

[News story: Cassini: an incredible journey of exploration](#)

Having used almost every bit of fuel it carried to Saturn, operators are plunging Cassini into the planet to ensure Saturn's moons will remain pristine for future exploration.

The UK has been heavily involved in the ESA/NASA mission, providing £8 million in funding for building vital instruments, plus on-going support for operational costs.

The Cassini-Huygens spacecraft embarked on a seven-year voyage across the Solar System, eventually reaching Saturn in July 2004. Several months later, the Cassini orbiter released ESA's Huygens probe, which landed on Titan on 14 January 2005 – the first landing in the outer Solar System.

Cassini – UK involvement

- Magnetometer: Led by David Southwood, then Michele Dougherty, at Imperial College London. The Magnetometer measures the magnetic field
- Composite Infrared Spectrometer (CIRS): Co-Ied by Simon Calcutt, Peter Ade, Pat Irwin and Fred Taylor at Oxford University and Peter Ade at Queen Mary University of London. Measures infrared thermal radiation
- Cassini Plasma Spectrometer (CAPS): Co-Ied on the Electron sensor unit by Andrew Coates, Mullard Space Science Laboratory and by Manuel Grande, Aberystwyth University. Measures the auroral environment and activity
- UK academics also contributed to work on the Radio Plasma Wave Instrument, Imaging Science Subsystem (ISS) and Cosmic Dust Analyser (CDA).

Huygens – UK involvement

- Surface Science Package (SSI): Led by John Zarnecki, Open University. Co-Ied by Simon Green, Open University. A package of 9 sensors to determine the physical properties of the Huygens landing site.
- UK industrial involvement included LogicaCMG and Irvin-GQ for the flight control and parachute manufacture.
- In April 2017, Cassini was placed on an impact course that unfolded over five months of daring dives – a series of 22 orbits each passing between the planet and its rings. Called the Grand Finale, this final phase of the mission has brought unparalleled observations of the planet and its rings from closer than ever before.

Katherine Wright, Head of Space Science said:

Cassini-Huygens has been an incredible journey of exploration and we are very proud to have supported the UK scientists and engineers

who have led many of the discoveries from this mission. It is sad to see the end of this expedition but its data legacy will keep on producing first class science for many years to come.

Professor Michele Dougherty, from Imperial College London, who took over the management of the Magnetometer from Professor David Southwood, said:

“The Cassini mission has been spectacular on a whole range of fronts, the science it has achieved, the way in which the spacecraft and instruments have operated way beyond their planned lifetime and how the large international team from many different countries and cultures have come together and worked to produce the results we have.

“I will have a range of emotions at the end: sadness that such an endeavor has come to an end, great pride in what we have all achieved together and a bit of relief since I am now exhausted and can't keep this end-of-mission pace up forever!”

[Watch the climax of the Grand Finale](#), as Cassini plunges into Saturn's atmosphere from 12 noon to 1.30pm (BST) on Friday, 15 September.

Speech: Secretary of State's Speech to Top 100 Companies Banquet 2017

Thank you David [Elliott, Ulster Business Editor], and thank you for the kind invitation to speak here today. It is a great honour to be here and to join you in celebrating the very best of NI business.

I would like to thank A&L Goodbody, Ulster Business Magazine and Lanyon Communications for hosting and organising this fine event.

Events like these are a welcome reminder of the economic progress we have seen in Northern Ireland since the Belfast Agreement nearly two decades ago.

Some often query whether, when politics comes to the fore, business takes a back seat as a result.

But the transformation of Northern Ireland in the past two decades shows why it is imperative to keep both at the heart of the work we do.

To see the change, from a place which had struggled to attract investment and jobs against a backdrop of terrorism and instability, to one of the most popular locations in the UK outside of London for foreign direct investment, shows exactly why we see a stronger economy as a key priority for Northern Ireland.

And as Mark Thompson mentioned in his remarks, 2016 was a hugely successful year for the Top 100 – with record sales and a 16% increase in profits from world-beating businesses making strides at home and globally. I can only congratulate you all for that achievement.

The fundamentals of the UK economy as a whole are strong. We have grown continuously for more than four years, reduced the deficit and delivered a record number of jobs.

We are proud of this record but not complacent. We must restore productivity growth to deliver higher wages and living standards for people across the country. That is why we are committed to investing in infrastructure, technology and skills to deliver the best possible base for strong future growth.

This strength includes continued growth in Northern Ireland, which has secured 34 new Foreign Direct Investment projects in the last year alone, creating more than 1,600 new jobs. We now have more than 800 international companies located in the region and employing in excess of 75,000 people.

And overall the picture is one of solid growth, increasing output, falling unemployment, and job creation.

Indeed we saw yesterday that unemployment is now at 5.3%, the lowest since the great crash in 2008, while more than 10,000 jobs were created over the course of the year. And the last quarter saw the sharpest rise in business activity in 2017 so far.

It is wonderful to be able to celebrate such success – to recognise the strength and resilience of the economy in Northern Ireland. But building upon that success must be the priority for the year ahead. And as we look to do so, it is important that we acknowledge the key issues that we must face.

EU Exit

The first is EU Exit.

We might be leaving the EU but we are not turning our backs on our friends and partners in Europe.

As a Government our goal is to secure a deal that works for the whole of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, as we leave the European Union.

This was reiterated in the Government's Position Paper on Northern Ireland and Ireland, setting out in more detail how we might achieve our objectives.

This Position Paper expanded on the Government's proposals for a future customs relationship with Europe. We proposed two options: a highly streamlined model and a new customs partnership. In our Northern Ireland/Ireland Paper we have set out the additional facilitations that the Government see as necessary to protect the open border and ensure as frictionless a movement of goods as possible.

Specifically, the Government has proposed that small and medium sized businesses should be exempt from all customs processes entirely. This imaginative and flexible solution to the free movement of goods would see some 80% of all Northern Ireland businesses free from any interaction with customs processes.

And for those businesses not falling into that category, the Government wants highly streamlined and flexible administrative arrangements to ensure no physical checks are required on goods crossing the land border.

Our second proposal is a new customs partnership with the EU, aligning our approach to the customs border in a way that removes the need for a UK-EU customs border.

One potential approach would involve the UK mirroring the EU's requirements for imports from the rest of the world where their final destination is the EU.

These are bold and imaginative proposals to the issue of free flow of goods across the border with Ireland. And we would encourage everyone to get behind that debate as we look to develop the next stage of detail and an implementation plan.

But of course the open border is about more than goods, it is also fundamentally about people and communities. The Government is absolutely committed to ensuring the border remains open to allow for the normal everyday interactions between people on either side.

For its part, the UK wants to continue to protect the CTA and associated reciprocal bilateral arrangements. This means protecting the ability to move freely within the UK and between the UK and Ireland with no practical change from now, recognising the special importance of this to people in their daily lives, and the underpinning it provides for the Northern Ireland political process.

We also recognise that investors, businesses and citizens in both the UK and the EU, and beyond, need to be able to plan ahead. In order to avoid any cliff-edge as we move from our current relationship to our future partnership, people and businesses would benefit from an interim period, for the implementation of the arrangements, which allowed for a smooth and orderly transition.

The Government believes it would help both sides to minimise unnecessary disruption and provide certainty for businesses and individuals if we agree this principle early in the process.

The Government is keen to explore with the EU a model for an interim period which would ensure that businesses and people in the UK and the EU only have to adjust once to a new customs relationship.

So the UK Government has been clear that we will respect and recognise the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland and its relationship with Ireland as we leave the European Union.

We must avoid a return to a hard border, and trade and everyday movements across the land border must be protected as part of the UK-EU deal.

The Government will take account of these unique circumstances and the priority attached by all parts of the community in Northern Ireland to avoid a hard border and protect cross-border trade and cooperation.

Lack of an Executive

But the most immediate challenge is the lack of an Executive, and the imperative – for growth, prosperity and for the people of Northern Ireland – to see power-sharing return.

For nine months government has effectively been in the hands of civil servants, rather than politicians who are rightly accountable to the public for the decisions they make. This has meant there has been no political direction to tackle the fundamental challenges facing Northern Ireland – including the reform and transformation of critical public services.

So our overriding priority for the UK Government in Northern Ireland remains the restoration of devolved power-sharing government in Stormont. We believe in devolution. It is right that decisions over local services – like health, education, transport and economic development – are taken by local politicians in locally accountable political institutions.

This is why I am working intensively with the Northern Ireland parties and, in accordance with the well-established three-stranded approach, the Irish Government, to secure the reestablishment of inclusive, stable, devolved government in the interests of the entire community in Northern Ireland.

I have been clear with the parties that they must come together and reach agreement in the short window of time that remains.

If this does not happen within a short number of weeks, we risk greater political decision-making from Westminster – starting with provision for a 2017-18 Budget this autumn.

This is not what anyone wants and would profoundly be a step back not a step forwards. But in the continuing absence of devolution the UK Government retains ultimate responsibility for good governance and political stability in Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom – and we will not shirk from the necessary measures to deliver that.

If things don't change we are on a glide path to greater and greater UK government intervention.

But I believe we can change course. This can be achieved with political leadership and with support of the people of Northern Ireland – including communities and businesses.

I ask everyone here tonight to do all you can to help secure what Northern Ireland wants and needs.

There is so much at stake. Risks, yes. But also so many opportunities, because I firmly believe in the huge unlocked potential there is right across Northern Ireland.

Opportunities to leverage the UK-wide Industrial Strategy to deliver stronger growth, and capitalise on new Sector Deals to support the industries of the future – like biotech and life sciences – where the UK, and Northern Ireland in particular, has the potential to lead the world.

To take forward with this Government a comprehensive and ambitious set of City Deals for Northern Ireland to prosper, and to put innovation at the heart of Northern Ireland's growth.

To be at the heart of a stronger, fairer and more prosperous United Kingdom, and one that is more outward looking than ever before as we make trade deals around the world – with NI business able to realise their ambitions and make their mark on the world stage.

And to make use of the considerable freedoms available, getting the devolution of corporation tax back on track to enable Northern Ireland to cut its rates to attract investment and jobs.

In all of these ways – and more – I see a bright economic future for Northern Ireland.

And that is a future that the UK Government will support – through all the ways above, as well as through the range of funding streams there will be available, whether our £4.7bn Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, our £23bn National Productivity Investment Fund, and far more besides.

And that is what a restored Executive can do for Northern Ireland. It can promote an enterprise-driven economy, somewhere where young entrepreneurs want to invest and the younger generation see opportunities to forge their careers in Northern Ireland – a place where innovation, skills, opportunity and prosperity are at the forefront of the way ahead.

With a stable, power-sharing government in place, business can rely on the backdrop of stability that removes barriers to finance, to investment, and which boosts confidence to create jobs and opportunities.

And that is exactly why it must remain our absolute priority in the critical weeks ahead.

Impact on business/private sector

All the while, I want to reassure you that the UK Government will always uphold its responsibilities to the people and businesses of Northern Ireland.

I will continue to keep communications open with businesses right across Northern Ireland. Some of you may be aware of the work of my Business Advisory Group, but more broadly too, my door will always be open to hearing more from the business community.

For no matter what, I will remain a strong advocate for Northern Ireland and NI business within the Government and beyond.

Including on the Government's ongoing work to support Bombardier in the ongoing trade case brought by Boeing.

Let me be very clear: it is a top priority for this Government to safeguard Bombardier's operations and its highly skilled workers in Belfast.

This is obviously a commercial matter, but Ministers across Government have engaged swiftly and extensively with Boeing, as well as the US and Canadian governments on this case.

We want to encourage Boeing to drop what we see as an unjustified case, and to get round the table and seek negotiated settlement with Bombardier. And we would encourage all those with an interest, whether of a political view or none, to join us in pushing for the same outcome.

Working to restore devolved government

So as we approach our dinner, I want to finish by being clear of what we want to see in the weeks to come in the best interests of Northern Ireland.

Over the last few weeks, the DUP and Sinn Fein have been holding meetings together and this intensive dialogue is continuing.

These discussions have been constructive and I am hopeful that further progress will be made as they continue. The issues remain relatively small in number and are clearly defined. But difference remains.

We have also been bringing together the other parties eligible to join an Executive and have had positive engagement with them in line with our commitment to an inclusive process.

But ultimately we cannot force an agreement.

That has to come from the parties themselves.

And we – all of us in this room – want to see those parties come together to..

...make the important decisions facing Northern Ireland's public services...

...to contribute to the important discussions about how the UK will leave the European Union alongside the devolved governments in Scotland and Wales...

...and to support continued economic growth in Northern Ireland: investing in infrastructure, taking its own decisions on corporation tax, and taking other actions to support businesses large and small...

To do this it's vital that they continue to work together to find a solution to their differences.

And it is my belief that they are committed to doing so... in the interests of

everyone in Northern Ireland.

I have very much welcomed the growing voice of businesses, trade unions, the voluntary sector and others in stressing the need for the return of devolved government – as we have seen for example in the media profiles by business leaders from across different sectors this week.

And tonight, I would encourage all of you here to continue to make it clear to the political parties just how important the restoration of devolved government is for business, for ordinary people and for Northern Ireland as a whole.

We all want to see the parties come together and form an Executive. They need to hear from you just how important it is for to you to see them working together for the good of Northern Ireland.

And deliver the bright positive future for NI we know we can achieve together.

Speech: Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson holds joint press conference with US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson

Good afternoon everybody, I'm delighted to welcome Secretary Tillerson to London. We've had an excellent series of meetings including of course about the appalling damage wrought by Hurricane Irma.

I returned this morning myself from Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands where I saw the scale of the destruction and the ordeal that has been inflicted on the people across the Caribbean and in Florida. Our immediate task is to ensure that aid reaches everyone in need and today there are nearly 1,000 British military personnel deployed in our Caribbean territories supported by RFA Mounts Bay and two Puma transport helicopters. More than 40 tonnes of aid has arrived including one ton of food and enough shelter for 13,000 people. RFA Mounts Bay is now heading to the U.S. Virgin Islands to pick up more supplies before moving on to the Turks and Caicos.

I thank the United States for allowing the U.S. Virgin Islands to be used as a hub for the distribution of aid and I'm grateful to France and to the U.S. for assisting the departure of British citizens. We have been glad to respond to a request for assistance from our French friends by sending an RAF C17 transport aircraft to provide heavy lift for their aid effort.

The Prime Minister has announced £57 million of help for the overseas territories in addition the government will match every pound donated to the Red Cross appeal up to a maximum of £3 million. Later today I'm going to chair COBRA to check on the progress of our response.

The Minister for the Commonwealth Lord Ahmad is arriving in the Turks and Caicos tonight to assess the situation on that British Territory. Once the emergency phase is over the overriding need will be for long term reconstruction to get our Caribbean territories back on their feet. In that effort; Britain, France, the U.S. and the Netherlands will be working side by side.

I've also today chaired a meeting on Libya with Secretary Tillerson and our colleagues from Italy, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and France. Libya is a front line in our common struggle against terrorism and illegal migration and we all share a vital interest in that country's stability. Our shared goal is to break the political deadlock and rally behind the United Nations envoy Ghassan Salame as he seeks to bring all sides together. Our friends in North Africa share the same interest in a peaceful Libya and that prize is wholly achievable. We now have a new opportunity to make progress by helping the Libyan people to reach a political settlement based on compromise and consensus.

Finally, we discussed the grave situation in East Asia where North Korea has defied the world by testing a nuclear device and launching ballistic missiles. On Monday the Security Council unanimously adopted UN Resolution 2375, including the toughest sanctions imposed on any country in the 21st century. Today we discussed how best to enforce those measures with the aim of maximising the pressure on North Korea to reach a diplomatic solution. We resolved to continue to work together and with important partners who can influence North Korea including China with the aim of securing the complete and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

On all these issues and more I'm delighted again to work alongside Rex, Secretary Tillerson, demonstrating once again the strength of the alliance between our two countries.

[Speech: Leader of the Commons addresses Institute for Government](#)

Introduction

It's a great pleasure to be here this evening, to share with you my belief that this will be a cooperative and collegiate Parliament.

In spite of the, at times, very heated exchanges in the Chamber, which can

oddly extend to my choice of clothing(!) –

I get on very well with Valerie Vaz, the Shadow Leader of the House.

And, the same is true for many front benchers, on all sides of the House.

The cut and thrust of debate in the chamber does not always reflect the efficient work going on ‘behind the scenes’.

Where in fact, Val and I work closely on a number of House projects, and are both driven by a shared desire for a functioning parliament.

This gets to the very heart of what I would dearly like to see.

And that is a parliament that can work together for the good of the country.

Our late colleague, Jo Cox, was so right when she said, ‘we have far more in common than that which divides us.’

The need to work together means that the Government will be listening, and taking into account all views right across the House.

It’s often said that the Leader of the House of Commons has two jobs – that of Parliament’s representative in Government, and Government’s representative in Parliament.

So in the last two weeks, at the request of many different Members across the House:

- We got the Select Committees up and running early;
- I extended the second reading of the EU Withdrawal Bill;
- And provided government time for a debate on illegal traveller encampments, which again, is a topic of concern across the House.

These are all examples of where Members share common ground, and where my role helps to bridge Government and Parliament.

This is a historical time

Now, it won’t have escaped anyone’s notice that we, in parliament, will be incredibly busy over the coming years.

I suspect that the period between 2016 and 2022 will be the stuff of future PHDs and political textbooks –

And will no doubt shape the next phase in the history of our great country.

Very rarely does the opportunity come along to build on our longstanding principles of tolerance, democracy, and the rule of law – to seize fresh opportunities and forge partnerships with new and old friends alike.

These are exciting and challenging times, in a parliament of great opportunity.

And the job of this Parliament will be to deliver on the vision set out by Theresa May, of a country that works for everyone.

The Government's legislative agenda

So what does that mean for our legislative agenda?

Firstly, crucially, legislation that allows us to deliver a successful Brexit – providing continuity and paving the way for a prosperous future.

Secondly, tackling social injustice and discrimination, to improve life opportunities.

Thirdly, building an economy of higher skills, greater productivity and more rewarding jobs.

Fourthly, to strengthen the precious ties of our union.

And vitally, the fifth challenge is to continue tackling the threat of terrorism, and to keep our country safe.

The Queen's Speech set out an ambitious programme of 27 bills and draft bills.

And so to accommodate the workload of parliament, we have agreed an extended session, that takes us beyond the point at which we leave the European Union.

Brexit

Despite the different views expressed in the referendum, we all share a desire for the United Kingdom to succeed.

In leaving the EU, we will have:

- Control of our own money
- Control of our own laws
- Control of our borders
- And, as the Prime Minister has said, we will be a global leader in promoting free trade

And we have a very positive story to tell:

- The UK is the fifth largest economy in the world;
- Three of our Universities are in the World's Top 10;
- The UK's contract law is world-class, something that is critical for international business;
- The UK is the world's leading financial centre;
- And whilst we all know London is the best capital city in the world, it's been confirmed for several years in a row by the Global Power City Index.

There have been lots of unhelpful metaphors created in the wake of the referendum –

But I prefer to look at the evidence – and the evidence is encouraging.

Since June last year:

- Deutsche Bank have signed a 25 year commitment to a new London headquarters;
- Nissan and Toyota are all investing millions in production;
- Amazon and Google are both expanding their UK operations;
- And Apple, Dyson and ARM are just a few tech companies that have recommitted to their UK HQ's.

Business confidence is critical to our economy, and a strong economy is the only way to keep the excellent public services we all rely on.

So, passing Brexit legislation is a key step towards this new phase in our country's history.

And, I was delighted that this week, we made significant progress – both in passing the 2nd reading of the EU Withdrawal Bill –

And enabling the smooth functioning of parliamentary committees.

Domestic

But as the Prime Minister has made clear, this parliament is about so much more than just leaving the EU.

A strong economy and a fair society is at the heart of a country that works for everyone.

And we are bringing forward wide-ranging legislation to reflect this:

- Such as, new opportunities in emerging technologies;
- Better services for those struggling with mental health conditions;
- And greater support for our armed forces families.

As Chairman of the Parliamentary Business and Legislation Committee, which is known as PBL, it's my job to make sure legislation like this is ready.

You could call it the parliamentary Dragon's Den -giving the business managers and key cabinet colleagues the chance to stress test and scrutinise all the legislation my colleagues plan to bring forward for introduction.

The level of scrutiny on the legislative programme is greater now than at any time in the last four decades.

My role isn't only to ensure Bills are shipshape – but to make sure they reflect the views of backbenchers, Select Committees, and that MPs know exactly what the legislation will achieve.

As a respected former Leader of the House Lord Young said in an interview with the IfG a couple of years ago – 'one of the lessons, if you are coming to PBL, is "don't wing it."''

Conclusion

Now, before I conclude my remarks, I want to come back to where I started.

The result of the general election is a parliament that quite simply must work together.

We have a huge task of delivering Brexit, and the opportunity to shape the kind of country we want to be after we leave the EU.

Frankly, the public do expect us to conduct our debates in a grown-up fashion.

I'm not suggesting for a moment that political disagreement will somehow fade away –

but I do hope Parliament can achieve proper debate, that reflects the seriousness of the task ahead.

So my message at this historic time is a very simple one:

The Government stands ready to listen and engage with all parties, to work in the best interests of the country.

There will be challenges ahead.

But we can all come together to work towards a stronger economy, a fairer society, and taking a central place on the world stage.

[Speech: RESI Conference 2017](#)

[Political content has been removed]

Thank you for inviting me today. It is an absolute pleasure to be here at Celtic Manor.

The last time I was here was with my family a few years ago for a weekend stay. Little did I know that four years later, I would be returning to speak to you at this brilliant venue as Housing and Planning Minister!

You will know better than I that over the past 5 years, there have been 5 planning Ministers. A bit like Doctor Who, I am the latest incarnation.

However, I very much hope to be in place for a decent length of time, to see through many of the reforms which are laid out in the Housing White Paper.

It is fair to say that it has not been the easiest of starts. The day after I was appointed, we had the terrible tragedy at Grenfell Tower.

Those terrible events have raised concerns right across the country. And have led many of us connected with housing to think very deeply about the issues that we need to address.

As you know, the Government is committed to making sure that we get help to those affected. I and other ministers, including the Secretary of State, meet regularly with the individuals affected to try to focus this help. We are ensuring that buildings across the country are safe.

We have carried out extensive tests, issued building owners with guidance on fire safety, announced an independent review of building regulations and fire safety led by Dame Judith Hackitt, and a full independent public inquiry into the tragedy is taking place. In headlines today there's a lot about the start of this.

I will also be meeting with and hearing from social housing tenants in the Grenfell area and up and down the country over the coming years to build up a full picture of some of the immediate issues facing tenants. And identify any common concerns that must inform a national approach.

I have already spoken with national tenant organisations to listen to their views and understand some of the main issues that may be raised.

I will be announcing further details about where I will be going, and when, very shortly.

But stepping back from that initial start and reflecting on what I have learned, what has been absolutely clear to me and that is that we absolutely need to build more homes. And faster. Whether the homes are to buy, or to rent.

We also need to improve the quality and design of those homes.

We need to change the public mind set towards new development.

We need to make sure individuals who need help to buy a home, get that help. And that housing, whether to buy or rent, is more affordable.

We need to support small and medium sized builders to access the market.

And, we need to encourage innovation and choice, and make sure that the skilled workforce that we need is in place to build homes at the rate that we want.

Above all, I believe that everyone should feel a sense of fairness about the housing market. Whether they are home buyers, or they are renting. And whether they are in the private or social sector.

To coin a phrase: we need a housing market which works for everyone.

Ahead of this Conference, the well-known publication Property Week, which is going to become part of my essential weekend reading, threw down a gauntlet listing what the industry wanted from me.

They wanted to me to do five things.

First, turn the Housing White Paper into action –I absolutely agree, that is precisely what my department is engaged in doing.

Second, I was asked to breathe down the necks of local authorities – I agree local authorities need to get their local plans in order. The Secretary of State will be making a statement to Parliament later this morning, setting out our plans to consult on an open and honest approach to assessing local housing need.

Thirdly, address the future of Help to Buy – again, I agree. The industry needs certainty.

Fourth, I've been asked to bang the drum for the construction industry and Brexit talks – yes, I very much understand the importance of access to the labour that you need.

And finally, I was told to be bold on the Greenbelt. As you know, the Housing White Paper is clear that Green Belt land can be released, but only in exceptional circumstances.

So there you have it. That could be the end of the speech.

But I guess you probably want a bit more detail.

So let's start with turning the White Paper into action. Our Manifesto made our commitment to delivering this clear.

We consulted on some of the proposals in the White Paper in May this year. As I said earlier, the Secretary of State will today set out plans to consult on proposals to agree on a clear, open and transparent approach to assessing local housing need.

This consultation will need to be read alongside our other White Paper proposals, so we will publish our combined consultation response early next year, alongside the draft new National Planning Policy Framework.

We believe the sum total of these changes will mean that plans will start from an honest assessment of the need for new homes. More land and a more diverse range of sites will be brought forward in places that people want to live. And we want to see greater focus on getting sites built-out.

How many of you are developers – let's have a show of hands! And how many of you are connected with the private rented market in some way? And how many of you are financiers? And is there anyone in this room that has walked in by mistake and too embarrassed to leave?

Let's talk about the developers first. I believe that the Housing White Paper sets out lots of carrots for the development players. We have been vigorous in our promotion of our £3 billion Home Building Fund.

This provides £1 billion in loans for small and medium sized builders, custom

builders and for offsite construction. And £2 billion of long term loan funding for infrastructure. It has proved extremely popular. Conversations that I have had with the industry suggest that this is precisely what people want.

Now obviously it is too early to see homes completed through this fund, but I am confident that over time it will unlock around 200,000 new homes.

So turning to the private rented sector, I believe the Housing White Paper has something for you connected with that sector as well. We will promote increases in new and quicker methods of quality construction, and increase in the number and quality of homes for private rent.

Many of you will have a crucial role to play in this. For example through increasing the numbers of build to rent homes.

My predecessors did sterling work getting this ball rolling, through the Montague Review. And the Government has supported the sector with funding.

You told us that planning is the biggest obstacle to moving forward. We've consulted on options to change planning policy on build to rent, and published those results last month.

People were positive about making the changes. Our next step will be to spell out the necessary changes in the revised NPPF.

And on build to rent finance, let's not forget we've done a lot already. We have put the Government balance sheet on the line by supporting build to rent schemes through our £3.5 billion PRS guarantee scheme. It is going from strength to strength and approvals have already topped £1 billion.

I recently visited Wembley Park in North West London, the biggest Build to Rent site in England. Here we have announced a £65 million infrastructure debt financing package for this site, under our Home Building Fund. This will help to unlock almost 7,000 quality new rented homes. Wembley Park is a great example of where we have been taking action to create a bigger and better private rental market. Boosting the choice and quality of homes on the market, and meeting the needs of renters.

This comes on top of a £39 million bond guarantee under the PRS guarantee scheme, for the first two PRS blocks at Wembley Park.

We hear that the market is ready to support far more build to rent. This is fantastic news, and we will support you in making this happen.

Although build to rent as a concept is relatively new in the UK, there is an opportunity to build on lessons from the established "multi-family housing" sector internationally. As you will know, the US is now delivering around 300 thousand multifamily homes every year.

But it took them 30 years to get there. We have the opportunity to develop the sector more quickly here, by welcoming international investment and hearing from others.

Having said that, I want to see more UK investors coming into this market as well. So we are listening to your concerns and tackling the problems.

For example, I know some of you have concerns that rent controls may destroy future markets. Let me be absolutely clear, under this Government rent controls are not going to happen.

Turning to local authorities, they have a crucial role to play in housing delivery, and we've set out the tools they need to deliver.

We launched a £2.3 billion Housing Infrastructure Fund in July this year, designed to support the infrastructure underpinning delivery of new homes. Infrastructure such as roads, healthcare centres and schools.

It will help ensure that more homes mean better, not more stretched, local infrastructure and community facilities.

This is an opportunity for local authorities to come forward with infrastructure proposals that show real ambition for the future. It will support local authorities to step up their plans for growth, release more land for housing and get homes built at pace and scale.

So far, I can tell you over 150 local authorities have applied. I want to encourage more local authorities to place their bids by the 28th September deadline.

Local authorities say they need more resources. So the Government is offering higher fees and new capacity funding to develop planning departments.

The White Paper outlined a 20% planning application fee increase for local authorities that commit to invest the additional fee income in their planning department.

All planning authorities have accepted, and we are bringing forward the necessary regulations in the autumn to apply the increase.

We are also minded to allow an increase of a further 20% for those authorities who are delivering the homes their communities need and we are going to be consulting further on the detail of this as part of the local needs consultation.

What I have heard from the developers that I have talked to, both small and large, is that they welcome this as a way of speeding up decision making.

In response, I expect authorities to step up to the challenge of delivering more homes in their areas. There are currently 34 local authorities without a plan. And only a third have adopted a plan since the NPPF came out in 2012. Frankly, this just isn't good enough.

The winds of change are blowing.

And local people need certainty. They don't want speculative applications being approved because local authorities haven't planned properly.

We must also make sure that new homes being built are well designed, good quality and respond positively to the local context. We want to create places, buildings and spaces that work well for everyone.

We have suggested changing the NPPF so that local and neighbourhood plans are expected to set out clear design expectations. And community engagement in early design stages must also improve.

So coming now to the future of the Help to Buy Equity Loan scheme. From its launch in Spring 2013 until March this year, Help to Buy: Equity Loan has helped over 120,000 people purchase a new-build home. It also assists builders to build more homes.

It is a huge success.

As we said in the Housing White Paper, the government has committed £8.6 billion for the scheme to 2021, ensuring it continues to support homebuyers and stimulate housing supply.

We also recognise the need to create certainty for prospective home owners and developers beyond 2021 and so we are committed to working with the sector to consider the future of the scheme.

And so, on to Brexit – I don't think any speech would be complete without Brexit. In my discussions with fellow Ministers, I am making the construction industry's case. There are many issues. Not least supply chains and investment. But one of our key interests is in respect of skills, training and modern methods of construction.

Once again the White Paper set out plans to change the way the Government supports training in the construction industry.

We want to have the best arrangements to ensure strong industry leadership to address the skills challenge, and to diversify the housing market.

And actually it's really good to see so many of these themes reflected at this conference.

And frankly it is absolutely in the sector's interest to play a part in resolving the long-standing manpower and skills shortages.

I'm very pleased that the sector has committed to bringing forward 45,000 new skilled workers by 2019/20. But we need to see progress. In the same way that you have quite legitimately asked of Government in this area, we are asking of you.

Something that has struck me in recent weeks is that yours is an incredibly fragmented sector. There are very many layers of sub-contractors.

And I do wonder whether developers in the sector needs to think harder about employing people direct. Helping to ensure quality and providing an incentive to ensure the workforce is trained properly. And I can tell you from discussions I have had with developers, I know that some of them are thinking

along these lines already. One of the other things that will help to speed up building is modern methods of construction.

Countries like Germany and Sweden are far ahead of us in realising the benefits of this.

I am encouraged that many sectors of the market are starting to embrace new technology – from some of the new Build to Rent apartment buildings to housing associations and small builders.

I recently visited – last week in fact – the Graven Hill development in Bicester, where I saw for myself custom built homes delivering greater choice for consumers. And modern methods of construction delivering entire homes much more quickly and cheaply. For me, the benefits were pretty clear.

The last challenge Property Week gave me was to be bolder on the Green Belt.

As I said earlier, the Housing White Paper does allow for development on the Green Belt.

However, I think it is important to say here that there is an onus on the sector to also recognise the legitimate concerns that people have about development on Green Belt land.

Good design is something that people are very concerned about, and it really does make a difference. And overall, changing minds about what new development looks and feels like is what is needed to create real change. Development must be something that local people welcome.

I mentioned earlier that I want to go further than the White Paper. We don't just expect more, and faster build out. We also expect quality.

Over the past couple of months, one fact in particular has really stood out to me. The latest housing survey carried out by the Home Builders Federation found that 84% of new home buyers would recommend their builder to a friend. This figure has fallen steadily from 90% four years ago.

This means 16% of new home buyers would not recommend their builder to a friend.

In any other market, this would spell the end of the most poorly performing companies. We have seen this dynamic play out for some companies in the sector. But overall the sector has not really been impacted.

I want to see the quality of new homes, and levels of customer satisfaction, improve across the industry.

A new home is one of the largest financial commitments that people make. Home builders need to step up and make this a priority.

This includes making sure that, where something goes wrong, house builders and warranty providers fulfil their obligations to put this right.

There are mechanisms in place for redress – such as the Consumer Code for Home Builders – but these can be complex and don't always provide full coverage.

And those of you who follow what's happening in Parliament there is a growing number of calls for the Government to introduce a New Homes Ombudsman.

The HBF has commissioned an independent report to look at consumer protection in the new homes market. I will review all of the recommendations and suggestions that are coming forward through this report and from others with an interest in this area.

At the end of the day this is about providing fairness for new home owners. I know that many of you, as long term investors in rented housing, have a strong interest in the quality of what is being built.

You bear the long term consequences of how the properties you buy are built.

The Government also wants to see all tenants receiving a good, fair and affordable service from landlords and letting agents.

So we will publish a Bill to ban letting fees paid by tenants in England. I know many of you in the build to rent sector do not charge upfront fees to your customers.

But a ban will help to deliver a more competitive, more affordable and more transparent lettings market across the rest of the sector.

We are also committed to improving standards. In April we brought in tougher measures targeting rogue landlords, including civil penalties of up to £30,000 and an extension of rent repayment orders.

These powers give authorities the tools to crack down on the minority of landlords who disregard the law and take advantage of tenants.

They will also help address any lingering reputational issues for you and those interested in investing in build-to-rent.

We will go further over this Parliament and we intend to introduce a database of rogue landlords and property agents convicted of certain offences. There will also be banning orders for serious and prolific offenders.

So in conclusion, my remarks today have I hope provided you with an insight into what we are doing. And our direction of travel.

As we all know, everyone is affected by the housing crisis. Everyone has an interest in solving this problem.

This must be a combined effort between Government and the Sector.

And we need to ensure that we are bringing people with us, through encouraging good quality, well designed development that changes how people feel about new development.

The Government set out in February our strategy for fixing the broken housing market. This has not changed. It is vital to see through the job of implementing the excellent reforms, some of them longer term, which were set out in the White Paper.

However, the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower has shown us that there is much more to be done in the short term. The backdrop upon which we carry out our work has fundamentally changed.

We are taking the steps necessary to ensure that something like this can never happen again.

As I said at the start of this speech, we want a housing market which works for everyone.

The Prime Minister is committed to this. The Secretary of State is committed to this. And I am committed to this.

As the Housing and Planning Minister, let me give you a categorical reassurance that I will not rest until we have not only turned the White Paper into action. But gone further. Improving fairness, safety, standards and redress for all home owners and tenants. And of course building more high quality homes.

I ask for your support on this shared journey.