

Local leaders pledge to continue vital building safety work

- Twenty-five more local leaders have pledged to ensure vital building safety improvements continue during the pandemic
- This will ensure the safety of those living in high-rise buildings with unsafe cladding is prioritised
- The announcement follows regional mayors agreeing the Pledge

The leaders from 25 councils have joined the ranks of those [pledging their commitment](#) to ensuring vital building safety work continues where this can be done safely and in line with public health guidance, Building Safety Minister Lord Greenhalgh has announced today (6 May 2020).

The Pledge, so far signed by 26 councils and 5 regional mayors, sets out a commitment to improving the safety of residential blocks while ensuring those working on site are given clear information and support to guarantee their own safety and limit the spread of COVID-19.

The new signatories to the Pledge include representatives of 18 London councils, as well as leaders in Manchester, Slough, Leeds, Sheffield, Salford and Liverpool.

This follows the Housing Secretary securing an agreement with regional mayors and other local leaders to sign the Pledge earlier this month. This included the mayors of Greater Manchester, Sheffield City Region, London, Liverpool City Region and the West Midlands.

Building Safety Minister Lord Greenhalgh said:

We are bringing about the biggest change in building safety in a generation backed by our unprecedented £1 billion fund for removing unsafe cladding from high-rise buildings, in addition to the £600 million already made available.

In order to ensure the safety of residents, building safety work must resume where it can be done safely and in line with public health guidance.

The agreement reached with local leaders from across the country is an important step that demonstrates a shared commitment to ensuring this vital work continues during the pandemic.

John Biggs, Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets, said:

As a borough with more high-rise buildings than almost anywhere else in the UK, we know how important the issue of fire safety is to our residents.

Almost 3 years on from the Grenfell Tower tragedy, delays and inaction on the part of private property owners means there are still too many people forced to go to sleep at night not knowing if they are safe in their homes.

It is right that we are focusing as many resources as possible on our coronavirus response, but where work can continue safely, it is also essential that we continue to make progress on vital fire safety work.

The government has provided sector specific guidance on how to apply social distancing in the workplace in England.

This was also reviewed by Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive and includes updated guidance for construction workers making clear that 'work on-site can continue if done in accordance with the social distancing guidelines wherever possible'.

Where work continues on-site, [detailed guidance is available from the Construction Leadership Council](#) on further reducing the risk, including measures for maintaining high standards of hygiene.

In order to support this vital work, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has appointed a firm of construction consultants, Faithful & Gould, to advise those planning and doing ACM cladding remediation work, including identifying and increasing awareness of safe practice under current COVID-19 restrictions.

The National Fire Chiefs Council has also published [revised guidance on waking watch interim measures](#), in the context of coronavirus, that reflects higher rates of occupancy and vulnerability due to people staying home for an extended period of time.

The Pledge has today been agreed by the following:

- Cllr Daniel Thomas (Leader, Barnet Council)
- Cllr Muhammed Butt (Leader, Brent Council)
- Cllr Colin Smith (Leader, Bromley Council)
- Cllr Georgia Gould (Leader, Camden Council)
- Cllr Tony Newman (Leader, Croydon Council)
- Cllr Julian Bell (Leader, Ealing Council)
- Cllr Danny Thorpe (Leader, Greenwich Council)
- Philip Glanville (Mayor of Hackney)
- Cllr Joseph Ejofor (Leader, Haringey Council)
- Cllr Damian White (Leader, Havering Council)

- Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE (Leader, Hillingdon Council)
- Cllr Richard Watts (Leader, Islington Council)
- Cllr Elizabeth Campbell (Leader, Kensington and Chelsea Council)
- Cllr Jack Hopkins (Leader, Lambeth Council)
- Cllr Debra Coupar (Deputy Leader, Leeds City Council)
- Joe Anderson (Mayor, Liverpool City Council)
- Sir Richard Leese (Leader, Manchester City Council)
- Rokhsana Fiaz (Mayor of Newham)
- Paul Dennett (Mayor, Salford City Council)
- Cllr Julie Dore (Leader, Sheffield City Council)
- Cllr James Swindlehurst (Leader, Slough Council)
- John Biggs (Mayor, Tower Hamlets)
- Cllr Andrew Western (Leader, Trafford Council)
- Cllr Ravi Govindia (Leader, Wandsworth Council)
- Cllr Rachael Robathan (Leader, Westminster Council)

The Pledge was initially agreed on 16 April by the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP (Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government) and the following:

- Andy Burnham (Mayor of Greater Manchester)
- Kate Henderson (Chief Executive, National Housing Federation)
- Dan Jarvis (Mayor of the Sheffield City Region)
- Peter John (Chair of London Councils and Leader of Southwark Council)
- Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London)
- Steve Rotheram (Mayor of the Liverpool City Region)
- Andy Street (Mayor of the West Midlands)

MOD awards places on specialist nuclear technical services framework

ACA (Atkins Cavendish Alliance), KAD (KBR, Assystem, Doosan Babcock) and Nuvia have been chosen following a procurement process which included a measurement of collaboration and behaviours.

The Nuclear Technical Support Provider (NTSP) framework lasts 7 years, with the option of a further 3 years. It will deliver specialist nuclear technical services valued between £250-million and £400-million to support DIO, Navy Command and other Ministry of Defence (MOD) organisations.

The framework will support the Clyde Infrastructure Programme (CIP) and wider Royal Navy and defence requirements. Its primary focus will be on delivering the refurbishment and upgrade of critical infrastructure at HMNB Clyde.

Charles Hoskins, DIO's Clyde Infrastructure Programme Director, said:

“The NTSP is vitally important to the delivery of our major infrastructure programme and wider operations at HMNB Clyde. We welcome all companies from our new NTSP delivery partners to our infrastructure family within the Clyde Community.

“We look forward to them joining our delivery team and the collaborative approach that we are embedding into all work we undertake at HMNB Clyde. This collaborative approach and the expertise from our new partners will be crucial to our success as we move forward into the exciting and challenging next chapter of our programme.”

Andy Albutt, on behalf of the ACA, said:

“The Clyde Infrastructure Programme represents an incredible opportunity to help shape the UK’s defence capability and further strengthen the industry’s collective expertise in delivering highly specialised nuclear services.

“Atkins and Cavendish Nuclear are now focussed on working closely alongside the DIO and our framework partners to hit the ground running as part of this select delivery team.”

Ian Hudson, Framework Director for KAD Nuclear, said:

We are absolutely delighted to have been selected as a supplier for the NTSP framework.

KAD Nuclear has a clear and unique philosophy; we have the right people; we are ready to go and we will work collaboratively inside KAD and with other framework suppliers to find the best solution.

At the heart of it all we are incredibly proud to have the chance to work on some of the most nationally significant projects of our time and create world-class infrastructure that will serve this country for decades to come.

David Field, Framework Director for Nuvia, said:

This is a unique opportunity, one that Nuvia is proud to be a part of and contribute to. We look forward to working collaboratively across the framework and becoming part of the Clyde family.

[Historic UK-Greece migration action](#)

plan signed

News story

The UK and Greece have committed to deepen cooperation on irregular migration in the Eastern Mediterranean.



The [joint action plan](#) has been signed by Immigration Minister Chris Philp and Greece's Alternate Migration and Asylum Minister, Giorgos Koumoutsakos, today signalling a firm commitment from both governments to increase cooperation as illegal migration into Europe via Greece remains high.

Minister for Immigration Compliance, Chris Philp, said:

Illegal migration is facilitated by dangerous, malicious criminals, taking advantage of the desperate situations that many people find themselves in. They do not care about the safety of the people involved.

The joint action plan will deliver on our commitment to keep our borders secure and will discourage those considering making the dangerous and illegal journey into Greece, through Europe, and in many cases to the UK.

Greece is one of the first countries migrants will visit on their route through Europe, and is used by a significant proportion of migrants seeking to reach the UK illegally.

The action plan strengthens the UK's relationship with one of its key partners in tackling irregular migration and will improve cooperation across a range of issues.

It will ensure asylum and returns processes are as efficient as possible, enhance the already excellent cooperation between UK and Hellenic law enforcement authorities to dismantle migrant smuggling networks and tackle organised immigration crime, and renew cooperation on search and rescue in the Aegean through the UK's renewed deployment of a Border Force cutter.

The new plan will come into force immediately.

Published 22 April 2020

Last updated 6 May 2020 + [show all updates](#)

1. 6 May 2020

Updated article to include a link to the joint action plan.

2. 22 April 2020

First published.

[Biggest number of new Universal Credit claims paid in a single day](#)

Press release

More than 135,000 new claims were made to Universal Credit on 30 and 31 March 2020. People who claimed on these two days will receive payments today.



Of the eligible claims, around 93% have been paid in full and on time. Where people haven't been paid, it is often due to the claimant needing to provide information, such as a correct bank number, and staff will attempt to contact claimants to fill in any blanks.

Since the pandemic began, around 1.8 million claims have been made to Universal Credit and almost 700,000 advance payments made to people.

Secretary of State Therese Coffey said:

Five weeks ago today, more than 135,000 people made a claim to Universal Credit in just over 48 hours – more than we usually have a month.

Our hero workforce here at Department for Work and Pensions has been working flat out to process claims. Just this week we are paying more than £200 million to around 300,000 households who made their claim at the end of March.

The system has proved itself in the face of unprecedented demand over the last few weeks and scrutiny over the last few years.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

Follow DWP on:

Published 6 May 2020

[New reagent available to support global diagnostic testing of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

The reagent is intended to be used in tests that confirm whether an individual is currently infected with the virus.

The reagent can be used as a positive control for the testing systems used to detect the presence of COVID-19. A positive control is included in tests by means of a sample that contains a known amount of the coronavirus genetic material. This acts as a confirmatory sample that assures the test is working correctly.

The reagent is non-infectious genetic material from SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic. An initial batch of 1,500 vials is available from the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control (NIBSC) with production of a further batch currently underway.

An expert centre of the MHRA, NIBSC has fast-tracked the development and production of this reagent. It is to be made freely available globally and will help more laboratories to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr Nicola Rose, Head of the Division of Virology at the NIBSC, said:

Accurate diagnostic tests are a vital component in the fight against COVID-19.

This reagent is a great example of the NIBSC rapidly responding to public health needs in the response to COVID-19. The development of the research material is a prelude to the production of established standards and reference materials that laboratories can use in their own work on COVID-19, and we will continue to make producing this material an absolute priority.

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

We have built the largest diagnostic testing industry in British history from scratch in a matter of weeks.

Thanks to our world-leading scientists and clinicians, we've now been able to fast-track a new biological reagent to help the UK and countries across the globe carry out even more tests and develop ever more accurate ways of diagnosing the virus.

"It's yet another example of the UK's pioneering life sciences sector leading the way in the fight against coronavirus.

The rapid availability of biological materials is a key component in global response efforts to tackle the COVID-19 outbreak. The availability of the reagent also supports the Government's new national testing strategy, which involves testing in NHS and PHE laboratories, as well as in a completely new network of labs, mobile testing units and home testing kits across the UK, to boost testing capacity.

Additional [SARS-CoV-2-related research materials](#) are also available from the NIBSC.