

Speech: Matt Hancock's speech at the Charity Commission's Annual Public Meeting

It is wonderful to have had The Duke of Cambridge supporting this event today. He has been a superb ambassador for the sector, and his passion for the welfare of our armed forces, for young people and for the environment has given a huge boost to charities in the UK.

I would also like to offer my appreciation for everything that William Shawcross has done in his time as Chair.

It can be a difficult job, which involves making some courageous judgements. And William, you have certainly not shirked from making those.

William, you have greatly improved the standing of the Commission, preserved the independence of the sector and laid the foundations for the growth in strength and size which we will see for years to come.

You have been unafraid to identify the big challenges and then have acted to tackle them, bringing the sector with you. I have no doubt that British charities under your leadership are a bigger force for good than ever before.

I'm absolutely thrilled to be leading DCMS. The Department does many things but basically it's the Department for the Things That Make Life Worth Living.

This means the arts, culture, sport, and also the ties that bind us in our communities; the charities, faith groups and neighbourhood projects that hold our society together.

It's also the Department for Digital and for me this is equally crucial to the things that make life worth living. Tech isn't just transforming the economy.

It's changing how communities work and opening up new opportunities for our civil society to become yet more effective.

The same goes for innovations in finance – the new world of social impact investment, bringing new approaches and new forms of finance to tackle social problems.

We're also seeing innovations in policy which push power and responsibility away from Whitehall and towards local communities, especially local mayors.

So I'm starting this job with a huge sense of possibility. I know from my five years as a minister across many departments that a charity is often better equipped to tackle a social problem than the government.

And I think there's a huge amount more we can do in finding opportunities for

government, civil society and business to work together.

The Charity Commission deserves major credit for developing this sense of possibility, despite tough times.

Six years ago the National Audit Office published a pretty tough review of your work and the then chair of the Public Accounts Committee questioned whether the Commission should be thrown on the bonfire.

Well, phoenix-like, under William's leadership, you have risen – last year the NAO hailed 'significant progress', which coming from them is like a Nobel Prize.

I want to congratulate you for everything that you are doing to maintain the reputation, the independence and the success of the sector.

I also want to welcome the work of the Fundraising Regulator. Charities depend on public trust and it is right we challenge those few charities whose bad behaviour endangers the reputation of all.

The Fundraising Regulator is also working with other partners to develop simple guidance for small charities on the new GDPR data protection requirements, which I know some of you have questions about.

I believe we are on the path towards a more transparent charity sector with higher standards of integrity. And this is important. Because I see an opportunity for the sector to make a major step up in its role.

These improvements to governance and funding must continue. Because I want us to focus on our time ahead as an opportunity to work together and improve people's lives.

Whether in public service or service through charities, that is what it's all about. I believe to my core in the value of public service and the deep integrity of dedicating your working life to improve the lives of others.

This is what we do in government, both politicians and civil servants. And it's what you do in the charitable sector, directly addressing some of the gravest challenges to the human condition and lifting the lives of people across the country and the world. I want this to be the focus of our work together.

I commend those charities that are working to fix problems and responding to need, usually on a small, local scale.

I also commend the charities which are playing a role in preventing social problems and not just fixing them.

This might be through setting the framework for action by other charities, the public sector and businesses. Or it could be bringing together everyone involved on an issue to coordinate their work, pool finance and agree common goals.

All charities that operate on the ground make a valuable contribution. Often the life-blood of our communities, I pledge today that I will always fight to protect and promote you. But I also want to see charities playing a strategic role in our social policy and practice.

Likewise, I want the Charity Commission not just to be known for challenging badly operating charities, as important as this is, but for actively supporting all charities to be the best that they can be.

My brilliant colleague Tracey Crouch has recently been appointed ministerial lead on loneliness and social isolation.

This is one of the most pressing social issues of our time, with research showing that nine million people say they always or often feel lonely.

I know that charities and civil society will play a crucial part in our cross-government strategy on loneliness. We are looking forward to working with you to develop and implement it.

Tracey also recently announced a review of civil society in the UK, with the objective of publishing a government strategy later this year.

We both see this as a major opportunity to set a new direction for UK civil society and to put charities centre-stage in local communities and public services.

This is of course not entirely new. Britain has a unique tradition of philanthropy and of social innovations which began through charitable activity.

Everything from hospitals and hospices to insurance and pensions have their roots in the independent initiative of individuals and communities, developing mutual solutions to the challenges of the time.

In 1948, William Beveridge followed his famous report on a new health and welfare system with another report called Voluntary Action. He saw the work of charities as vital to a strong and free society.

I could not agree more and I very much intend to maintain that tradition.

I'm looking forward to working with all of you to help our nation's incredible charities to strengthen and grow.

I pledge that I will be by your side all the way.

Thank you very much.

[News story: Civil news: improving quality of family advocacy online claims](#)

Changes have been made to CCMS to help improve the quality of the online claims you make under the Family Advocacy Scheme (FAS).

The idea is to make it more likely that your claim will not be rejected, so avoiding the need for work to be resubmitted.

How will the changes work?

Improvements are being made to CCMS to enforce fee scheme rules for hearings claimed under FAS. These mean that it will no longer be possible to claim:

- FAS hearing and bolt-on activities within the same category of work
- above allowed amounts per case

An example would be where a claim for a third advocates' bundle for an interim hearing is claimed. Where this happens CCMS will now display an error message and will not allow the bill to progress.

CCMS will also prevent issues such as claiming for:

- an interim hearing and final hearing advocates' bundle on the same day
- over-claiming of Counsel conference fees

Check before claiming

Counsel and providers may need to check with another where court bundles are being claimed to ensure the correct information is entered.

In the event of issues, the first action should be to liaise with the instructed parties on a case. This is preferable to calling the Legal Aid Agency to check who has claimed the bundle.

[Press release: HM Land Registry moves forward with digital conveyancing](#)

Buying and selling your home without the need for paper deeds is one step closer today as the Government approves changes to the Land Registration Rules that will further enable digital land registration.

The changes, which will come into effect on 6 April 2018, are central to HM Land Registry's ambition to become the world's leading land registry for speed, simplicity and an open approach to data which it outlines in its new [Business Strategy 2017 to 2022](#).

Chief Executive and Chief Land Registrar Graham Farrant sets out the changes to the way HM Land Registry will provide services to its customers including allowing for fully digital conveyancing documents with e-signatures.

Working closely with its customers, and launching a public consultation on the changes last year, HM Land Registry plans to use digital technology to make conveyancing simpler, faster and cheaper while enhancing the integrity and security of the register against threats from cyber-attacks and digital fraud. The rule changes will allow HM Land Registry to introduce fully digital conveyancing documents such as mortgages and transfers, in response to customers' needs.

Chief Executive and Chief Land Registrar Graham Farrant said:

Our customers are central to everything we do and we want to make dealing with us quicker and simpler by providing more services through digital technology. These changes are an important enabler for our digital transformation and I want to thank our customers for their positive responses to the consultation.

Changes were required to the Land Registration Rules 2003, with the revocation of the Land Registration (Electronic Conveyancing) Rules 2008 and the Land Registration (Proper Office) Order 2013, in order to allow HM Land Registry to continue with its digital transformation programme, and modernise and simplify its services.

The changes will benefit customers by allowing HM Land Registry to build new and more flexible statutory services that have been called for by the industry, and other electronic services will improve the assistance offered to them throughout the application process.

HM Land Registry will be contacting customers in the coming weeks to explain any changes that will affect the way they submit applications, though these are expected to be minimal, and will only affect a small number of customers.

Notes to editors

1. Read the [Government response](#) to the consultation for proposals to amend the [Land Registration Rules 2003](#).
2. HM Land Registry's mission is to guarantee and protect property rights in England and Wales.

3. HM Land Registry is a government department created in 1862. It operates as an executive agency and a trading fund and its running costs are covered by the fees paid by the users of its services. Its ambition is to become the world's leading land registry for speed, simplicity and an open approach to data.
4. HM Land Registry safeguards land and property ownership worth in excess of £4 trillion, including around £1 trillion of mortgages. The Land Register contains more than 25 million titles showing evidence of ownership for some 85% of the land mass of England and Wales.
5. For further information about HM Land Registry visit www.gov.uk/land-registry.
6. Follow us: on Twitter [@HMLandRegistry](https://twitter.com/HMLandRegistry), our [blog](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).

Contact

[News story: Committee on Radioactive Waste Management \(CoRWM\) recruiting new Chair](#)

CoRWM provides independent scrutiny and advice to UK government and devolved administration ministers on the long-term management of radioactive waste, including storage and disposal. The committee's primary task is to provide independent scrutiny on the UK government's and Radioactive Waste Management Ltd's high profile programme to deliver geological disposal, together with interim storage, for higher activity wastes.

The role of the CoRWM Chair is high profile and the Chair may be required to appear before Parliamentary Select Committees. The Chair is also the committee's main point of contact with stakeholders and will represent the committee's views to both broadcasting and written media (where required).

The Chair will be appointed for a single term of 4 years, renewable for a further term at the discretion of the Secretary of State.

Further information and details of how to apply are available on the public appointments website:

<https://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/appointment/chair-24/>

The closing date for applications is 23:00 on 19 February 2018.

Press release: PM meeting with US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson: 22 January 2018

The Prime Minister attended a part of the National Security Adviser's meeting with the US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson at 10 Downing Street today.

They discussed the continuing depth and breadth of the special relationship.

They agreed on the importance of the international community coming together to counter Iran's destabilising regional activity, and the Prime Minister reiterated the UK's commitment to the Iran nuclear deal.