

Fourth anniversary of Anoosheh Ashoori's detention: Foreign Secretary Statement

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Press release

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Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

Iran's continued detention of Anoosheh Ashoori is wholly unjustified. We call on Iran to end his suffering and allow him to return home to be reunited with his wife Sherry, and children, Aryan and Elika.

We are doing everything we can to secure the release of Anoosheh and other dual British nationals who have been arbitrarily detained. We call on President Raisi's administration to start to set a new course for Iran by releasing them.

[Guidance: Businesses approved to export to the EU](#)

Use the lists to check your business in Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) or one of the Crown Dependencies (Jersey, Guernsey and Isle of Man) is approved to export to the EU, and find out what your TRACES number is.

[Multimillion-pound initiative to improve local roads across England](#)

- councils across the country to receive millions of pounds to upgrade traffic signals
- new data standard for monitoring road condition to be developed, providing more useful data for local authorities and the Department for Transport (DfT)
- government continues to encourage research into new and innovative technology, such as 3D printing and drones, to help find and fix potholes faster and more effectively

A multimillion-pound scheme to improve traffic signals and a commitment to explore how new technology – such as drones and 3D printing – could be used to find and fix potholes are part of a raft of measures announced by Transport Secretary Grant Shapps today (13 August 2021).

The package will see councils across England receive a share of £15 million in government funding to improve their traffic light systems to cut congestion, boost safety and reduce journey times and emissions – a commitment set out in the recently announced [Transport decarbonisation plan](#).

In addition to announcing today's funding, the government has also published the findings from a new initiative called the [Digital Intelligence Brokerage \(DIB\)](#), which aims to encourage more work with small and medium enterprises outside of the transport sector and to speed up research into new and innovative ways to fix potholes.

The DIB has already made waves in this area, identifying:

- graphite nanoparticles in asphalt to reduce surface cracks
- the use of bio-bitumen materials to create environmentally friendly road surfaces which contribute to the decarbonisation of highways maintenance
- automated repair operations to minimise risk to road maintenance workers

This work supports wider government commitments to use advanced technology, such as drones to spot defects in roads and 3D printing to repair cracks.

This all comes as the government continues its drive to level up the country's transport network and build back better from the pandemic.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Whether you're a motorist, cyclist or pedestrian, every road-user across our country deserves the best possible journey. That's why, despite already having some of the best and safest roads in the world, this government is providing millions of pounds to improve them further still.

This vital funding and work will cut journey times for millions of people, reduce emissions and keep the UK at the forefront of technological developments in roads maintenance as we continue to invest in local economies and build back both better and greener from the pandemic.

RAC Head of Roads Policy Nicholas Lyes said:

Additional investment to cut congestion and make pothole repairs better for the future is very welcome. Improving traffic lights can make a significant difference to local roads by efficiently maximising the number of vehicles that can safely pass through junctions while hitting a pothole can be an expensive and even a dangerous experience.

We look forward to seeing how drivers and road users more widely can benefit from the use of 21st-century technology to repair their local roads more quickly.

The £15 million announced today builds on the £1.125 billion that has already been made available to local authorities for local road maintenance.

Councils will be expected to not only use the extra funding to repair and improve existing traffic signals but also consider how to future-proof their local road networks and prepare for technological innovations.

In addition to these measures, DfT has also today announced the development of a [new data standard for local road condition monitoring](#), which will allow councils to use multiple technologies to carry out road condition surveys for national reporting purposes. This will lead to more accurate and useful data

being collected.

£100,000 of funding is also being put towards the [Transport Technology Forum](#). The open forum is funded by the DfT and [Innovate UK](#) and brings together road operators and suppliers from across the industry to offer their skills and experience to drive technological advances in the traffic management sector.

Record number of households benefit from Help to Buy as loans pass £20bn

- Figures released today show a record number of people buying a home through the Help to Buy: equity loan scheme
- Over £20 billion has been lent to help people into homeownership since start of the scheme
- Despite impact of COVID-19 housing market remains healthy as more first-time buyers get on the housing ladder
- Government committed to providing a realistic and affordable route into home ownership

The number of people purchasing a home through the Help to Buy scheme is at an all-time high, according to figures released today (13 August 2021).

The latest [Help to Buy statistics](#) show that in the financial year 2020-21 over 55,000 households bought their home with the support of Help to Buy: equity loan – a record year for the scheme.

Since the scheme was introduced 328,506 households have now purchased a home through Help to Buy.

In total, the value of these equity loans has reached over £20 billion, with the value of the properties sold under the scheme going past the £90 billion mark.

The scheme helps first-time buyers on to the housing ladder by providing a loan to put towards the cost of buying a newly built home.

Today's figures show the appetite for home ownership remains high across the country with the government committed to supporting first-time buyers and hard-working families into home ownership.

It was also announced earlier in the week that home builders across the country can [bid for a share of £150 million to support roll-out of the new First Homes scheme](#) helping local first-time buyers onto the housing ladder.

Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick MP said:

Over 55,000 households bought their home with the support of Help to Buy equity loan last year: a record year for the scheme, which is helping young people and first-time buyers feel the sense of pride and achievement that comes with owning your own home.

Whether it be Help to Buy, the 95% mortgage guarantee scheme or First Homes – we're doing everything we can to make home buying an affordable and realistic ambition.

Holly Roberts, 27, is one of the thousands of people who have benefitted from the scheme over the past year having recently purchased a property in Poole, Dorset.

Holly said:

It feels really good to have my own home, I just love having my own place and knowing that I did that through my own hard work.

I wouldn't have been able to get on the housing ladder without Help to Buy. That equity loan just helped me bridge the gap between what I could borrow from a mortgage and the sort of prices I was looking at around this area.

I would recommend help to buy to other people. I genuinely think it is such a good government scheme.

First-time buyers can find the right home ownership scheme for them, including Help to Buy: equity loans, via the [Own Your Home website](#) which provides a single gateway for all routes on to the housing ladder.

The website is an easy and accessible way for first-time buyers to start their home ownership journey and find the right government scheme for them.