

News story: 'Prioritise gender equality' says City Minister to finance firms

[Speaking at the Women in Finance Awards](#) last night, newly-appointed minister for financial services, Stephen Barclay laid out the importance of the four industry actions in the Charter which aim to build the pipeline of female talent for leadership positions.

Mr Barclay made clear that the Charter offers financial firms, both large and small, the flexibility they need to make a real difference:

The [Charter](#) is simple. It doesn't tell companies who to hire, or how to run their businesses.

But it does ask them to make a real commitment to supporting women and their progression to more senior roles.

It asks them to set their own targets for what that looks like.

To measure their progress in achieving them – and make that progress public.

I simply don't buy the argument of those firms who say they cannot do this.

As well as celebrating the success of women in finance, the Economic Secretary emphasised that firms should also think about improving different types of diversity:

The charter does not prevent firms focusing on other aspects of diversity, and if we are to meet the economic and political challenges ahead, we need a meritocracy which promotes diversity across all areas, including LGBT, class, and geography.

The [Women in Finance Awards](#), held at the Grosvenor House Hotel, identified and celebrated role models and advocates in financial services.

The Awards are supported by HM Treasury, 30% club, London Stock Exchange, Virgin Money, Bloomberg, Prudential and Rolls-Royce, among others.

Winners were chosen by an independent panel of judges. Many of the winners, including the top prizes of the night, went to those from firms signed up to the Charter.

Stephen Barclay, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, said:

For too long many women have been underpaid, underrepresented and undervalued compared to men and it is events like the Women in Finance Awards which rightly shine the spotlight on female excellence and achievement in financial services. I want to congratulate all of the winners and I wish them luck for their future careers.

Top winners include:

Woman of the Year – Emily Cox, Virgin Money

For the flagship award of the night, given to an inspiring leader who has challenged, influenced and revolutionised the culture of the business, the judges chose Emily Cox. Emily stood out as a game changer for all of her work on the Gadhia Report, and for furthering the momentum of the Women in Finance Charter.

Banker of the Year- Maria Harris, Atom Bank

Maria stood out as one of the most influential and inspirational women in banking thanks to her genuinely disruptive approach to mortgage lending. Her work in mentoring team members and hiring for diversity singled her for this award. This was also evidenced by the scores of testimonials from clients and co-workers in praise of her hard work.

Advocate of the Year- Andrew Bester, Lloyds Banking Group

Andrew has gone out of his way to drive greater diversity and inclusion at all levels of Lloyds bank. Under his leadership, Lloyds Bank is now on track to reach its 2020 commitment of 40% of women in senior roles.

Employer of the Year- Columbia Threadneedle

Columbia Threadneedle has a proven track record of proactively cultivating a diverse workforce, introducing specific measures to promote diversity and backing these up by measurable impact.

Insurance Leader of the Year- Debbie Cannon, LV= Insurance

Debbie takes the title of Insurance Leader of the Year for her truly inspiring journey, her compellingly honest story, and for standing up as a role model to other women in the sector.

Legal Adviser of the Year- Leigh Kirkpatrick, RBS

Leigh stood out as a lawyer who has broken barriers to advancement, carved out a niche for herself in finance, while simultaneously paving the way for greater diversity in her firm. This was further bolstered by her mentoring and pro bono work outside of office hours.

Further information

Over 120 firms that have signed up to the Treasury's [Women in Finance Charter](#), covering over half a million members of staff – more than half of the financial sector staff.

The Charter sits among a set of wider government reforms to improve gender equality in the work place. These include the £5 million fund for 'returnships' announced at Budget 2017 and making gender pay gap reporting mandatory from April this year.

[Press release: New charity investigation: NSA Afan \(Community Regeneration\)](#)

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has opened a statutory inquiry into [NSA Afan \(Community Regeneration\) registered charity number 1088934](#). The inquiry was opened on 23 February 2017.

The charity has objects to promote the regeneration of the local area, the provision of education and training and the relief of poverty.

In May 2016 the charity reported a serious incident to the Commission outlining that there had been a theft at the charity, with £90,000 of the charity's funds unaccounted for. The Commission immediately opened a case to monitor the charity's response, the matter was then referred by the charity to Action Fraud and the police.

The Commission has also been liaising closely with the Welsh Government (a major funder of the charity) who have expressed concerns about the governance of the charity.

The Commission has serious concerns about the charity's governance and internal controls and the apparent failure of the trustees to remedy these issues, placing the charity's property and its operations at risk. In view of this the Commission opened a statutory inquiry in February 2017.

The inquiry will examine:

- the financial controls, management and application of charitable funds, property and assets belonging to the charity
- the governance, management and administration of the charity by the trustees, particularly whether the trustees have acted prudently and exercised reasonable care in respect of the day-to-day running of the

charity

- whether the charity's decision making process is adequate, in particular how it has managed conflicts of interests

The Commission stresses that opening an inquiry is not in itself a finding of wrong doing. The purpose of an inquiry to examine issues in detail and investigate and establish the facts so that the regulator can ascertain whether there has been misconduct and mismanagement; establish the extent of the risk to the charity's property, beneficiaries or work; decide what action needs to be taken to resolve the serious concerns, if necessary using its investigative, protective and remedial powers to do so.

It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and what the outcomes were. [Reports of previous inquiries](#) by the Commission are available on GOV.UK.

The charity's details can be viewed on the [Commission's online charity search tool](#).

Ends

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Notes to editors

1. [The Charity Commission](#) is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our [annual report](#).
2. Search for charities on our [online register](#).
3. Section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 gives the Commission the power to institute inquiries. The opening of an inquiry gives the Commission access to a range of investigative, protective and remedial legal powers.
4. The Commission's decision to announce the opening of a statutory inquiry is based on whether it is in the public interest to do so and with consideration of our objective to increase public trust and confidence in charities.

[National Statistics: Farming facts and figures: 2017](#)

Topics include livestock, labour and economic data.

[Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on international investigation into Syria chemical weapons attack](#)

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) publishes a statement on its investigation into the chemical weapons attack on Khan Sheikhoun in Syria on 4 April 2017. The OPCW confirms that deadly nerve agent sarin was used in the horrific attack.

[News story: Government publishes £6.1 billion programme of upgrades to major roads and motorways](#)

Transport Minister Jesse Norman has unveiled a £6.1 billion programme of road improvements as part of the government's £23 billion upgrade to the road network in England.

Road users will benefit from shorter journey times, reduced congestion and increased capacity on roads, creating better local connections and improved passenger journeys as a result of these projects.

This includes the route for the new A19 Downhill Lane junction which has been published today (30 June 2017). The new junction will support the new international manufacturing park by significantly increasing road capacity, easing traffic and improving safety – as well as boosting the local economy.

Over the coming 6 months, the government will take the next steps on 55 road improvements across the country, including opening 8 schemes, consulting on 10 schemes and publishing final plans for another 29 schemes.

Transport Minister Jesse Norman said:

Road users across England should soon be seeing the benefits of these improvements in their daily lives, which are designed to link people better with their jobs, friends, family and local amenities, as well as connecting businesses with customers.

Over the next 6 months we expect to roll out our vital upgrade plan – taking next steps on £6.1 billion-worth of schemes and seeking to hear from local people, organisations and businesses to help shape our plans and ensure they benefit local communities.

And shortly I also plan to announce the winners of the 2017 to 2018 highways maintenance challenge fund, where the government will be investing £75 million to improve smaller local roads including through resurfacing, filling potholes and other infrastructure projects.

Upgrades include adding capacity to sections of the A1 in Northumberland. This shortens journey times, supports economic growth and improves access to and from the county.

Road users will also see proposals to increase capacity at the A12 Colchester Bypass to reduce delays and will also see a new strategic corridor to the south-west via the A303, which will improve journey times to enhance the world heritage site.

Other improvements include a more efficient Junction 19 on the M6 and an upgrade to the link between the Port of Liverpool and the motorway network.

The announcements are important next steps to progress the schemes announced in the [2014 road investment strategy](#), which outlines how £15.2 billion will be invested in our strategic roads between 2015 and 2021.

The schemes will be delivered by Highways England, which is responsible for the country's motorways and main trunk roads.

Jim O'Sullivan, Highways England Chief Executive, said:

Highways England is committed to delivering the government's investment programme to improve the strategic road network. These milestones are critical elements of our current work and we are extremely pleased that we are on track to deliver them.

Edmund King, AA president, said:

Drivers will welcome this much needed investment on some of the nation's most important routes.

As well as increasing capacity and smoothing traffic flow, we believe that significant road safety benefits can be to be achieved especially with the A1 improvements.

Following full consultations we hope that the proposed upgrades can be made quickly so drivers can reap the benefits.

Steve Gooding, director of the RAC Foundation, said:

The first five-year road investment strategy reassured millions of drivers and businesses that their long-term travel needs were at last being taken seriously and provided for. But the fear has always been that road programmes, like the morning mists, have a tendency to fade away before our eyes.

This latest unveiling is therefore a particularly welcome demonstration that the promised money is not only available but is being spent on schemes that really matter, and that our calls to remember the local roads – where our journeys begin and end – are being heard.

East

Scheme	Next step
A12 Colchester bypass widen	Consultation
A5 to M1 link	Scheme opening ceremony

South East

Scheme	Next step
M27 Southampton Junctions (London and south east)	Consultation
M271 Redbridge roundabout	Preferred route announcement

London East

Scheme	Next step
A12 M25 to Chelmsford	Consultation

North East

Scheme	Next step
A19 Downhill Lane	Preferred route announcement
A1 Scotswood to North Brunton	Preferred route announcement
A1 Northumberland (Yorkshire and the north east)	Preferred route announcement

Midlands

Scheme	Next step
A52 Nottingham junctions	Consultation
M42 J6	Preferred route announcement

Yorkshire

Scheme	Next step
M621 J1-7 improvements	Consultation
A1 Leeming to Barton	Scheme opening

North West

Scheme	Next step
M6 Junction 19 improvements	Preferred route announcement
M56 J11a	Preferred route announcement
A585 Windy Harbour	Preferred route announcement

South West

Scheme	Next step
A358 Taunton-Southfields	Preferred route announcement
A30 Chiverton to Carland Cross	Preferred route announcement
A303 Sparkford to Ilchester	Preferred route announcement