

## [Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on bombing in Kabul](#)

I am appalled by this despicable attack on a cultural centre in Kabul which has claimed so many innocent lives, and my heartfelt condolences go out to the victims and their families.

We remain determined in our resolve to help the Afghan people overcome terror and we are committed to supporting the Afghan Government in seeking a brighter future for its people.

Initial reports suggest that Daesh in Afghanistan have claimed responsibility. The disregard for humanity shown today bears all the hallmarks of their hateful ideology which must be countered wherever it is found. This is what the brave men and women of Afghanistan are committed to doing, with the help and support of their regional and international partners, the UK included.

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## [News story: Behind the headlines: calorie guidelines remain unchanged](#)

Over the past couple of days, the national media has reported on Public Health England's (PHE) upcoming campaign on calories. Much of the coverage suggests PHE is changing the guidelines on how many calories people should consume in a day. This is incorrect. Below are the facts about calorie guidelines and the campaign.

The [government dietary recommendations](#) on how many calories the population should consume in a day to maintain a healthy weight have not changed. Women should still aim to consume 2,000 calories a day from food and drink, men should aim for 2,500.

The new campaign, due to launch in the spring of 2018, aims to help people be more aware of and reduce how many calories they consume from the 3 main meals of the day, in particular when eating on the go. There will be a simple rule of thumb to help them do this: 400:600:600 – people should aim for 400 calories from breakfast and 600 each from lunch and dinner.

The rule of thumb is based on the principle that's been in [healthier and more sustainable catering: nutrition principles](#) for years: on average, 20% of daily energy and nutrients should come from breakfast and 30% from both lunch and dinner. All other snacks and drink consumed between meals should make up the difference.

What is new about this campaign is that we are working with high street food chains to offer healthier choices and help get the message out there that many of the extra calories being consumed are out of the home.

We are absolutely not telling the public what to do but to give them the facts and one of these is that two thirds of us are overweight or obese and this is largely to do with eating too much. As we are the sixth most overweight nation on the planet, we believe it is a sensible thing to do.

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## **Press release: Multi-million pound road improvements to unlock homes and jobs**

The improvements, worth just over £67 million in total, will mean opportunities in Wigan, Greater Manchester, Marlow in Buckinghamshire, Newton in Nottinghamshire, Cumbria and Plymouth.

Highways England is making a £16.6 million contribution towards the schemes from its Growth and Housing Fund, alongside private sector developer contributions and other public funding making up the rest.

Jim O'Sullivan, Highways England Chief Executive, said:

Each of these improvements will ensure England's strategic road network continues to make a valuable contribution to the prosperity of our country.

We will continue to use our Growth and Housing Fund, working with a range of local stakeholders to unlock further development sites around the country.

The designated £100 million fund was set up as part of the government's £15 billion investment in roads and provides financial contributions towards the cost of road improvements needed for new developments that provide new jobs and much needed homes.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Transport investment is crucial to a strong and resilient economy – that's why we are making the biggest investment in roads in a generation, spending £23 billion across the country to improve journeys for motorists.

These upgrades from Highways England will benefit the regions, giving a boost to businesses and better access to the jobs and homes that people want.

The Designated Fund is part of Highways England's award-winning "The Road to Growth" strategic economic growth plan. The plan received national recognition from the Institute of Economic Development (IED) for having the "greatest economic impact" at their 2017 annual awards ceremony.

The five schemes announced today are:

### **A404/A4155 Westthorpe Interchange improvements, Buckinghamshire**

The scheme will create the opportunity for up to 560 jobs at the Globe Business Park and enable over 22,000 sqm of vacant space that would be brought back to life and used by businesses. In total, the project will receive funding of £1.75 million which is being made up of £1.18 million from the Growth and Housing Fund, £500,000 private finding and an additional £63,000 provided by the Local Enterprise Partnership. Work on the scheme is expected to commence late 2018/spring 2019.

### **M58 Wigan Link Road (Greater Manchester)**

This package of work is designed to improve accessibility in the area, help to reduce congestion and create smoother journeys for drivers. The scheme will also unlock the Pemberton Park development site and 250 new homes and support the delivery of a further 170 homes and 2,600 jobs at the neighbouring 'Bell Site'. The £23.6 million package of work will be funded by £5 million from the Growth and Housing Fund, a public funding contribution from Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council, £10.9 million from Greater Manchester growth deal and £3.1 million provided by private developers. The site is expected to be open to traffic during winter 2020.

### **A46 RAF Newton (Nottingham)**

Allocated £2.9 million from the Growth and Housing Fund, a new link bridge over the A46 will be installed connecting the former RAF Newton site with critical transport links and public amenity services in central Bingham. The scheme will also receive £970,000 of private funding and will unlock the land to create up to 550 local homes and deliver substantial benefits to improve safety and conditions for vulnerable road users.

### **A590 Cross-a-moor (Cumbria)**

This scheme will see an upgrade of the existing junction at Cross-a-Moor, Cumbria into a four arm roundabout which will provide a number of key local development sites with direct access to the A590 trunk road. The £5.05 million scheme has been allocated £3.05 million from the Growth and Housing Fund, £2.03 million in third party match funding which will include £1.73 million of private funding and a contribution from South Lakeland District Council. The scheme will also unlock 106 local homes, and three further sites

with the potential to deliver 895 new homes In the future.

## **Forder Valley Link Road (Plymouth)**

This £37.84 million package of works includes the construction of the Forder Valley Link Road which will connect the A386 at Derriford to the A38 to the east of the city. Allocated £4,470 from the Growth and Housing Fund, the link road will form part of a range of transport interventions that will help to accommodate a number of developments and will unlock up to 651 homes, and 1,227 additional jobs. The scheme will also be funded by a private match of £6.4 million. The scheme is fully supported by both the local authority and the LEP (local enterprise partnership, with a substantial £22.55 million of other public (LEP) funding also being brought forward to enable the scheme to progress.

Highways England's Growth and Housing Fund has so far made contributions of over £77 million to improve 21 improvements, unlocking over 38,000 new homes and more than 44,000 jobs around Swindon, Exeter, Weston Super Mare, Darlington, Scunthorpe, Grantham, Warrington, Honiton, Derby, Foxdenton (Oldham), Taunton, Durham, Daventry, Southampton, Leicestershire and Whiteley (Hampshire).

### **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

### **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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## **[News story: Supporting veterans through membership of the VAPC](#)**

Jonathan Jelley, Chairman of the Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee  
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On 14 December 2017, the [Centre for Public Appointments](#) launched a new campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of being a public appointee.

The campaign aims to increase diversity on public boards but also to make a wider audience aware of the benefits of such appointments. The Cabinet Office published the [Public appointments diversity action plan](#) to coincide with the launch.

I was appointed as Chairman of the Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee in Eastern England by the Minister of State for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans in February 2015. With a long background in voluntarily supporting the oldest military charity SSAFA, taking on this role was a natural extension to the work I was already doing in supporting veterans and their families.

Since taking on the role the Eastern England VAPC have set out to change our way of working by establishing a clear plan of action and to seek new recruits with different backgrounds in order to execute it.

We are now playing an increasingly important and influential part in the work supporting our veterans and their families. We have provided leadership and direction, worked with Veterans UK in support of their work as the executive and representing what we discover on the ground to an array of stakeholders including the minister.

From a personal perspective, it has helped me to gain broader experience and to develop further skills but it has also allowed me to contribute my expertise and knowledge in support of veterans and to influence the decisions that affect them and their families.

This is why I was delighted to support the government's recent campaign to increase awareness of the work that can be done through membership of public bodies such as the VAPC.

[Jonathan Jelly MBE, East of England VAPC](#)

I encourage others to apply for these positions as they offer unique opportunities to broaden skills and experience as well as making meaningful contributions to society.

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## [\*\*Press release: Rogue landlords put on notice as government announces tough new powers\*\*](#)

Rogue landlords have been put on notice as government has announced today (28 December 2017) a raft of new measures to crack down on bad practices, stamp out overcrowding and improve standards for those renting in the private sector.

Housing Minister Alok Sharma has set out how, subject to parliamentary clearance, landlords renting properties in England occupied by 5 or more people, from 2 or more separate households will need to be licensed.

The move, affecting around 160,000 houses, will mean councils can take further action to crack down on unscrupulous landlords renting sub-standard and overcrowded homes.

Government has also set out details of criminal offences which will automatically ban someone from being a landlord. From April next year, someone convicted of offences such as burglary and stalking can be added to the database of rogue landlords and be barred from renting properties.

These latest measures build on government action to date to drive up safety and standards in the private rented sector. This includes bringing in fines of up to £30,000 for dodgy landlords, protections for tenants from revenge evictions and £12 million funding for councils to take enforcement action in hotspot areas.

Housing and Planning Minister Alok Sharma said:

Every tenant has a right to a safe, secure and decent home. But far too many are being exploited by unscrupulous landlords who profit from providing overcrowded, squalid and sometimes dangerous homes.

Enough is enough and so I'm putting these rogue landlords on notice – shape up or ship out of the rental business.

Through a raft of new powers we are giving councils the further tools they need to crack down these rogue landlords and kick them out of the business for good.

The move will also benefit wider communities fed up with living near shoddily maintained properties without proper bins, dumped rubbish and anti social behaviour. Landlords will be held responsible for making sure the council's rules on refuse and recycling are followed.

New rules will also come into force setting minimum size requirements for bedrooms in houses of multiple occupation to prevent overcrowding. As part of the licencing requirements, local councils will be able to make sure only rooms meeting the standard are used for sleeping.

The new measures announced today were subject to consultation with the majority of responses supporting the new proposals:

### **Houses in multiple occupation**

There are around 4.3 million households in the private rented sector in England, with around 500,000 houses in multiple occupation.

The new licensing rules only apply to certain houses in multiple occupation in England.

National mandatory licensing currently only applies if properties are 3 or more storeys. This is being changed so flats and one/two-storey properties

will be brought within scope.

### **Minimum space requirements**

Rooms used for sleeping by 1 adult will have to be no smaller than 6.51 square metres, and those slept in by 2 adults will have to be no smaller than 10.22 square metres. Rooms slept in by children of 10 years and younger will have to be no smaller than 4.64 square metres.

The licence must specify the maximum number of persons (if any) who may occupy any room and the total number across the different rooms must be the same as the number of persons for whom the property is suitable to live in.

### **Banning orders and landlord database**

A small number of rogue or criminal landlords knowingly rent out unsafe and substandard accommodation.

The [Housing and Planning Act 2016](#) introduced a range of measures to tackle rogue landlords:

- civil penalties of up to £30,000 as an alternative to prosecution – came into force April 2017
- extension of Rent Repayment Orders to cover illegal eviction, breach of a banning order or failure to comply with a statutory notice – came into force April 2017
- banning orders for the most serious and prolific offenders – to be implemented in April 2018
- a database of rogue landlords/letting agents convicted of certain offences – to be implemented in April 2018