

Amy Rees appointed to lead HMPPS

News story

The Ministry of Justice has today (31 August 2022) announced the appointment of a new Chief Executive for Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).



Amy Rees – previously the Director General of Probation, Wales and Youth for HMPPS – will succeed Dr Jo Farrar who will focus on her wider role as Second Permanent Secretary at the MOJ, including digital transformation of justice services.

Under the restructure, following an operating model review led by the MOJ Permanent Secretary Antonia Romeo, Phil Copple will become Director General of Operations for Prisons and Probation.

Both roles will begin on 1 September 2022 and are part of a wider, ongoing agency transformation placing greater focus on the delivery of frontline services – keeping the public safe, delivering modern prisons that rehabilitate offenders and reducing reoffending.

Having joined HMPPS in 2001, Amy worked in frontline positions at several prisons including HMP Lewes, High Down and Bristol before being appointed Governor at HMP Brixton in 2008.

She has since acted as Executive Director for HMPPS in Wales and was the lead official with the Welsh Government on behalf of the MOJ.

Amy also took on responsibility for the Youth Custody Service, including day-to-day operations and supporting its work to shape the future of children's services in custody.

Phil has been in the Prison service for over 30 years, joining in 1990 as a prison officer. He has governed in a number of prisons including HMP Deerbolt and HMP Frankland and led prisons and probation in the North East region, as NE Director of Offender Management.

Phil took up post as Executive Director Prisons in 2017, before becoming

Director General of Prisons in 2019.

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[New vision for a world-leading digital property market](#)

- HM Land Registry launches Strategy 2022+ and three-year Business Plan to guide the next stage of its digital transformation.
- Announces commitment to lead the market in harnessing the power of digital tools and automation to speed up the homebuying process.
- Strategy is supported by the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives, the Conveyancing Association, the Council for Licensed Conveyancers, the Council of Property Search Organisations, the Law Society, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the Society of Licensed Conveyancers and UK Finance.

The current homebuying process does not meet some basic expectations for a modern, professional service. We know that people find the process stressful and confusing. HM Land Registry will work with the property market to co-create a homebuying process of the future that is quicker, more efficient and more user friendly, under its new strategy launched today, 31 August 2022.

[Strategy 2022+, 'Enabling a world-leading property market'](#), sets out how HM Land Registry will transform land registration in England and Wales to cut delays for customers and influence the market to realise the potential of cutting-edge digital tools and solutions.

The next stage in transforming HM Land Registry into a global leader in digital land registration sees the organisation taking on a convening role as it invites the UK property sector to work in partnership to create a simpler, paperless and transparent process for buying and selling property which will benefit homeowners across the country.

Also published today is [the new three-year Business Plan](#), a clear roadmap for how the organisation will implement the strategy and deliver improvements for customers.

Chief Executive and Chief Land Registrar of HM Land Registry, Simon Hayes, said:

Strategy 2022+ comes at a pivotal moment. The very high level of activity in the property market in recent times has underlined the urgency with which all players in the market need to work together

to improve the system.

With property transactions taking record time to complete, it is imperative that we work as partners to innovate and remove friction so that the process is as quick and painless as possible.

For HM Land Registry, that means a step-change in our offering to customers so that they receive an outstanding, fully digital service.

As we do so, we are placing people – those buying and selling property – at the heart of our transformation.

Business Minister Lord Callanan said:

Industries across the economy stand ready to seize on the digital revolution and the UK's world-renowned property market is no different. The digitisation proposals in this strategy will help the Land Registry deliver more efficient and user-friendly services, while driving productivity and growth for the sector.

These proposals, along with other action the Land Registry is taking such as the completion of a Local Land Charges register, will provide a boost to households and businesses engaging with the property market throughout the UK, supporting our ambitious Levelling Up agenda.

Automation will bring speed and resilience

For 160 years now, HM Land Registry has served as the critical institution protecting the right to property and enabling the market to operate. The better land registration works, the better conveyancing and the property market function. As such, HM Land Registry's Strategy 2022+ is informed by the need to urgently build the organisation's resilience to volatility in the property market which is the leading cause of application backlogs.

Under the strategy, many more land registration processes will be automated to significantly improve service speeds for customers. Automation, and further investment in our people, will give HM Land Registry the capacity and capability to deliver its services swiftly even in periods of very high demand, ensuring backlogs are a problem of the past.

A significant investment to automate most changes to the land register by 2025 will result in the end-to-end automation of up to 70% of all updates to the register, while maintaining the accurate and fraud-free registers that provide trust and confidence in the property market. Automated applications will be completed within one day – many of them in seconds.

Greater levels of end-to-end automation on simpler application types will also allow us to refocus our expert caseworkers onto the more complex

applications that demand their expert judgement, reducing wait times for complex property transactions.

We also want to work with conveyancers who are facing the pressure of increasing demand in the market to help reduce inefficiencies elsewhere in the process. Currently, 1 in 5 applications to HM Land Registry (more than 3,500 applications every day) require us to follow up with the applicant to resolve an issue in the application. This increases to around 2 in 3 for more complex applications. This causes extensive delays to the affected applications and our average speed of service times. We are working hard to help customers reduce avoidable errors in their applications, which will save both us and conveyancers time and money.

Better access to vital information

A lack of upfront information can cause up to 8% of property transactions to fall through, costing the buyer up to £2,700 per transaction. A new drive to rapidly digitise the information the public and conveyancers need most will allow people to access HM Land Registry's information on ownership, location, mortgages, local land charges and more in real time, so that when making a decision, people are better informed and buying and selling property is quicker and less uncertain. This will benefit those involved in all types of property transactions, both residential and commercial.

HM Land Registry's ambitious agenda to work with the property sector to enable property to be bought and sold digitally will see it encouraging the market to adopt new technology – such as digital ID and e-signatures – by introducing new standards and working with property partners to create an open, integrated ecosystem of digital services that support property transactions. This will mean that people only need to provide their information once – rather than sending the same information to different people multiple times throughout the process of a transaction.

Opening up property data to benefit the economy

Strategy 2022+ also sets out HM Land Registry's commitment to open up property data so that it is more transparent, easier to use and supports a strong, sustainable economy and the UK's Net Zero targets. For example, the commitment to complete the new instant-access Local Land Charges register within the next four years is expected to add around £3bn to the UK economy.

We are committed to making our data more findable, accessible, interoperable with other data and reusable (or 'FAIR') to increase its potential to generate insight that helps the government and others tackle complex social, environmental and economic challenges. We will continue to energise innovation in the use of property data, in particular through our Digital Street research and development programme and our Geovation accelerator, which has already supported 137 start-ups to develop new products and services and has created more than 1,500 jobs.

HM Land Registry's strategy is supported by stakeholders from across the

property and conveyancing sector.

President of the Law Society of England and Wales, I. Stephanie Boyce, said:

We welcome HM Land Registry's new business strategy and the focus on digital. Technological change in the conveyancing market, which was accelerated because of the COVID-19 pandemic, continues at pace.

We look forward to continuing to work with Land Registry and the industry more widely to further digitise the conveyancing process, to promote better and earlier decision-making and make residential property transactions smoother for buyers and sellers.

Beth Rudolf, Director of Delivery at the Conveyancing Association, said:

In the past HM Land Registry's five-year strategic plans have referenced the move to digital/machine-readable and the creation of notional registers but this time it has already started the process through the delivery of the Digital Registration Service.

This is very encouraging in an industry where we need to be able to deliver digitally for the consumer and other stakeholders in order to reduce the waste of the extended transaction times and fall-through rates, and to enable the consumer to understand the implications of the title on their intended use and enjoyment to reduce claims and therefore PII premiums.

Covid alert level reduced to two

News story

Alert level has been reduced from three to two



Based on UKHSA advice, the UK Chief Medical Officers and NHS England National Medical Director have recommended to Ministers the COVID Alert Level moves from Level 3 to Level 2.

Hospitals and the wider health systems remain extremely busy overall but the summer BA.4 and BA.5 wave is subsiding and direct COVID severe illness is now a much smaller proportion of this. Severe COVID cases, direct COVID healthcare pressures, direct COVID deaths and ONS community positivity estimates have decreased. COVID remains present in the community and we may see an increase in cases with BA 4.6 and BA.2.75 circulating but do not expect this to lead to an immediate increase in hospital pressures. This will continue to be kept under review. Further COVID surges are likely so please be prepared by getting a vaccination when it is offered.

Chief Medical Officer for England, Professor Sir Chris Whitty
Chief Medical Officer for Northern Ireland, Professor Sir Michael McBride
Chief Medical Officer for Scotland, Professor Sir Gregor Smith
Deputy Chief Medical Officer for Wales, Professor Chris Jones
NHS England National Medical Director, Professor Sir Stephen Powis.

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay and ministers from the devolved administrations have accepted the advice.

Background

The Covid alert levels are as follows:

- level 1: COVID-19 is present in UK, but the number of cases and transmission is low
- level 2: COVID-19 is in general circulation but direct COVID-19 healthcare pressures and transmission are declining or stable
- level 3: a COVID-19 epidemic is in general circulation
- level 4: a COVID-19 epidemic is in general circulation; transmission is high and direct COVID-19 pressure on healthcare services is widespread and substantial or rising
- level 5: as level 4 and there is a material risk of healthcare services being directly overwhelmed by COVID-19

Multi-million pound investment brings environmental improvements

Press release

The Environment Agency has worked together with partners to invest almost £3m in environmental improvements in the North East over the past year.



The Tipalt Burn

More than 21 hectares of habitat has been created or improved in the North East over the past year as part of a £3million programme of work to improve the environment for people and wildlife.

Almost 12km of river has been improved and more than 8,000 trees planted, while 32 hectares of stillwaters have been enhanced for fishing.

The North East Environment Programme is managed and delivered by the Environment Agency working mainly in partnership with government backed Catchment Partnerships, bringing together river and wildlife trusts, local authorities and other organisations to improve the environment.

There were almost 50 partners involved in this year's £3million programme, contributing £461,000 in funding.

Key projects progressed in 2021/22 include:

- Blyth Estuary Habitat Enhancement – 27 habitat areas for wildlife created at Port of Blyth to boost the ecology of the estuary
- The EU Life Wader project led by Natural England will see the Environment Agency deliver restoration work on the Rivers Till and Breamish

- The Wilds of Wanney project aimed at improving water quality in the Upper Wansbeck tributaries delivered 1.4km of protection to the Delf Burn and supported the restoration of 4.5ha of habitat
- The Northumberland Crayfish Strategy continued its work to protect the endangered white clawed crayfish with the development of safe breeding 'Ark' sites, a captive breeding programme and an increased public awareness programme.
- Design and installation of a floating ecosystem on the Tyne Estuary at Newcastle Quayside – the first of its kind on a tidal waterbody – as part of the Tyne Estuary Habitat Enhancement project.
- Progressing a Tipalt Burn project to identify priority projects that will improve water quality in the burn, including tree planting, reducing run-off from land into the water and habitat creation.
- Gaunless Reconnected saw interventions at farms to reduce pollution running off farmland and into the river, including cattle crossings, improvements to farm yards and gates. It saw 2,700 trees planted, fencing installed and 300m of riverbank restored.
- Wear Estuary Improvements saw the creation of a 150m² of saltmarsh along the River Wear Estuary – important habitat for marine animals and birds.
- Fish for Tees, aimed at improving fish passage at five sites and opening up 76km of river for fish migration made progress at all sites, with design and delivery the next steps.
- At Billingham Beck, options were developed for improving fish passage and creating and improving habitat.

Fiona Morris Environment Planning and Engagement Manager for the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

There's been a huge variety and scale of projects in this year's programme that have been started and delivered, from protecting iconic species, enhancing and creating habitat and improving water quality.

Together with our partners we are committed to driving forward innovative environmental improvements and continuing to deliver this ambitious programme of environmental improvements for people and wildlife in the North East.

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[A vision of the future: £750K](#)

available for novel early stage concepts that may disrupt the defence landscape

- DASA has launched a new Themed Competition: Disruptive Science and Technology Impacting the Future of Defence
- Funded by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl).
- Up to £750k funding available for disruptive, early stage ideas and concepts may be used as the basis for further research within the Defence Science and Technology Futures (DSTF) Programme

The [Defence and Security Accelerator](#) (DASA) is pleased to launch a new Themed Competition, [Disruptive Science and Technology Impacting the Future of Defence](#). Run on behalf of the [Defence Science and Technology Laboratory](#) (Dstl), this competition seeks exciting concepts, technologies, or ideas that may disrupt the future of defence.

The outcome of this competition is anticipated to be a pool of novel Science and Technology (S&T) ideas / concepts that may disrupt the defence landscape and have the potential to lead to radical change.

Key dates and funding

£750k (exc. VAT) funding is available for this Themed Competition. The value of each funded submission is £50k.

The deadline to submit a proposal is midday (BST) 12 October 2022

Do you have a disruptive idea or concept? [Read the full competition document and submit a proposal](#).

Getting ready for the technologies that will shape the future defence landscape

The Defence Science and Technology Futures (DSTF) Programme identifies novel early stage research which may have a significant game-changing or disruptive impact on future military capability.

The DSTF Programme recognises the need to look beyond the current, developed science and technology landscape, and this Themed Competition has been launched to support this need.

DASA and Dstl seek ideas that may underpin generation-after-next technology, concepts or approaches and could disrupt traditional technologies or ways of thinking. Proposals submitted to this competition will help defence understand how current novel Science and Technology (S&T) might develop and impact defence priorities, to help plan for the future, combat threats and

take advantage of opportunities.

We are interested in low Technology Readiness Level (TRL) ideas (TRL 1-2) from any discipline. Proposals submitted for this competition do not need to fulfil contemporary defence requirements.

Requirement areas

This competition has one requirement area.

Requirement 1: Evaluating Disruptive S&T ideas and their impact on the Future of Defence

The goal of this requirement is to help Dstl develop an understanding of ideas to help determine their potential to be disruptive. Proposals should examine how the idea may fit within the future defence landscape, rather than the confines of contemporary technologies and capabilities.

Ideas that might help solve this requirement include:

- early stage science and technology that currently do not have a defence application
- ideas identified through horizon scanning or technology watch, that may be disruptive and should be researched further
- ideas developed through brainstorming or other workshopping approaches that may have the potential to disrupt the future defence landscape but are at a very low Technology Readiness Level (TRL 1-2)

Any ideas submitted to this requirement must have a theoretical basis supported by reasoned explanation.

To learn more about the challenge area of the competition, [read the full competition document here](#).

Webinar

21 September 2022

This webinar will provide more information on the challenge areas and how to submit a proposal. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions in the Q&A. If you would like to get involved, please register on the [DASA Eventbrite page](#).

[Register now](#)

Submit a proposal

Do you have a potentially disruptive idea or concept that may disrupt the future of defence? Submit your idea and help the DSTF Programme improve its ability to research and prepare for the future defence technology landscape.

[Learn more and submit a proposal](#).