

Gender recognition application modernised

News story

Minister of State for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch, has today (29th June) launched a new service which modernises the process of applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate.



The Government committed to modernising the application process in response to the public consultation on the Gender Recognition Act, where respondents highlighted how burdensome and unaffordable the existing procedure was.

Last year, Minister for Women and Equalities, Liz Truss, announced the first step of this process by reducing the fee for applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) to £5, a move that has helped an increased number of people apply.

Today's announcement will see all aspects of the GRC application moved onto one [GOV.uk portal](https://www.gov.uk), removing the administrative burden on individuals and centralising the process.

Minister of State for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch, said:

"We want transgender people to be free to live and to prosper in modern Britain.

"Those that responded to the Gender Recognition Act consultation asked for a simplified and centralised process, which is why I am delighted to launch this improved service today.

"This government will continue to prioritise initiatives that can improve the lives of LGBT people across the country."

The new online service has been carefully developed and rigorously tested with trans people to ensure that it meets the needs of applicants and removes the barriers highlighted in the consultation. With this in mind, the guidance has been simplified and the process made more transparent and less

bureaucratic.

Applicants without online access will still be able to apply through a paper-based route, in line with Government Digital Service standards.

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[UK steel safeguard: International Trade Secretary's statement, 29 June 2022](#)

With permission, Mr Speaker I would like to make a statement on the Government's final decision regarding the UK's steel safeguard.

A strategic steel industry is of the utmost importance to the UK – especially given the uncertain geopolitical and economic waters that we are currently all charting.

Trade remedies are one of the ways that Government can protect their businesses. They tackle issues of dumping, of unfair government subsidies or, as in the case of safeguards, give businesses time to adjust to unforeseen increases in imports.

When we left the EU, Mr Speaker, the UK rolled-over the relevant trade remedies that were already in place. This included safeguards on 19 different categories of steel imported into the UK from the rest of the world.

Last year, the Trade Remedies Authority (TRA) reviewed these measures and recommended keeping the safeguard on ten categories of steel and removing it on nine. On 30 June 2021, the Government announced that it would extend the safeguard as recommended by the TRA on ten product categories of steel for three years and remove them on four of the remaining nine, but would extend the safeguard for one year on five categories of steel to allow further time to review them.

In March this year we passed legislation to allow the Government to take responsibility for the conduct of transition reviews and the reconsiderations of any transition review.

In March, Mr Speaker, I called-in the reconsideration of the steel safeguards with this new authority. The TRA has since completed additional analysis for my consideration. I have now considered their Report of Findings and concluded that there would be serious injury or the threat of serious injury to UK steel producers if the safeguard on the five additional categories of

steel were to be removed at this time.

Given the broader national interest significance of this strategic UK industry, and the global disruptions to the energy markets and supply chains that the UK currently faces, we have concluded it is in the economic interest of the UK to maintain these safeguards, to reduce the risk of material harm if they were not maintained.

I am therefore extending the measure on the five steel categories for a further two years, until 30 June 2024, alongside the other ten categories. This means the safeguard will remain in place on all 15 categories, updated from 1 July to reflect recent trade flows.

The Government wishes to make it clear to Parliament that the decision to extend the safeguard on the five product categories departs from our international legal obligations under the relevant WTO agreement, as relates to the five product categories. However, from time to time, issues may arise where the national interest requires action to be taken which may be in tension with normal rules or procedures.

The Government has therefore actively engaged with interested parties, including those outside the UK on the future of the UK's safeguard and has listened to the concerns raised. This also includes the needs of the many thousands of people employed throughout our downstream steel industry who play a vital role in the economic life of the UK.

Throughout this investigation, downstream users of steel have raised concerns about difficulties in sourcing some steel products in the UK, in particular, those classified under category 12. I have listened to these concerns, and I am acting to protect this vital part of the economy by increasing the tariff rate quota on Category 12a to ensure it better reflects trade flows.

Finally, the Government has also decided to suspend the safeguard measure for steel goods coming from Ukraine for the next two years. The Government is clear that it will do everything in its power to support Ukraine's brave fight against Russia's unprovoked and illegal invasion and to ensure long-term security and prosperity and the maintenance of the world order from which we all benefit. The Government has already removed all tariffs under the UK-Ukraine FTA to zero to support Ukraine's economy. This decision means Ukrainian steel will not be subject to the additional safeguard quotas and duty.

Mr Speaker, these are unusual times – the aftershocks of the gravest pandemic have combined with the biggest war in Europe since 1945. The spike in energy costs is creating huge stresses on manufacturing. Global steel markets are facing persistent overcapacity. The TRA findings provide clear evidence of serious injury or the threat of serious injury to our UK producers. The Government has a duty to use its democratic mandate to the greatest possible effect to protect the interests of the British people and provide leadership in these challenging times.

On balance, we have therefore decided that it is in the vital public interest

that Government acts to protect the steel sector, which is why we have taken the steps that we have. We believe that this approach is in the public interest, and this decision has been taken collectively and with reference to the Ministerial Code, noting the conflict outlined above.

Mr Speaker, this has been a finely balanced decision.

Steel is a vital industry for the UK and it is in constant use in our everyday lives.

But the global position on steel production is challenging. The use of unfair subsidies contributes to global overcapacity, putting domestic industries at risk around the world.

The measures I am announcing today will further support our steel industry and those who work in it. This comes on the back of this government securing an expansive removal of Section 232 tariffs on imports of UK steel and aluminium products into the USA, which came into effect earlier this month. The tariff-free volumes we have secured mean that UK steel and aluminium exports to the US can return to levels not seen since before 2018.

It is important to remember that safeguards are a temporary, short-term measure. We will continue to work with international partners alongside other government departments to support our domestic steel sector for the long-term.

Mr Speaker – I hope that the House will support this Government's stance in defending our strategically important steel sector, and I commend this statement to the House.

[Two Great War RAF officers' graves rededicated](#)

The graves of Second Lieutenant (2nd Lt) Alan Thompson Watt Boswell RAF and Second Lieutenant (2nd Lt) Robert Percy Gundill RAF who were killed on 2 October 1918, have been rededicated more than a hundred years after they died.

The service which was organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (MOD JCCC), also known as the 'MOD War Detectives' was held at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) Duhalloy Advanced Dressing Station (ADS) Cemetery, near Ypres Belgium on Wednesday 29 June.

Tracey Bowers JCCC said:

"These two brave young men served throughout the Great War firstly with the

Army before transferring to the Royal Flying Corp showing courage and devotion, it is a privilege to be here today to see their names on their headstones and pay our respects to them.”

The rededication service for 2nd Lt Boswell was attended by members of his family including his great nephew Russell Evans who read the poem “High Flight” at the ceremony.

Russell Evans, said:

“There were nine wonderful wreaths laid by various branches of the military and CWGC on the headstones of Alan Boswell and Robert Gundill, his fellow airman who both died in an aircrash in October 1918.”

2nd Lt Boswell, aged 28, came from Woolwich and was a very talented athlete and represented Wales in hockey and football, and his County at cricket and rugby. Alan was employed as a School Master when he enlisted into the Welsh Regiment in December 1914. Alan was quickly promoted to the rank of Serjeant and was discharged from the Army on being granted a commission into The Royal Flying Corps in September 1917.

2nd Lt Boswell served with 105 and 109 Squadron before joining 108 Squadron in July 1918 as a Pilot. He had a total of 81 flying hours by October 1918.

2nd Lt Gundill, aged 21, came from Pontefract and was a liquorice manufacturer before he enlisted into the West Yorkshire Regiment on Dec 1914, a month before his 18th birthday. Pte Gundill served overseas, including Egypt and France, he was wounded in June 1916 when hit by shrapnel in his back. 2nd Lt Gundill was granted a commission into The Northumberland Fusiliers on 25 April 1917.

2nd Lt Gundill applied to transfer to the Royal Flying Corps where he was appointed as an Observer on 6 July 1918 and posted to 108 Squadron.

The ceremony conducted by Reverend (Squadron Leader) Adrian Klos and supported by members of XI(F) Squadron RAF Coningsby was held with family members present, alongside one of the researchers who submitted the case.

Newly engraved headstones for 2 Lieutenants Boswell and Gundill. Crown copyright.

The Reverend Klos said:

“Today, we have been rededicating the graves of two of our service personnel, 2nd Lt Boswell and 2nd Lt Gundill, and to have Boswell’s family with us today was very moving. To hear the emotion in the great nephew as he read the words of High Flight and recognising the sacrifice of his family member made.

“It was a real privilege to be here as RAF and members of the MOD, and recognising the family price these young men paid, we will honour that

together.”

How they died

2nd Lt's Boswell and Gundill were flying as a tandem crew on DH9 D1080 as part of a bombing raid in the locale of Menin when they went missing on 2 October 1918. The Officer Commanding the 108 Squadron stated they left the aerodrome at 1207 hours and were last seen flying at 3,000 feet west of the objective, but they failed to return.

Geert Bekaert, Area Director for Central and Southern Europe at the CWGC, said:

“These brave men died in the final months of the First World War. The support they gave from the air to the infantry troops when the Allies were advancing through Belgium was critically important. It is an honour to commemorate them and we will care for their graves in perpetuity.”

[UK escalates support for global marine environment at UN Ocean Conference](#)

The UK Government has joined other world leaders at the UN Ocean Conference to announce new initiatives to protect the global marine environment, marking a significant step forward in our mission to protect at least 30% of the global ocean by 2030.

The government's ambitious £500 million Blue Planet Fund, launched at the G7 Leader's Summit last year, is already supporting developing countries and vulnerable coastal communities around the world adapt to climate change and build sustainable, prosperous coastal economies.

In the latest instalment of the Fund announced today, a record £150 million will be invested in a new global programme, known as COAST, to protect and restore valuable coastal and marine habitats such as corals, mangroves and seagrasses, improve the sustainability and productivity of small-scale fisheries, and help developing countries unlock aquaculture's potential.

Up to £100 million of Blue Planet funding will also be used to support the implementation, management and enforcement of Marine Protected Areas, which are created to limit potentially damaging activity at sea and support the recovery of key habitats and marine species, and other effective conservation measures in developing countries.

Building on this momentum, the UK has announced it will join the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, a global initiative which brings together governments, businesses, financial institutions, the science

community and civil society to drive the transition to a sustainable ocean economy.

Lord Zac Goldsmith, Minister for Pacific and International Environment, said:

The world's ocean is in crisis and we have reached a tipping point. This week world leaders came together to redouble their efforts to protect the marine environment. But it absolutely critical these commitments are translated into action and that our ocean remains firmly on the global agenda.

Through our new £500 million Blue Planet Fund we are helping countries tackle a wide range of issues, from illegal fishing to plastic pollution and marine protection. And I'm delighted to announce further UK support for the goal to protect 30% of the world's ocean by 2030, including £154 million for coastal restoration and up to £100 million for marine protection.

The UK government, with Canada and the US, has also this week launched a world-first global alliance to tackle illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing which poses a threat to ocean ecosystems, coastal communities and global fish stocks by undermining fisheries management and distorting trade.

The IUU Fishing Action Alliance will bring together countries leading the fight against IUU fishing, countries targeted by IUU fishing, and organisations helping tackle the issue. It will acknowledge and strengthen existing international commitments, back improved monitoring, control and surveillance, and improve the transparency of fishing data.

Today's announcements sit alongside continued support for programmes under the Blue Planet Fund including:

- £43 million to the Ocean-Country Partnership Programme (OCP): to provide further technical assistance and support to strengthen local scientific expertise and domestic policies in developing coastal countries so they can better manage and mitigate pressures across the marine environment and efforts to achieve sustainable seafood and marine biodiversity.
- £36 million to the Sustainable Blue Economies Programme: through this programme, the UK will provide expertise and support to small islands governments as they develop a climate-resilient ocean economy, including through protecting biodiversity, better ocean management and greater use of nature-based solutions.
- £7.5 million to the Global Plastics Action Partnership (GPAP): to be provided over the next three years, taking the total UK contribution to

£15 million. The UK was one of the first donors of GPAP in 2018 which brings together world leaders, industry and civil society to prevent plastic from entering the ocean.

Background

- The Climate and Ocean Adaptation and Sustainable Transition Programme (COAST) programme sits under the £500 million Blue Planet Fund and will support developing countries and vulnerable coastal communities adapt to climate change and build sustainable, prosperous coastal economies.

Other UK announcements being made at the UN Ocean Conference are:

- £6m to the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership (GOAP): GOAP supports the development and maintenance of ocean natural capital accounts in developing countries. The UK will provide a further £6m to GOAP over the next three years, taking the total UK contribution to £7m.
- UK announces membership of the Ocean Acidification Alliance: the UK will work with partners to increase scientific understanding of ocean acidification and explore actions that can better protect coastal communities and livelihoods across the globe from the threats it poses.
- Launch of the Global Ocean Decade Programme for Blue Carbon (GO-BC): GO-BC will act under the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development to enhance collaboration on ocean science, provide a robust evidence base to protect and restore blue carbon habitats and build resilient marine ecosystems. The UK government will launch this in partnership with St Andrews University, the Scottish Government, Blue Carbon Initiative/Conservation International, the International Partnership for Blue Carbon, and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO.

The UN Ocean Conference follows the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly whereby the UK worked with international partners to secure a breakthrough on negotiations to kickstart a new legally binding treaty on plastic pollution. The UK is now partnering with OPLN to draw upon the world-class expertise of UK stakeholders to help shape this ambitious new international treaty through a series of UK Plastics Treaty Dialogues.

The UN Ocean Conference comes ahead of the 15th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) in December this year where the UK will be calling for an ambitious new framework of biodiversity goals and targets.

CIH Housing 2022 conference: Housing Minister's speech

Introduction

Thank you very much for that warm introduction, Gaby [Hinsliff] and thank you for inviting me to deliver the conference's keynote speech today.

This morning I've had the pleasure of meeting Gavin and the wider CIH team. It's the first real opportunity I've had as the new Housing Minister to really drill down into the impressive work of the Institute...

...Raising the bar on housing quality, while being that helping hand to the housing sector in these challenging times and supporting the government to add meat to the bones of our mission to level up.

I have to say, in my brief time in post, I have been inspired and impressed – in equal measure – by the commitment and enthusiasm of the people who work not only in organisations like the CIH...

...but across the sector, from our councils and combined authorities to housing associations and charities.

When I arrived at the department – one thing was abundantly clear from the start: we have a huge challenge on our hands – and we will not get to where we need to be on housing without big ideas, big thinking and big policies to match them.

And I can honestly say that – regardless of party, politics or place – everyone I've met has had one thing in common: they are geared up and raring to go...

...Ready to build the new homes and infrastructure we need, to breathe new life into our high streets, our towns and city centres, to turn us into 'a regeneration nation.' Today's announcement by Homes England to help fund the transformation of Middlewood Locks is a brilliant example of this work – thousands of high-quality homes being built on a 25-acre brownfield site just over the way in Salford.

But as you're sat in the room today, you might well ask – what does this all mean for me?

Well, I believe it means delivering on three Ss – supply, safety and standards. And I'll briefly take each in turn...

Supply – the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill

When we're talking about current house-building, the sector has, in many ways, defied all expectations.

Thanks to the steps we took together at the height of the pandemic – including through the Charter for Safe Working – we kept the conveyor belt of house building going...

Over 216,000 new homes were built in 2020/2021...just a small dip on the previous year.

And there is every indication today in 2022 that, even with this challenging economic backdrop, numbers will climb back up in the coming months and years.

So, our ambition now is to do everything we can to scale-up delivery and help the sector – to help you – overcome the barriers from holding you back.

But I should stress that our view is that, when it comes to housing, far too much attention is paid to numbers. As Werner Herzog said, if facts were the most illuminating thing in life, then the New York phone book would be the most interesting book in the world.

We do need to look beyond the numbers and look at where we need houses and whether those houses are of the right quality.

The reforms we've set out in the [Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill](#) – introduced to Parliament earlier this month – will help us consider all the parts of our housing market.

Agility

...For starters, the Bill will bring some much-needed agility to our planning system.

Because right now, the speed and the versatility of our planning system do not marry up to what we want to achieve in our housing market.

How can it be that there's such a wealth of innovation going on in the sector...with technology that can produce a house in the same amount of time it would take to watch an episode of Grand Designs...

Yet, it can take the best part of half a decade for a planning application to go from submission to spades hitting the ground...

And it takes an average of seven years for councils to prepare a local plan...

Every single delay has a very real knock-on effect that is felt by people in the industry.

94% of small and medium-sized developers say delays in securing planning permission are a major concern.

So, the case for swifter, slimmer, more locally relevant plans is not just overwhelming, it's an urgent one.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill therefore simplifies the content of local plans and standardises the process for producing them.

Popular consent

With more local plans in place and faster approvals of planning application, we'll reduce speculative development.

However, we also need to build in more popular support for new homes at the beginning of this process too.

Poll after poll consistently shows people are more likely to support new development that's well-designed and in-keeping with the local area.

That's why we want councils and the wider housing sector to adhere to the BIDEN principles of beauty, infrastructure, democracy, environment and neighbourhoods in everything that's built.

Whether it's making use of solar technology and green roofs in new development so that we meet net zero...

...Or really paying attention to the feel, look and character of a neighbourhood when a new development is first planned.

The new design codes we're introducing will help developers focus their efforts on creating homes that achieve this – homes the local community actually want.

Street Votes will also make sure they deliver the homes in the places communities want too, allowing people to have a real say over what's built on their doorstep.

Infrastructure

Of course, there's one final piece of the jigsaw when it comes to unlocking popular consent – and I'm talking about infrastructure.

All of us know that when people see new homes going up in their community, they too often fear the worst – packed train, a bigger queue into the Tesco car park and a longer wait to get a doctor's appointment.

It doesn't have to be that way.

So the proposals we've set out in this Bill will go a long way towards allaying some of those fears by sweeping away the old, complex Section 106 agreements...

...and replacing them with one fairer, simpler Infrastructure Levy; a Levy that is set and raised by the councils themselves.

Some of this revenue can be ploughed straight back into building even more affordable homes.

But mandatory Infrastructure Delivery Strategies will make sure that the rest goes on things like schools, nurseries and GP surgeries so that these vital

local services are not just maintained but improved.

Supply – council housebuilding

Of course this isn't the only way we're helping councils to build the new homes and neighbourhoods communities need.

In addition to our multi-billion-pound Affordable Homes Programme, we've given local authorities a comprehensive range of tools to deliver more social housing.

As you just heard I grew up on a council estate in North Wales – the sense of community there, of neighbours looking out for each other, had a very lasting impact on me. It's one of the reasons why I got into politics.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is making it easier for local authorities to build more council homes.

We abolished the HRA borrowing cap and we've given councils more flexibility over how they spend Right to Buy receipts.

Of course, the Right to Buy scheme – recently extended in the PM's speech – also helps to replenish our social housing stock while giving 2.5 million tenants the chance to realise their own dreams of homeownership.

That's because, as part of that announcement, we've made a clear commitment – carved in stone – to build a new social home for every one that is sold.

Finally, I should say that in the [Levelling Up White Paper](#) we promised to review how we support councils to build more affordable housing in greater numbers. And we'll be saying a lot more on this very soon.

Standards – the Private Rented Sector

Now, at over 300 pages long I'll forgive you if you haven't read that White Paper cover to cover.

But the eagle-eyed among you may well have spotted that one of its 12 national missions was to halve the number of poor-quality homes by 2030.

The mission commits us to levelling up standards and quality across the board in all sectors, especially in places with a disproportionate number of poor-quality homes like the West Midlands and the North West.

Earlier this month, we took a big step towards making that happen with the publication of our [fairer private rented sector](#) White Paper.

It underlines our commitment, through the Renters Reform Bill, to ensure all private landlords follow a legally binding standard on decency.

The Bill also fulfils our manifesto commitment to replace Section 21 'no fault' eviction notices with a modern tenancy system to give renters true

peace of mind.

And all of these changes will be backed by a powerful new ombudsman so that disputes between tenants and landlords can be settled quickly and cheaply, without having to go to court.

This new deal for renters includes a host of additional reforms to empower tenants so they can make raise concerns and challenge unfair rent hikes without fear of repercussion...

Social Sector

This is something we want to mirror in social housing too, especially for tenants in the social rented sector.

And I know this is a cause The Chartered Institute of Housing has been championing for some time.

I'm also aware that you will soon be convening an independent panel along with the National Housing Federation and Shelter to address some of the long-standing issues facing this sector.

I'm hugely grateful to everyone getting this vital project off the ground and I'm looking forward to seeing your recommendations.

For our part, we've driven through a series of reforms through the [Charter for Social Housing Residents](#).

This introduces, for the first time, proactive consumer regulation with regular inspections of the largest landlords.

Through the Social Housing Regulation Bill we're also shifting meaningful power into the hands of tenants so they can really hold their landlords to account.

If theirs is one of the largest housing providers, those landlords will have to give iron clad assurances that standards are being upheld through a new inspection regime.

Meanwhile, the new Housing Ombudsman Service is going to be stepping up efforts to make sure tenants know their rights and, more importantly, know how to exercise them.

That's how we're levelling up standards throughout the sector, giving a megaphone to tenants so their voices are heard loud and clear not only by this government, but by future governments of all political stripes.

Safety

It's also right that we're pressing ahead with the vital reforms this month on safety – which marks the fifth anniversary of the Grenfell Tower Fire.

It should never have taken a national tragedy and the death of 72 people for us to have woken up to just how broken the building safety regime was in this country...

...Years in which people had to put up with poor quality housing which they knew was unsafe – their complaints falling on deaf ears.

We can never get those lives back, but what we can do is do the right thing by the victims of that tragedy by fixing our building safety system for good.

As many of you will know, our Building Safety Bill has set us on that path...

...with a tougher new regulator and an even tougher regulatory regime to match it...

...with an 'Accountable Person' appointed and held responsible for a building's safety and the residents who live in it.

...with robust protections for leaseholders so that they are no longer hit with bills they can ill-afford for problems for which they should never have been held responsible.

Many of these protections actually came into force yesterday. Combined with our common-sense changes to assessments, they will restore proportionality, confidence and stability back to this vital part of the housing market.

Through our Building Safety Pledge, we're also making sure that industry steps up to the plate and pays to fix the problems they created.

I'm pleased that over 45 developers have signed that pledge and committed to fix the unsafe buildings they developed over the last 30 years.

Our ambition now is to turn those pledges into legally binding contracts so there's no doubt, no wriggle-room and no delay in making sure that every building in this country is made safe.

Conclusion

I want to finish with a quick story, if I may.

Four decades ago, social scientists conducted an experiment with the lifts in a Canadian university.

They added a 16-second delay before the doors closed to see if more people would use the stairs. They did. No surprise there.

But what was particularly interesting was that when the lifts returned to normal many people continued to use the stairs, cutting energy costs and raising students' fitness levels.

Now, I'm not claiming that the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is a social sciences experiment...but I do believe that we can replicate the principle behind this...

...from incentivising the right behaviours by private landlords and developers in the construction sector, to creating market conditions that boost the supply of housing in the places and the communities that need it most.

And when I think about what we want to achieve I often ponder what we've already achieved in the last few years.

Whether it's the supply of new houses, their standards or their safety, I have no doubt that much of the progress we've made in recent years, in spite of the pandemic, is owed to the hard work and the efforts of the people we have in the room today.

We need fantastic partners like the Chartered Institute of Housing to continue holding us to account, so our reforms actually work on the ground and deliver the kind of transformative changes we all want to see.

In the words of the great social activist and campaigner, Helen Keller, 'Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much.'

Thank you and I hope you enjoy the rest of the conference – and I look forward to working with you in the months to come.