

President of India inaugurates international conference on 'Bharat Bodh'

The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee inaugurated an international conference on 'Bharat Bodh' (Idea of Bharat) organized by the Indira Gandhi National Open University and Bhartiya Shikshan Mandal today (February 23, 2017) in New Delhi.

Press release: Housing starts hit 9-year high

The number of new build homes that have started to be built continued to rise last year to the highest level since 2007, figures released today (23 February 2017) show.

The [latest house building data](#) shows that 153,370 new homes were started in the year to December, up 5% on the previous year.

More than 140,500 homes were completed in the year to December 2016.

Meanwhile, figures from the Council of Mortgage Lenders show first-time buyer lending totalled 338,900 loans in 2016, up 8% on last year.

Housing and Planning Minister Gavin Barwell said:

We've got the country building again with the highest number of housing starts for 9 years. However, we know there's more to be done to build more homes in the places that people want to live.

Our housing white paper sets out an ambitious set of proposals to deliver more land, speed up build out, diversify the housing market, and support people who need help now.

The figures also show strong growth across the country with Islington and Manchester experiencing high levels of starts in the year to December 2016, with an annual increase of 296% and 323% respectively.

Reforms in the recently published [housing white paper](#) set out the government's bold new plans to fix the broken housing market and build more homes across England.

The 4 key aspects of the paper set out new measures to ensure the housing market works for everyone, and help local authorities, developers and SME builders get building.

Building more homes is an absolute priority, which is why the government plans to invest £25 billion in housing over the Spending Review.

£1.4 billion of funding has been released for Affordable Housing, and restrictions on funding have been relaxed so providers can build a range of homes including for Affordable Rent and Rent to Buy which help people save for a deposit before they buy.

The [House building: December quarter 2016 England statistics](#) record the number of new build homes completed and started during the quarter October to December. It uses data sourced from building control officers at local authorities, the National House Building Council and independent inspectors.

According to the [Council of Mortgage Lenders](#), the number of first-time buyers in December 2016 is up 8% year on year.

Press release: Review of the National Heritage Memorial Fund and Heritage Lottery Fund launched

From:

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23 February 2017

The Government has today launched a call for evidence on the roles and responsibilities of the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) and Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

It forms part of a review on how the organisations carry out their roles in supporting the heritage sector and how HLF operates in distributing National Lottery funding to heritage projects across the UK.

It will also consider how NHMF and HLF engage with the public and work with partners across the country.

Heritage, natural environment and other cultural organisations, as well as members of the public, are invited to submit their views over the next six weeks.

Every government-sponsored public body is reviewed at least once in each Parliament to ensure it is fit for purpose and provides good value for money.

The National Heritage Memorial Fund review Challenge Panel, made up of stakeholders and experts in the sector, is chaired by DCMS Non-Executive Director Charles Alexander. The review is expected to be completed in summer 2017.

Notes to editors:

1. The call for evidence for the National Heritage Memorial Fund tailored review will be open for six weeks, from today until 06/04/2017. More information, including how to take part in the online call for evidence can be found [here](#).
2. A Challenge Panel made of external experts and stakeholders has also been set up to look at the scope, methodology and conclusions of the National Heritage Memorial Fund review. This will be chaired by Charles Alexander, lead Non-Executive Director of DCMS with a background in international finance.
3. Tailored reviews are part of the Government's Public Body Transformation Programme, and look at the effectiveness, efficiency and good governance of public bodies.
4. The National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) was set up in 1980 to save the most outstanding parts of our heritage at risk of loss to the nation, as a memorial to those who have given their lives for the UK. NHMF, operating as the Heritage Lottery Fund, also distributes money from the National Lottery to help people across the UK to explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about.
5. The Terms of Reference for the Review are attached.

Media enquiries – please contact the DCMS News and Communications team on 020 7211 2210.

[Notice: GU10 1PB, SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK Ltd: environmental permit](#)

issued

The Environment Agency publish permits that they issue under the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED).

This decision includes the permit and decision document for:

- Operator name: SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK Ltd
- Installation name: Runfold South Landfill Areas A and C
- Permit number: EPR/SP3131GC/V003

Notice: UB2 4NA, Noon Products Limited: environmental permit issued

The Environment Agency publish permits that they issue under the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED).

This decision includes the permit and decision document for:

- Operator name: Noon Products Limited
- Installation name: Southall Ready Meals Factory
- Permit number: EPR/AP3139AM/A001