

## [Housing and planning](#)

Last Tuesday the Communities Secretary of State made a speech about the need to build more homes and to provide more affordable accommodation. His intention to get many more homes built was clear. His local government audience had mixed feelings about the message and the means to bring it about.

Some local authorities do not have up to date local plans. The Minister was right to stress to them the continuing need to do this. Developers and owners of property look to the Council to set out in a plan which areas are protected, where development may occur, and how the Council will provide infrastructure to support new development. There is a need for some new development in most communities, and a need to relate this to the roadspace, public transport, schools, health facilities and the rest that are available.

The problems come more when there is an extant local plan. The Council may decide to concentrate the development of new homes in a limited number of places. This makes it easier to provide the services and transport links, and protects more residents elsewhere from additional development they may not want. A Council may set out enough space for the likely or required build rate.

If the developers who own or control these chosen sites do not then build at a fast enough rate to meet the targets, they or others may put in for planning permission elsewhere in the area. The Council will turn it down as against the plan. Then the Inspector on appeal may grant it on the grounds the Council is not hitting its build rate!

Because we have created such artificial scarcity by inviting in many migrants and not building enough homes, this gaming of the system can be profitable. The conversion of brownfield or greenfield to development land usually results in a big uplift in values, so why wouldn't a developer want to exploit it?

The UK is both wedded to a planning system, and very critical of its results. This is another difficult disagreement between developers and Councils. I am exploring ways that we can reconcile these differences of view and approach between Councils, Inspectors and developers. We need to control development in a sensible way and bring demand and supply for new homes into better balance.

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## [Recording of the week: choosing](#)

## [dreadlocks](#)

*This week's selection comes from Holly Gilbert, Cataloguer of Digital Multimedia Collections.*

Mother and daughter, Jan and Ama, talk about why they both have dreadlocks. This is the first time they have told each other their reasons for choosing to wear their hair in this way and their motivations are quite different, though Jan's hair definitely inspired Ama's choice and they both really like the way that dreadlocks look and feel. They discuss how other people react to their hair and how this makes them feel as well as how their hair connects with their self-identity, their appearance and their blackness. Later in the conversation they talk about how fighting for racial and gender equality has evolved over time and is different for their respective generations, how their hair is part of being active in those fights and how choosing dreadlocks is a way of defining their own idea of beauty.

[The Listening Project\\_Choosing dreadlocks](#)



This recording is part of [The Listening Project](#), an audio archive of conversations recorded by the BBC and archived at the British Library. The full conversation between Jan and Ama can be found [here](#).

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## [Science ship returns after sulphide research in Indian Ocean](#)

Chinese science ship "Xiangyanghong 10" Sunday returned to China after a voyage to the southwest Indian Ocean that lasted more than 200 days.

The ship docked at a port in Zhoushan, east China's Zhejiang Province.

The voyage was to explore the polymetallic sulphide at a seabed ore covering 30,000 square meters, under a contract signed between China and the International Seabed Authority, said Li Huaiming, a scientist involved in the project.

Scientists used China-developed unmanned submersible Qianlong 2 to conduct eight dives, reaching maximum 3,320 meters at depth. Qianlong 2 spent 170 hours, traveling 456 km for the research, proving that it was able to work on complicated terrains underwater, Li said.

Other advanced Chinese technologies in exploring polymetallic sulphide were also used, Li said.

Xiangyanghong 10 is the first Chinese ocean science survey ship built with the participation of a private company.

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## **83 dead or missing after central China floods**

Severe rainfall in central China's Hunan Province since June has affected over 12 million people and left 83 dead or missing, the provincial government said Sunday.

Of the dead or missing, 28 were buried by landslides, 13 were washed away by flash floods, 22 died in collapsed buildings, four drowned, and 16 were killed or went missing due to ground collapses or other reasons.

Over 1.62 million people were relocated across the province, and more than 470,000 need urgent living aid. A total of 53,000 homes collapsed, 68,000 homes were seriously damaged, and over 280,000 homes were partially damaged.

A round of heavy rainfall hit the province from June 22, triggering the most serious floods on record in many rivers.

Over 52,000 soldiers, police, firefighters and government officials were dispatched to do rescue and relief work. Relief funds and materials were also sent to disaster areas.

The provincial government is on high alert as a new round of rainfall arrived Saturday.

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## **China wraps up combustible ice mining trial, setting world records**

China on Sunday completed a 60-day trial of mining gas hydrates, commonly known as combustible ice, in the South China Sea, marking breakthroughs in human's search for alternative clean energy sources.

Started from May 10, the mining operation in waters near the Pearl River estuary has beaten previous expectations and set world records in both the

length and total amount of extraction, according to the China Geological Survey Bureau.

The trial exploration produced over 300,000 cubic meters of gas – mainly methane, with an average daily extraction of more than 5,000 cubic meters of high purity gas, and a highest daily output of 35,000 cubic meters, said the bureau.

Meanwhile, 6.47 million sets of experimental data were recorded.

China declared its first success in collecting samples of combustible ice in the South China Sea on May 18, which usually exists in seabed or tundra areas with the strong pressure and low temperature necessary for its stability.

The substance can be ignited like solid ethanol, which is why it is called combustible or flammable ice.

One cubic meter of combustible ice, a kind of natural gas hydrate, is equal to 164 cubic meters of regular natural gas.

China Geological Survey Bureau's deputy director Li Jinfa said combustible ice will play a vital part in China's energy security and economic development.

"It is considered a strategic alternative to oil and natural gas in the future," Li said. "Not just China, the world at large sets eyes on it."

He said other countries like Japan had also begun mining combustible ice, but operations were suspended due to a significant amount of sand entering the production wells.

Chinese scientists this time invented a new technique to prevent sand from disrupting the exploration. Other adjustments were also made to ensure commercial explorations.

Environmental tests showed that there were no methane leaks. Neither did geological hazards occur.

China began research in combustible ice in 1998. The latest exploration showcased a number of breakthroughs.

"China is leading the world in combustible ice exploration, whether it is about theory, techniques, machinery, or engineering," said Ye Jianliang, director of Guangzhou Marine Geological Bureau.

"The trial will have a big impact on the world's energy sector," he said.

Li said his bureau will double the efforts on research to prepare for combustible ice's commercial production, with emphasis on ocean ecology protection and "green" exploitation of the new energy. Regulations on exploitation management and industrial policy are also being drawn up.