

# Press release: Government acts to improve the home buying process

As part of a continued drive to make the housing market work better, we want to hear from everyone with an interest in home buying including estate agents, solicitors and mortgage lenders.

We want to ensure that we address issues across the whole sector, from ways to tackle gazumping and reduce time wasting to increase commitment to a sale.

Views will be taken on:

- Gazumping – Buyers are concerned about gazumping, with sellers accepting a higher offer from a new buyer, we will look at ways this could be tackled.
- Building trust & confidence – Mistrust between parties is one of the biggest issues faced, we want to look at schemes including ‘lock-in agreements’. Although 1 million homes are bought and sold in England each year, around a quarter of sales fall through and hundreds of millions of pounds are wasted, we want to increase confidence in the housing chain
- Informing customers – How to provide better guidance for buyers and sellers, by encouraging them to gather more information in advance so homes are ‘sale ready’
- Innovation – You can now search for a home online, but the buying process is too slow, costing time and money so we’re looking for innovative digital solutions including making more data available online

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

We want to help everyone have a good quality home they can afford, and improving the process of buying and selling is part of delivering that. Buying a home is one of life’s largest investments, so if it goes wrong it can be costly. That’s why we’re determined to take action to make the process cheaper, faster and less stressful.

This can help save people money and time so they can focus on what matters – finding their dream home. I want to hear from the industry on what more we can do to tackle this issue.

Today’s (22 October 2017) announcement will build on recent proposals to cut out abuses of leasehold, protections for renters and a crackdown on unfair managing agents, now we are looking at modernising the home buying process.

The Housing White Paper set out plans to fix the broken housing market, getting the right homes built in the right places and measures to improve affordability and protections for renters and home purchasers.

This exercise isn't about adding extra work for buyers and sellers or seeing a return to Home Information Packs, this [call for evidence](#) will look at how we can further improve the home buying experience.

The government manifesto committed to reforming and modernising the home buying process so it is more efficient and less costly.

This is important as [research published today](#) sampling more than 2,000 people who have bought or sold a home recently shows that some of the key issues are:

- of those that experienced delays, 69% of sellers and 62% of buyers reported stress and worry as a result of the delay
- 46% of sellers had concerns about a buyer changing their mind after making an offer
- 24% of sellers would use a different estate agent if they were to go through the process again; and
- 32% of sellers and 28% of buyers were dissatisfied with the other party's solicitor

Research from [Which?](#) shows that people find moving house more stressful than having children, as part of research on life events.

The [call for evidence](#) will run for 8 weeks from Sunday 22 October

We have also looked to other countries, such as Denmark and the USA where it's perceived that home buying and selling works much more smoothly.

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## [Press release: UK aid provides lifeline to defenceless and wounded Syrians to help them return to a liberated Raqqa](#)

The International Development Secretary Priti Patel called for urgent international action to end the "death sentence" that innocent people of Raqqa city still face from explosive booby-traps and wounds inflicted by war.

Ms Patel's plea came as she announced UK support to clear deadly landmines and restore hospitals and medical treatment for victims of this bloody conflict, helping them to return home safely.

As Raqqa is set to be liberated from Daesh, the first steps are being taken to make the city safe, with UK aid support giving a "glimmer of hope" to the people of Raqqa that one day they will be able to return home and rebuild

their lives.

Hundreds of thousands of defenceless men, women and children have fled Daesh brutality and fighting in Raqqa. Many have been forced to leave with nothing and have been left suffering from life-threatening injuries and trauma from years of relentless violence, bombing and landmines planted across the city. Others have been held hostage by the Daesh regime or forced into hiding within the city itself.

Ahead of liberation, Ms Patel announced that the UK is stepping up to:

- clear lethal landmines and explosives, to allow families to return unharmed to their homes, and ensure that humanitarian experts and aid agencies can reach those in desperate need
- restock hospitals and mobile surgical units in the area with essential medicines and equipment to help restore crippled health facilities
- provide 145,000 medical consultations, including for those that have been wounded or starved, and psychological support for 1,600 people who have been traumatised by the horrors of war
- provide immediate relief for innocent people who have been displaced, with 31,000 relief kits including cooking equipment and blankets to keep them warm for winter
- improve access to clean water for 15,000 people, with jerry cans and water-purifying tablets to prevent the spread of deadly disease and sickness
- help pregnant women with 1,000 clean delivery kits to ensure safety for mothers and babies during childbirth.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

Daesh's iron grip on the city of Raqqa has stolen the lives of too many innocent people and now that this evil regime has been driven out, it is absolutely crucial that the international community actively helps them rebuild their lives.

After years of barbaric and indiscriminate violence by Daesh, the liberation of Raqqa offers a glimmer of hope – but defenceless men, women and children still face a brutal death sentence from lethal landmines or wounds inflicted by the conflict.

UK aid is providing a lifeline for countless Syrians who have lost absolutely everything, giving life-saving medical treatment, water and blankets to those that have escaped and destroying deadly explosives to ensure people can return safely once Raqqa has finally been freed.

Today's announcement comes as liberation of Raqqa city is set to be declared.

The brutal Syrian civil war, now in its seventh year, has already cost an estimated 400,000 lives, with over 11 million people displaced by conflict and causing a severe shortage of food, clean water and healthcare.

Britain has been at the forefront of the response to the Syria crisis and already we have delivered 20.9 million food rations every month, 8.8 million relief packages, 3.3 million vaccines against deadly diseases and 8.1 million medical consultations for those in need in Syria.

## **Notes to Editors**

Today's £10 million package of support is a new allocation from the UK's response to the Syria crisis and will be provided to partners already working in the region, including UN agencies and the World Health Organisation working on the frontline within and around Raqqa governorate.

This includes £5 million for the World Health Organisation and £5 million for other NGOs. For safety and security reasons, DFID does not name a number of our partners operating in Syria.

The UK is a leading donor in the humanitarian response. To date we have committed over £2.46 billion in humanitarian funding to the region.

For more information on the UK's humanitarian response to the Syria crisis, visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/factsheet-the-uks-humanitarian-aid-response-to-the-syria-crisis>

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## **Press release: Chemical event at Sellafield, 21 October 2017**

Following a chemical inventory audit in a laboratory, we took the decision to dispose of a number of chemicals which are no longer used in our operations and have been stored since 1992.

In line with best practice and established procedures, we alerted the relevant partner agencies and sought advice on managing this material in accordance with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health regulations.

### **Update at 10:40 Saturday 21 October**

- This is not a radiological event
- The chemicals are contained within a small number of canisters. These need to be removed and disposed of appropriately.
- The materials involved are solvents which are widely used in industry.

- They will be disposed of in a controlled manner.
- An area of the site is cordoned off as a precaution – but the rest of the site is operational and the majority of our staff who would be in at the weekend are at work and working normally.
- The army's Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team deal with hundreds of these issues every year, recovering chemicals from science laboratories in places like schools and universities.
- These chemicals are used extensively in many industries and are well understood.
- Because this is happening on the Sellafield site we exercise extreme caution and leave nothing to chance.

## **Background**

As is usual in these scenarios, a specialised unit was invited to attend the Sellafield site to assess the material and advise on its safe disposal.

That team, from the army's Explosives Ordnance Disposal Team, will dispose of the material safely.

They will dig a trench, bury the canisters using sandbags, and detonate them in a controlled manner. This will create a noise that will be audible off-site, but there is no need for alarm.

The chemicals involved are solvents, such as Tetrahydrofuran, which are potentially flammable in liquid states and can crystallise and become unstable when exposed to air (oxygen) Crystallisation takes a number of days.

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## **[News story: Business Secretary points to bright future for Belfast during Canada visit](#)**

Business Secretary Greg Clark was in Canada today (20 October 2017) to attend an event marking the joint venture between Airbus and Bombardier, agreed earlier this week.

During the visit, Greg Clark held meetings with Bombardier and Airbus' senior

leadership, including Airbus' CEO Tom Enders and COO Fabrice Brégier; and Bombardier's Chairman Pierre Beaudoin, President and CEO Alain Bellemare and President, Aerostructures and Engineering Services in Belfast, Michael Ryan.

Greg Clark also met Canadian Minister of International Trade François-Philippe Champlain, with both governments reinforcing their joint commitment to working with the companies to build on the C-Series success, while continuing to ensure the unjustified case brought by Boeing is brought to a swift resolution.

The Business secretary also met with members of the Quebec Government, Premier Philippe Couillard, Deputy Premier Dominique Anglade and Minister of International Affairs Christine Saint-Pierre.

The event, held at Bombardier's assembly facility in Mirabel, Quebec, marks an important step in the future of Bombardier's C-Series aircraft and in securing the Bombardier Shorts plant in Belfast, which produces the aircraft's wings.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

Airbus' announcement that it is taking a stake in Bombardier's C-Series was an important positive step forward for the C-Series and the highly skilled and dedicated workforce in Belfast.

I discussed with Airbus and Bombardier how the new partnership has the potential to see Bombardier Shorts plant in Belfast build on its excellence and grow further. In my meeting with Canadian Minister of International Trade François-Philippe Champlain we reinforced our commitment to continuing to work together to ensure the unjustified case brought by Boeing is brought to a swift resolution.

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## **[News story: Flood risk this weekend](#)**

This is likely to cause large waves and spray which could lead to coastal flooding along the south and south-west coast.

Ben Lukey , National Flood Duty Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

Environment Agency teams are on the ground, checking defences and taking precautionary action to close tidal gates and put up temporary barriers. We're working with the Met Office and local authorities and are ready to respond as necessary.

We urge people to stay safe along the coast and warn against putting yourself in unnecessary danger by taking 'storm selfies' or driving through flood water – just 30cm is enough to move your car.

You can check whether you're affected at [www.gov.uk/flood](http://www.gov.uk/flood). We will issue flood alerts and warnings as needed, so please sign up to receive them for free online or by calling 0345 988 1188.