

Speech: Strengthening financial oversight of Montenegrin Parliament

Poštovani gospodine Sekuliću, gospodine Jovićeвиću, dragi Emile, poštovani poslanici i poslanice,

Drago mi je da sam danas ovdje sa vama da obilježimo kraj faze projekta na kojem smo radili sa crnogorskom Skupštinom i Vestminsterskom Fondacijom.

As the representative body of Montenegrin citizens, and the seat of legislative power in the country, ensuring sound legislative scrutiny is central to Parliament's role and essential in delivering accountability. Robust parliamentary oversight of the public finances not only facilitates good use of public funds but enhances the provision of public services and supports the alignment of policy with citizens' needs.

Parliamentary Budget Offices, such as the one the UK has helped the Montenegrin Parliament to establish, are designed to enhance the financial and economic analytical expertise available within a parliament as well as providing independent costing of policies and legislation. They are supposed to be the objective and competent aide to the MPs in performing one of their most crucial roles – holding government accountable for the money it has spent.



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I'm delighted that the British Government, working through the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, has supported the establishment of a Parliamentary Budget Office within the Parliament of Montenegro. The UK's intention is that this facility will enhance the culture of effective financial oversight and scrutiny, thus assisting the country in the process of European integration.

We are grateful to the Parliament of Montenegro for their consistent support for this project, which was not an easy task, and involved a series of complicated institutional and procedural solutions.

The work of the Montenegrin Parliamentary Budget Office has been tested through the times of the post-election period in 2016, formation of the new Government, adoption of Montenegro's first 4-year Fiscal Strategy and the government's plan for fiscal consolidation.

Although few in numbers, the researchers have managed to both build up their capacities and answer the inquiries of MPs, as well as work proactively on the topics they considered neglected or important enough for the attention of MPs.

While the position of the UK remains that we call for all elected MPs to take up their seats in Parliament and in order to better serve those who voted for them, I am pleased that MPs of all parties have drawn on material produced by the Parliamentary Budget Office.

We are particularly glad that within this project, the MPs and parliamentary staff of the Montenegrin Parliament had the opportunity to witness the work done by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre and the functioning of its Financial Scrutiny Unit.

The UK looks forward to the Parliament of Montenegro continuing to develop the Parliamentary Budget Office. There is still work to do to make the Parliamentary Budget Office an integral part of the parliamentary structure, and I welcome the reassurance from the Parliamentary leadership that this will happen soon.

The UK hopes that the products produced by the Parliamentary Budget Office will be used not only by the MPs in the Committee for Economy, Finance and Budget, but by all the committees across the Parliament. Public money flows through all policies of the state, and its oversight is equally important in the welfare sector as well as healthcare or education.

Furthermore, we hope that the products of Parliamentary Budget Office will be read and used by a wider audience outside of the Parliament, as a credible and objective source of data for both the civil society organisations and media.

The UK stands ready to support the future work to strengthen the accountability of Montenegrin institutions, and to continue work which draws on the UK's rich parliamentary experience.

Zahvaljujem se na vašem doprinosu i radujem nastavku razgovora na ovu temu.

Hvala.

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[Press release: February 2018](#) [Transaction Data](#)

In February:

- HM Land Registry completed more than 1,632,960 applications to change or query the Land Register
- the South East topped the table of regional applications with 376,385

The transaction data shows HM Land Registry completed 1,632,969 applications in February compared with 1,782,088 in January and 1,516,596 last February, of which:

- 376,546 were applications for register updates compared with 462,352 in January
- 796,961 were applications for an official copy of a register compared with 825,613 in January
- 186,329 were search and hold queries (official searches) compared with 211,393 in January
- 23910 were postal applications from non-account holders, compared with 26,002 in January

Applications by region and country

Region/country	December applications	January applications	February applications
South East	287,649	403,526	376,385
Greater London	250,636	339,286	313,340
North West	139,168	222,150	185,253
South West	124,681	173,058	158,433
West Midlands	107,079	150,292	143,338

Region/country	December applications	January applications	February applications
Yorkshire and the Humber	98,017	139,207	122,513
East Midlands	90,239	122,812	115,725
Wales	58,854	80,315	74,301
North	56,648	77,912	71,772
East Anglia	53,549	73,345	71,764
Isles of Scilly	79	110	75
England and Wales (not assigned)	42	75	70
Total	1,266,641	1,782,088	1,632,969

Top 5 local authority areas

Top 5 local authority areas	December applications	Top 5 local authority areas	January applications	Top 5 local authority areas	February applications
Birmingham	19,714	Birmingham	27,561	Birmingham	26,256
City of Westminster	17,977	City of Westminster	25,488	City of Westminster	21,991
Leeds	14,262	Leeds	20,256	Leeds	18,730
Manchester	13,384	Manchester	19,350	Manchester	16,972
Cornwall	13,332	Cornwall	18,367	Cornwall	16,606

Top 5 customers

Top 5 customers	December applications	Top 5 customers	January applications	Top 5 customers	February applications
Enact	36,313	Enact	50,327	Enact	50,488
Optima Legal Services	19,826	Nationwide Building Society	31,589	Optima Legal Services	27,904
O'Neill Patient	19,764	Optima Legal Services	27,284	O'Neill Patient	23,851
HBOS PLC	16,649	O'Neill Patient	26,073	Devonshires	20,684
TM Group (UK) Ltd	16,444	My Home Move Limited	19,103	TM Group (UK) Ltd	19,558

[Access the full dataset on data.gov.uk.](https://data.gov.uk)

Notes to editors

1. Transaction Data is published on the 15th working day of each month. The March Transaction Data will be published at 11am on Monday 23 April 2018 at [HM Land Registry Monthly Property Transaction Data](https://data.gov.uk).

2. We are challenging ourselves to reassess our language to make our terms understandable to both our commercial and citizen customers. This is in line with our commitment set out in the [Business Strategy 2017-2022](#) under the 'simplicity' element of our ambition.
3. The monthly Transaction Data shows how many applications for register create (new titles), leases, transfer of part, register updates (updating existing titles), official copies of the register and search and hold queries (official searches) were completed. It reflects the volume of applications lodged by customers using an HM Land Registry account number on their application form.
4. Completed applications in England and Wales shown by region and by local authority include postal applications as well as those sent electronically.
5. Transaction Data excludes pending applications, bankruptcy applications, bulk applications, and discharge applications (to remove a charge, for example, a mortgage, from the register).
6. Transactions for value are applications lodged involving a transfer of ownership for value. For an explanation of other terms used, see [abbreviations used in the transaction data](#).
7. Most search and hold queries carried out by a solicitor or conveyancer are to protect the purchase and/or mortgage. For example, a search will give the buyer priority for an application to HM Land Registry to register the purchase of the property. This can give an indication of market activity.
8. Reasonable skill and care are used in the provision of the data. We strive to ensure that the data is as accurate as possible but cannot guarantee that it is free from error. We cannot guarantee our data is fit for your intended purpose or use.
9. Transaction Data is available free of charge for use and re-use under the [Open Government Licence](#) (OGL). The licence allows public bodies to make their data available for re-use.
10. If you use or publish the Transaction Data, you must add the following attribution statement:
Contains HM Land Registry data © Crown copyright and database right 2017. This data is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.
11. HM Land Registry's mission is to guarantee and protect property rights

in England and Wales.

12. HM Land Registry is a government department created in 1862. It operates as an executive agency and a trading fund and its running costs are covered by the fees paid by the users of its services. Its ambition is to become the world's leading land registry for speed, simplicity and an open approach to data.
13. HM Land Registry safeguards land and property ownership worth in excess of £4 trillion, including around £1 trillion of mortgages. The Land Register contains more than 25 million titles showing evidence of ownership for some 85% of the land mass of England and Wales.
14. For further information about HM Land Registry visit www.gov.uk/land-registry
15. Follow us on: Twitter [@HMLandRegistry](https://twitter.com/HMLandRegistry), our [blog](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).

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Press release: New river forecasts for North East communities

A new service which allows people to get forecasts for river levels to help them plan for flooding is available for two locations in the North East.

It is being provided by the Environment Agency on the gov.uk website for the River Tyne at Hexham, Northumberland, and Lustrum Beck at Stockton-on-Tees.

All communities can see observed data for river levels for the past five days. Now people living in these two areas can also see their future flood risk in a 36-hour river level forecast.

The aim is to help communities be more aware of their flood risk and be able to plan for potential flooding incidents. The new river forecasts are calculated by computer models that take into account data like current flows and expected rainfall.

Forecast information can change quickly so people are still advised to sign up for the Environment Agency's free flood warning service to ensure they are notified if a warning is issued for their community.

And residents and businesses can still get the most up-to-date and accurate situation from the [live online map](#) which updates every 15 minutes and details the current Severe Flood Warnings, Flood Warnings and Alerts in place.

Help residents manage flood risk

Phil Taylor, from the Environment Agency's Flood Resilience Team in the North East, said:

We are always looking at ways to use technology to better share information with people, and residents have told us that they would find it really useful to see these forecasts to help them manage their flood risk.

We want people to know if they are at risk of flooding, be prepared, and take action to protect themselves and their families. A wealth of information is available on our website for people to find out if they are at risk and understand how to prepare.

Everything residents and businesses need to know about how to check their risk and prepare for flooding is online on the [Floods Destroy website](#).

The new 36-hour river forecasting for Hexham and Stockton can be found online at:

[Lustrum Beck, Stockton-On-Tees](#)

and

[River Tyne at Hexham](#)

The plan is to continue to refine the service based on feedback from users before rolling it out to other areas in the future.

People who live in areas where the 36-hour forecast is not available can still view data on river levels from the previous five days.