

Press release: Senior Traffic Commissioner reminds transport managers and operators that they need to keep up to date

The Senior Traffic Commissioner for Great Britain, Richard Turfitt, has reinforced the importance of continuous professional development for those responsible for managing haulage, bus and coach operations.

Introducing the revised [Statutory Documents](#), Mr Turfitt said responsible persons such as transport managers should be proactive in their efforts to keep up to date and make sure they are effective in their roles.

He explains that transport managers and other responsible persons should be able to demonstrate to traffic commissioners that they are able to meet their statutory responsibilities through professional development, in particular when:

- they've not been acting for an operator in the last five years
- their qualification is more than 10 years old
- their ability to exercise continuous and effective management is under consideration at a Public Inquiry

The Senior Traffic Commissioner has revised a number of other Statutory Documents, following a consultation, which closed in August.

There is clearer guidance on what will happen if some-one uses an operator's licence without authority (the practice of 'fronting'), greater emphasis on the importance of accurate applications, a new section on support for tribunal users, updated guidance on what happens when periods of grace expire and a new section on driver employment status.

Mr Turfitt said:

"It is important that we get the balance right, so that irresponsible people, who ignore the safety of other road users, do not put compliant businesses at a disadvantage.

These documents demonstrate our commitment to transparency in the way we make our decisions.

"On this occasion the majority of changes are dictated by the case law rather than a debate on policy. There is a heavy emphasis on providing continuity but the responses received have helped us to try and clarify our approach to regulation."

Press release: Budget to support new housing, high streets and local services

Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP welcomed [the Budget](#) and said it will boost efforts to build the homes communities need, restore the dream of home ownership, help our high streets and support councils to deliver local services.

Building on the current comprehensive package of reform and targeted investment to deliver the homes the country needs, the measures outlined in the Budget include:

- continuing to help people onto the housing ladder by announcing a new Help to Buy scheme from April 2021 and exploring proposals to deliver a new wave of shared ownership homes
- supporting councils and housing associations by removing borrowing restrictions to enable them to deliver a new generation of council housing and affordable homes
- further planning reforms to make the most of available space for homes and ensuring developers pay their fair share to support new and existing communities

Recognising the pressures faced by councils, almost £1 billion of extra funding will be provided to help deliver the services communities need and support the most vulnerable residents:

- a £650 million boost for adults and children's social care, including £240 million to support vulnerable people over winter months and help manage the impact on the NHS

This is alongside a package to support high-streets meet the new challenges brought about by changing shopping habits, providing short-term relief for struggling retailers and a long-term vision for town centres.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

This Budget provides positive news for those struggling to get on the housing ladder with certainty given on the future of Help to Buy and freeing up councils to deliver a new generation of council housing.

It also supports communities across the country by helping councils deliver services for their most vulnerable residents while also helping our high streets to flourish.

Building the homes communities need

The Chancellor has confirmed that the biggest barrier to councils building homes, the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap, has been removed entirely – freeing up councils to deliver a new generation of council housing – up to an estimated 10,000 homes a year.

In a move to help more first-time buyers get a foot on the housing ladder, a new Help to Buy scheme has been announced from April 2021 – restricted to first-time buyers and including regional property price caps to ensure it is more targeted on people who need it most.

And with most first-time buyers now exempt from paying Stamp Duty following last year's Budget – benefitting over 120,000 buyers so far – this year's Budget went a step further by extending this relief to all first-time buyers of shared ownership properties worth up to £500,000 – and making this retrospective, so any first-time buyer who has made such a purchase since the last Budget will benefit.

To make sure that the infrastructure is in place to support new and existing communities ahead of development of new homes, the Housing Infrastructure Fund has been boosted by £500 million – bringing the total to £5.5 billion with the potential to unlock up to 650,000 homes.

Grant funding of £291 million for vital infrastructure on the Docklands Light Railway in East London has been announced, meaning less pressure on existing services in the area and the potential to unlock over 18,000 homes.

The next wave of deals with 9 housing associations were announced, allocating £653 million from the Affordable Homes Programme to deliver over 13,000 additional affordable housing starts by March 2022 and £1 billion of new guarantees to support small and medium sized builders, implemented by the British Business Bank.

A [consultation](#) on a package of planning reform to allow greater flexibility to extend existing buildings upwards and allow a change of use has been launched – to ensure that the planning system is speeding up the delivery of homes and supporting the regeneration of high streets.

Support was confirmed for up to 500 neighbourhoods to develop plans to allocate or permission land for homes sold at a discount.

The government has also committed to working with local partners in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc to maximise sustainable economic growth in a response to the National Infrastructure Commission's report.

Almost £1 billion extra support for local services

This Budget has provided a boost of £650 million to help councils support the most vulnerable people in their communities. Of this £240 million will be focused on winter pressures next year with flexibility to use the remainder where it is needed most – for adult or children's services.

This is on top of the £240 million announced last month to address winter social care pressures this year.

An additional £84 million over 5 years will also be made available as a targeted children's social care fund over the next 5 years, along with an additional £55 million Disabled Facilities Grant in this financial year.

This will mean councils will be able to deliver the services their residents need while also protecting them from excessive Council Tax bills.

The Budget will also provide a further £420 million to councils to fix potholes and carry out other repairs to improve roads, allow better access to workplaces, high streets and other community facilities.

Help for the high street

A £1.5 billion plan that includes a cut to the business rates bills for small retailers worth almost £900 million over 2 years, funding to transform town centres and a relaxation of planning rules has been announced as part of the Budget to support the country's high streets.

This includes:

- the launch of a £675 million Future High Streets Fund to transform local high streets so that they can remain firmly at the heart of communities; this will be used to improve infrastructure and transport and also support areas to redevelop under-used retail space into homes and offices, helping to restore high street properties and put historic buildings back into use
- business rates relief targeted at small retailers to cut their bills by a third and a new mandatory relief for public lavatories, building on over £10 billion of business rates support since 2016
- relaxing planning rules to support new mixed-use businesses on the high street and the conversion of under-used retail units into offices and homes

This is accompanied by additional support for local leadership to prepare and implement new strategies for their high street, including a new High Streets Taskforce to offer support and advice to help revitalise high streets.

This Budget also went further to fire-up the Northern Powerhouse, fuel the Midlands Engine and back our regions across the UK by committing to refresh both strategies next year and increasing the Transforming Cities Fund to £2.4 billion to make it quicker and easier for people to get around in some of England's biggest cities.

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[Press release: Foreign Secretary meets Leader of the Syrian White Helmets](#)

In July this year the Foreign Secretary coordinated an international effort to rescue dozens of members of the volunteer rescue service and their families from Southern Syria. This effort was in light of the threat to their lives from the Syrian regime.

The UK has since given a number of the rescue workers and their families a safe haven in communities across the country, as part of the Home Office's Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme.

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

Few people have to make the kind of moral choices that faced White Helmet Raed al-Saleh, who I was privileged to meet today. The White Helmets risked life and limb to save over 115,000 lives during the Syrian conflict, despite attacks at the hands of the Syrian regime and the Russian military. The UK is proud to stand behind them.

Mr Raed al Saleh expressed his gratitude to the people and Government of the UK for their support to the 3,000 men and women of the White Helmets over the past 6 years, which he said, “has enabled our volunteers to provide essential life-saving support to more than 115,000 persons and services to more than 4 million Syrian civilians who live under daily risk of violence in Syria.”

View the [previous joint statement on the resettlement of the White Helmets](#).

Further information

- Follow the Foreign Secretary on Twitter [@Jeremy_Hunt](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
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[Press release: Caroline Corby begins as permanent Parole Board Chair](#)

Caroline Corby starts her permanent appointment as Chair of the Parole Board from today (1 November 2018).

She has been the Interim Chair of the Parole Board since April 2018, as well

as a member of its Management Committee since 2015.

“I am delighted to have been appointed as Chair of the Parole Board. Although the announcement was made some time ago, today is my first official day in the permanent post.

“This is a good opportunity to set out a little bit about my priorities for the Board over the coming years.

“My priorities are for us to continue to improve our performance, maximise our influence in the various on-going reviews, take steps to address the lack of ethnic diversity among our Parole Board membership and, finally, I am determined to safeguard the Board’s independence. I cover each of these areas in a little more detail below:

Reviews of the Parole Board

“We are currently subject to a number of reviews including a public consultation on a new internal review mechanism and [a departmental review of the 27 Parole Board rules](#). These present us with a real opportunity to make positive changes to the way in which the Board works. Martin Jones (Parole Board CEO) and I are in frequent dialogue with the MoJ and we are confident that we will emerge in the New Year with a framework that suits the way we want to work and gives us greater powers and control.

Improving Diversity in the Board

“In 2017 David Lammy MP led a review of [the treatment and outcomes for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic \(BAME\) individuals going through the Criminal Justice System](#). A key finding was that trust in the system from people with a BAME background was low and that this was due to the lack of ethnic diversity among those making decisions in the CJS. The Parole Board has 240 members of which only 11 have a BAME background. In order to ensure that we have the confidence of prisoners and the public, a key priority for the Board will be to address the relative lack of ethnic diversity among Parole Board members in the next recruitment round in 2019.

Safeguarding Independence

“As Chair I am determined to safeguard the independence of the Board. The [Wakenshaw judgment](#) in August 2018 looked at issues around independence and said that further changes should be made with respect to member tenure and the lack of a formal process for removing a member. We are in discussions with the MoJ about possible changes. Safeguarding our independence is also at the heart of all our responses to the various on-going reviews.

Reducing Deferrals

“Under Martin Jones’s leadership, the Parole Board has done a tremendous job in getting on top of the backlog of cases which has plagued us since the Osborn judgment in 2013. The next challenge is to address deferrals and adjournments. These are currently running at over 40% of all cases, with over

20% of cases being deferred on the day. I am confident that we can make real progress here. Indeed, the outcomes from our project to tackle this issue are very encouraging, with a noticeable reduction in on the day deferrals.

In Conclusion

“It is a real time of change for the Board and I look forward to working with my colleagues in the organisation and wider justice system to improve the experience of parole for all who are affected by it.”

Caroline Corby, Chair for the Parole Board of England & Wales

Press release: PM meets European Round Table of Industrialists: 1 November 2018

The Prime Minister welcomed representatives from the European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT) to Downing Street to discuss the progress on Brexit negotiations and hear from some of Europe’s leading businesses about their priorities. The Brexit Secretary and Business Secretary were also present.

First, she recognised the ERT’s valuable contribution to the economy as major multinational companies in the UK and across Europe.

The Prime Minister set out that since their previous meeting, the vision for the future economic partnership with the European Union had been published. The plan would protect frictionless trade, which is in the interests of both UK and EU businesses, employees and citizens. The Prime Minister emphasised that the proposals would not only ensure there was no hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, but it would also safeguard jobs, just-in-time manufacturing and integrated supply chains, all of which are important to business.

Second, the Prime Minister spoke about the good progress in negotiations, with 95% of the Withdrawal Agreement complete and with agreement on the structure and scope of the Future Framework. She reiterated that she was confident a deal would be reached.

The Prime Minister heard from the ERT about their priorities, and all agreed that it was in everyone’s interests to secure a good deal for both sides and provide clarity for businesses and employees in the UK and across Europe. The Prime Minister emphasised her commitment to achieving this and all agreed the importance of getting a deal as soon as possible.

Finally, at the end of the meeting, she thanked them for the useful and

constructive discussion, which would continue in future.

Attendees:

- Carl-Henric Svanberg – Chairman, ERT
- Vittorio Colao – Vice-Chairman, ERT. Former Chief Executive, Vodafone Group
- José-María Álvarez-Pallete – Chairman and CEO, Telefónica
- Nils Andersen – Chairman, AkzoNobel
- Pierre-André de Chalendar – Chairman and CEO, Saint-Gobain
- Iain Conn – Chief Executive, Centrica
- Ian Davis – Chairman, Rolls-Royce
- Ignacio Galán – Chairman and CEO, Iberdrola
- Leif Johansson – Chairman, AstraZeneca
- Rafael del Pino – Chairman, Ferrovial
- Johannes Teyssen – Chairman and CEO, E.ON
- Jacob Wallenberg – Chairman, Investor AB

- Brian Ager – Secretary General, ERT