

UN Human Rights Council 42 – UK

Statement under Item 10

The UK firmly believes that technical assistance can help States realise their human rights obligations. This is why I was delighted to be appointed the first International Ambassador for Human Rights earlier this year to further enhance and support the UK's work in this area. The broad aim of this role is to work in coordination with Ministers to strengthen the multilateral human rights system and help it deliver tangible human rights improvements globally.

The UK believes it is important to challenge States that violate human rights, but it is equally important to support States that are working to fulfil their human rights obligations. We encourage other countries to take a similar approach, and to provide political and financial support to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Turning to specific country situations, I refer to our separate statements delivered on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Ukraine.

The UK welcomes the continued co-operation between Georgia and OHCHR but remains deeply concerned that those in effective control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia refuse access to OHCHR and other human rights mechanisms. We are also concerned by civic inequality based on ethnicity and that the latest "borderisation" activities and severe restrictions on crossing regimes by the de facto authorities have further restricted freedom of movement, affecting the most vulnerable.

It was unfortunate that the Tbilisi Pride March of Dignity was cancelled due to concerns for participants' safety. We welcome Georgia's commitment to support and protect the rights of all its citizens. In Cameroon, we believe the forthcoming national dialogue must tackle the root causes of grievances in the North-West and South-West regions. We remain ready to support credible efforts towards peace.

Finally, the UK recognises the serious, unequivocal threat that climate change poses to our planet, and to the protection, strengthening, and enjoyment of human rights. We should consider how to use this agenda item to encourage States to address climate change and its effects on the protection and enjoyment of human rights.

Japan Rugby World Cup: Investment in UK Housing & Regeneration

The Japan Rugby World Cup: Investment in UK Housing & Regeneration Event aims to encourage and foster positive trade relationships between both Japanese investors and British business executives with regards to international investment in UK housing.

“It gives me great pleasure to be here today at the British Embassy in Tokyo at such an exciting time for Japan and for rugby lovers around the world. My home town is birthplace of the other Rugby Code but I am sure Huddersfield will forgive me in return for the reference to a fine bit of Yorkshire.

Our delegation has only been here for a short time but we have been made to feel incredibly welcome and on behalf of my team I would like to extend our thanks to everyone who has hosted us so far for their generosity and hospitality.

It has also been good to see our friends from Sekisu House very much on their home ground and I look forward to visiting their dream factory tomorrow.

For me personally it is also great to be back here in Japan: a country I have visited previously and got to know well through my time working many years ago at the Japan Local Government Centre. It's a great shame we are not able to stay for longer to enjoy the tournament and catch up with old colleagues. Hopefully the England team won't be saying the same thing at the end of the group stages.

As Chief Executive of Homes England I think I have one of the best jobs in the Government and the private sector, working to solve one of biggest domestic challenges facing the country at the moment.

I lead an organisation of over 1,000 people who are all dedicated to increasing the pace, scale and quality of housing delivery in England.

Homes England is a relatively new agency, having only been formed in January 2018.

We were formed to address one the Government's top domestic policy priorities, fixing the housing market, which has failed to deliver enough homes for decades.

This shortage of new homes has led to high property prices and rents, and has prevented a whole generation from buying their first home.

Very simply, England needs to significantly increase the number of homes built year on year, and Homes England is tasked with ensuring more people in England have access to well-designed homes in the places they want to live.

To achieve this, Government has given us the tools to intervene in the housing market to ensure more homes are built in areas of greatest need, and to improve the affordability of housing.

Beyond getting more homes built, we are determined to create a more resilient and diverse housing market by supporting new entrants and pioneering new methods of construction.

The scale of the challenge is significant, last year in England we built just over 220,000 homes and Government has tasked us with working with the sector to build 300,000 a year.

While the challenge is significant, so are the resources Homes England has to deliver on its mission.

We expect to spend £27bn in the next five years, in addition to leveraging significant additional investment by partnering with the private sector. We already have already launched separate funds with Barclays and Lloyds and are looking for new opportunities. This is important. Homes England may be a government agency but it works primarily with and enabling private organisations.

As an organisation we have been given the remit to build significant capability. The agency is doubling in size and we now have a vastly experienced workforce from a wide range of primarily private sector backgrounds including land buyers, bankers, investors and developers. We are in many senses private skills operating in the public sector.

And as owners of significant amounts of public sector land with land assembly powers we are well placed to act as master developer, substantially reducing the risk of new large scale housing projects for private sector partners.

This experience and resource makes us a commercially astute organisation, capable of delivering ambitious projects competently and at pace.

Put simply we are an organisation with the money, land, and powers to deliver the homes the country needs.

But in order to succeed we need partners working in construction, finance, design, development, affordable housing, local government, asset managers and all others involved in the development process to work with us.

We are well placed to introduce you to the English residential market, partner with you to unlock opportunities.

In many ways we are the Fumiaki Tanaka of the English housing market. As scrum half, we don't kick the points or score many tries. Our role is to use our skills to bring partners into the game and present them with the opportunity to succeed.

And it's fantastic to one of these partners here today, Mr Kenta Konishi from Sekisui House UK.

Our new joint venture – HoUSE – with Sekisui and regeneration specialist Urban Splash is a testament to teamwork, shared ambition and innovation.

Being part of bringing one of the world's largest and most innovative housebuilders to the UK is a matter of immense pride for all of us at Homes England.

They have a proven track record of delivery quality homes at scale, having built nearly 5% of all the homes delivered across Japan last year.

This ability to deliver at scale and their expertise in modern methods of construction makes them a superb addition to the English housing market.

We are greatly looking forward to seeing House's first development at our new town in Northstowe, the biggest new town in England for over 50 years.

To date, Homes England has made great progress. In October 2018 we published our Strategic Plan setting out the steps we will take with the industry to respond to the long-term housing challenges facing the country.

In the last financial year we directly supported the completion of over 40,000 new homes and unlocked land with capacity for 35,500 homes, but there is still much to do, and to achieve our goals we need ambitious partners.

Others will speak in more detail about the range of investment opportunities the UK residential market has to offer.

I will say though that Homes England is actively working to build our investment pipeline in partnership with developers and asset managers with strong equity raising and development delivery capabilities.

This work is crucial if we are to achieve our objective of diversifying the housing market.

We are already supporting the growing Build to Rent sector via our cornerstone investment in PRS REIT's £250 million IPO and we are working to further develop our equity investment capabilities.

As with Build to Rent, supporting new homes for people of specific demographics is an important part of diversifying the market.

A lack of high quality homes for older people to downsize in to leaves these people stuck in large properties that would be perfect for new families.

As a result the growing capacity of the care home and retirement village sector to provide well designed homes with excellent amenities to suit the needs of an ageing population is fundamental to a functioning housing market.

Just as we need to diversity what we build, we need to diversify how we build, and for Homes England, embracing new technology and new methods of construction is vital to getting homes built at the pace and quality we want to see.

If you'll forgive another rugby analogy, England's Rugby World Cup winning coach Sir Clive Woodward was famously mocked by the media for buying each of his players a laptop in the build up to their ultimately successful World Cup challenge in 2003.

However he understood the importance of technology in getting the best out of his players. The team used this technology to analyse their performance and the games of their opponents in incredible detail which gave them an on field advantage. His mantra was "whoever wins in IT tends to win".

I think this is as good a lesson for the housing sector as it is for the world of sport.

Productivity and innovation growth in the UK construction sector has been low for the past 25 years and continues to lag behind the UK economy as a whole and the UK construction workforce is ageing.

Based on current entrant and exit rates, the construction sector could shrink up to a quarter by 2026.

However we know that if we keep building in the way we do at the moment, we will only hit our target if the construction workforce expanded by 40%

If Homes England is to achieve its objectives, we need to seriously shake up how we build homes in England by increasing the capacity of the off-site manufacturing industry, using our land and investment capabilities to push the sector to incorporate greater use of Modern Methods of Construction, as well as support the sector to test and learn about new technologies.

Homes England is actively supporting MMC across our land and investment interventions and is looking to do more in this space.

Bringing Sekisui to the UK is a key part of this.

Looking ahead, acting as master developer on a greater number large strategic developments will give Homes England even greater power in the market to drive the use of modern methods of construction, new technologies of all kinds, as well as ensure high quality design and sustainable homes.

But as I've said, in order to change the housing market and get homes built and build the homes we need the support of new ambitious partners who support our objectives and want to work with us.

My hope is that our visit to Japan has helped to strengthen existing relationships and will be the catalyst for new ones.

I wish the Cherry Blossoms the very best of luck in the tournament and thank you again for your hospitality, I now need my team to find a French company we can partner with so we can be sure of a trip to the next World Cup in France."

Statistical Data Return details social housing rent levels

The second release of the Statistical Data Return 2018-2019 published today (26 September 2019) by the Regulator of Social Housing shows a reduction in the average rent for general needs social housing in England and a significant difference in rent levels across regions.

Private registered providers of social housing with 1,000 or more units / bedspaces have reported an average net rent of £95.12 per week for the general needs rental stock (excluding Affordable Rent and intermediate rent) properties that they own. This is a reduction of 1.3% since 2018; however, increases in service charges have meant gross rents have seen a lesser reduction.

The second in a series of three SDR releases details rent levels for owned low cost rental units as at 31 March 2019 and changes in rent levels between 2012 and 2019.

Other findings include:

- London, the South East and the East of England have the highest net rents on average (ranging from £98.99 to £121.85 per week) and the North East has the lowest average weekly net rent of £77.89
- Supported housing net rents have reduced by 0.3% since 2018 – the key driver behind the lower level of decrease appears to be units that have an absolute exception from the 1% per annum rent reduction. After controlling for these units a 1.3% reduction can be seen.
- Affordable Rent rents for general needs units have reduced by 0.7% since 2018, with an average gross rent of £126.94 per week in 2019.
- Average service charges in England for supported housing increased by 5% between 2018 and 2019.

Fiona MacGregor, Chief Executive of RSH, said:

The data on stock ownership, location, development and transfers collected through our Statistical Data Return helps us ensure a risk-based and proportionate approach to regulation. It also informs our risk analysis and sector research. The regulator

systematically reviews the rents data in the SDR and we will engage with providers where necessary. We will set out some of our wider findings as a result of that engagement in due course.

This year's SDR results are being made available in three releases phased over the next few weeks. The changes follow a call for user views between May and July 2019 about proposals to make the publication of the data more timely and more accessible.

The set of National Statistics releases includes a range of briefing notes, look-up tools and accompanying documents.

The first release, published on 19 September, focused on the social housing stock at 31 March 2019, and examined changes to stock owned in the sector since 2012. Both releases are now available on the [RSH website](#).

The final release providing all SDR data will be published on 10 October 2019 and will include look-up tools providing easy access to the SDR data at a PRP and local authority level.

Further information

For press office contact details, see our [Media enquiries page](#). For general queries, please email enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or call 0300 124 5225.

Notes to editors

1. The Regulator's Statistical Data Returns are available on the [RSH website](#).
2. A total of 1,409 providers completed this year's Return – there was an overall response rate of 96% for the 2018-19 SDR, while 100% of large registered providers who own 1,000 or more units/ bedspaces (including Affordable Rent units) completed the return.
3. The response to the [Call for user views on the SDR](#) was published in August 2019.
4. Figures do not include non-social housing units built by unregistered entities within PRP groups, which are outside the scope of the SDR.
5. RSH promotes a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. It does this by undertaking robust economic regulation focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer. It also sets consumer standards and may take action if these standards are breached and there is a significant risk of serious detriment to tenants or potential tenants. For more

information visit the [RSH website](#).

UK energy statistics: statistical press release – September 2019



[Energy Trends](#) and [Energy Prices](#) publications are published today 26 September 2019 by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The publications cover new data for the second quarter of 2019 (April to June). Energy Trends covers statistics on energy production and consumption, in total and by fuel, and provides an analysis of the year on year changes. Energy Prices covers prices to domestic and industrial consumers, prices of oil products and comparisons of international fuel prices.

PDF, 520KB, 14 pages

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Over £85 million of deals announced at UN General Assembly in New York

Transatlantic export and investment deals expected to be worth over £85

million have been announced by the UK government as the UN General Assembly takes place in New York.

The UK government has announced a number of export wins to the United States from a range of British companies, all of which were achieved with support from the Department for International Trade, expected to be worth over £50 million.

Accompanying the Prime Minister in New York, the International Trade Secretary, Liz Truss said:

It's great to see UK SMEs selling their British-made products – from food and drink to tech – to the US.

British businesses have seen great success in the US, with exports reaching £100 billion last year.

Signing a comprehensive US-UK free trade agreement will ensure we see this figure grow and British small businesses are going to be the big winners.

Strengthening US-UK collaboration in healthcare, American and British gene therapy company MeiraGTx has invested over £35 million in the UK to build and operate a gene therapy manufacturing facility next to Moorfields Eye Hospital in London. The company has created more than 70 highly specialised jobs, and expects to hire another 30 professionals over the coming months. This state-of-the-art facility is developing novel treatments for patients living with serious diseases.

Companies securing new export deals include:

- Yorkshire-based food maker Symingtons Ltd who have secured a deal expected to be worth more than £8 million over the next two years with American retail giant Walmart which will see their Naked Noodle brand sold in 3,000 stores across the states;
- Geollect, a geospatial technology start-up founded in 2017 by Cate Gwilliam, a former Geospatial Intelligence Officer with National Geospatial Agency in the US and Richard Gwilliam, a former Royal Navy Intelligence Officer, who has secured a deal with a US cruise line operator projected to be worth £5.5 million by the end of 2024;
- Southampton-based technology firm Clearvision who have secured two export wins for their software tools and applications to the US worth a combined £15 million;
- Leeds-based firm Booking Protect which secured a £6 million export win to the USA for their refund and ticket insurance technology;
- Feed Me Bottles based in Dartford, Kent, has secured a new deal in the United States which will see its Yoomi range, which includes a pioneering self-warming baby bottle, sold in Buy Buy Baby stores across the country as well as online via Macy's department store and major US retailer Walmart. The deal is expected to be worth more than £1 million by 2025;

- Specialised wholesaler of Indian books Motilal Books from St Albans have secured a £2.5 million export win to the United States;
- UK tech firm Cognisess have secured an export win to the United States for their predictive HR technology which helps businesses identify, nurture and retain workforce talent. The company estimates this deal to be worth around £3.5 million over five years;
- London-based online fashion marketplace Love The Sales has expanded its business to the United States with support from the Department for International Trade. The company project the expansion will boost revenue by £9 million over five years.

One British producer, The Foraging Fox has signed agreements which will see their award-winning all-natural beetroot ketchup and flavoured mayonnaise stocked on American shelves in more than 1,000 stores. The company believes this could lead to tens of millions of pounds of sales within the next five years as they grow their reach in North America.

Total trade in goods and services between the UK and the US in the four quarters to the end of Q1 2019 was £199.5 billion, up 9.0% on the previous 12 months, with UK exports reaching £100 billion last year.