional controls for Romanian and Bulgarian workers there were around 57,000 Romanians and 35,000 Bulgarians living in the UK, according to the Office for National Statistics.

The time-limited restrictions to member states' labour markets were provided for under the Treaty of Accession 2011 between Croatia and the EU and can be applied for five years, plus an additional two years if required to protect the member state's labour market from serious disturbance.

Under the UK's application of the restrictions, Croatian partners and spouses of British nationals or other nationals settled in the UK are exempt, as are Croatian citizens who have worked in the UK for 12 months with the appropriate authorisation.

Further information can be found in the [guidance for Croatian nationals on working in the UK](#).