

# News story: Drones – are you flying yours safely? (and legally?)

Most people will either have flown or seen a Quadcopter type drone being flown about. But how many of you are aware that drones present a hazard to aviation and are subject to the law through the Air Navigation Order?

What is meant by the word 'drone'? The public and press use the phrase for almost anything that flies and does not have a pilot – we in the services generally prefer the terms; Remotely Piloted Air System (RPAS) or Unmanned Air System (UAS), you may even hear Unmanned Air Vehicle (UAV). This article however is not about the RPAS', UAVs or UAS used by the military, these systems (from the large (Reaper) down to the very small), are generally well regulated, procured correctly and flown/operated by trained individuals who understand the hazards involved. This article and the use of the phrase 'drone' focuses on those systems that are affordable, commercially available and weigh no more than 20kg, though the majority weigh considerably less.

A Black Hornet nano helicopter unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). Crown Copyright. Photo: via MOD.

Most of the commercial drones come in the form of Quadcopters, Hexacopters or even Octocopters, and vary in price and capability. At the bottom end of the market are models that are simply toys, small very lightweight, with limited range and endurance. About £100 will get a Quadcopter with a camera, whilst not of 'professional' quality these drones can weigh in the region of 1kg and can have a range that takes them beyond the operator's line of sight. For several hundred pounds, you can purchase a drone which has full HD video, a range of beyond 1km and decent battery endurance. These drones weigh in the region of 3kg, perhaps more if purpose built or exceptionally capable. Almost all of these drones, with the exception of the very small toys, have the capability to fly to several thousand feet.

In addition to the standard drones – controlled by a hand held 2 stick controller and operated by eye, increasingly there are those which are operated by what is called 'First Person View'. This is where the operator will fly the drone using a normal controller but will be viewing images transmitted by the drone either through a set of goggles or on a screen.

It ought to be mentioned that legally, model aircraft are also considered drones. These range in size from small light weight models to gas-turbine powered scaled replicas – capable of very fast speeds and weighing close to 10kg.

Drones are readily available on the high street and internet, and are being sold in their thousands, and it is not hard to see why. Not only are they affordable and capable, but they are great fun to fly or operate, and have great utility. Whilst most people use them for personal recreation, they are also very popular with photographers and those that use photography in their

business, like estate agents or the media. Those who work at height now use them to get information before climbing or instead of climbing, survey companies use them and large parcel delivery companies have an aspiration to use them for deliveries.

So, drones are here to stay, but what is the problem? In simple terms, for the vast majority of drone users, there isn't one, but there are those who operate their drones too high or too close to airfields. In 2016 there were over 50 reports from pilots of commercial airliners that their aircraft had almost hit a drone. Military aviation is not immune, there have been near misses with Chinooks at Benson and Odiham, likewise for fixed wing aircraft at Cranwell, and in 2016 a Navy Lynx at 2000ft missed a drone by an estimated 30-50 feet. Whilst there is work ongoing within the aviation industry to fully understand the implications of a drone hitting an aircraft, it doesn't take much imagination to understand the likely consequences of 3kg of metal and plastic, including the lithium-polymer battery, hitting a helicopter windshield or, perhaps worse, the tail rotor at 100mph. Likewise for a fixed wing aircraft but at greater speeds, hitting the canopy or disappearing into an engine intake. So if you or members of your family are one of the many owners of a drone, or are thinking of buying one then you need to read on.

If you are using a drone for personnel use then you are governed by the Civilian Aviation Authority (CAA) [Air Navigation Order 2016](#), specifically Article [241](#) (endangering the safety of any person or property), Article [94](#) (small unmanned aircraft ) and Article [95](#) (small unmanned surveillance aircraft). This is the law and you can, and individuals have been, prosecuted for breaking it. The new Drone Code is available to download at <http://dronesafe.uk/> along with a useful Drone Assist App created by the CAA and air traffic control body National Air Traffic Service (NATS) to help individuals understand their responsibilities.

Quadcopter with a camera. Crown Copyright. All rights reserved.

Essentially your responsibilities are:

- to know how to fly your drone safely, and do so within the law
- to understand that the operator is legally responsible for every flight
- to keep your drone in sight at all times – stay below 400ft
- not to fly your drone over a congested area, never fly within 50 metres of a person, vehicle or building not under your control
- ensure any images you obtain using the drone do not break privacy laws
- avoiding collisions – you should never fly a drone near an airport or close to aircraft. It is a criminal offence to endanger the safety of an aircraft in flight

There are several other things to think about – what is your drone going to do if it runs out of power or fails? Is it going to land/fall somewhere safe? Are you far enough away from people, buildings and more importantly airfields if you lose control of your drone? Also bear in mind that you can be several miles away from an airfield and still be a hazard to manned aviation. Height is very difficult to judge from the ground, you might still be able to see your drone, just, and yet be well above 400ft. You should also consider that

many military helicopters will often return to an airfield from all directions at 500ft and fixed wing aircraft can start descending from 1000ft about 3 miles away. So the message is this – if you are going to use drones, have a really good think about where you are, keep your drone in sight, consider what aircraft might be flying about and keep clear – it is your responsibility.

For those who wish to use drones commercially, i.e. for commercial gain, then permission is required from the CAA. They will expect you to attend an accredited course that will train you and assess your ability to safely operate drones. The courses include flying competence, knowledge of the law, risk assessments, decision making and more. They exist to ensure that those who wish to legitimately use drone technology in their business can do so safely and not expose the general public or aviation to unnecessary danger. Further information can be found on the [CAA website](#).

Finally, we all know how useful drones are on operations and some units may consider that these commercially available drones can be put to use to meet service non-core aviation requirements – photography, multimedia applications, surveys etc. If you are considering this, then you need to know that in this instance any drone use for the MOD, will be regulated by the [Military Aviation Authority \(MAA\)](#). Specifically, Regulatory Articles [1600](#), [2320](#) and most pertinently [2321](#). The requirements in these regulatory articles are similar to those required by the CAA. If your unit does not have any aviation expertise you may wish to consult the MAA direct for advice, or, for those with access to the Defence Intranet – view Defence Instructions and Notice (DIN) [2015DIN06-023](#); Alternatively DINs [2016DIN07-112](#) and [2016DIN04-178](#) issued by 700X Naval Air Squadron are a good starting point.

In summary, drone technology is extremely useful, great fun to use and is here to stay. But used wrongly it does pose a genuine hazard to manned aviation, so make sure you know the law, stay within the law and fly safe.

#### 10 things you need to know about flying drones

1. drones can and do present a very real hazard to manned aircraft – pilots (including military pilots) have reported over 50 near misses with drones last year alone
2. drones (including model aircraft) are subject to the law through the Air Navigation Order
3. it is your responsibility to fly safely and within the law – if you don't (and individuals have been) you could be prosecuted.
4. never fly a drone near an airport/airfield or close to aircraft. It is a criminal offence to endanger the safety of aircraft in flight
5. keep your drone in sight and below 400ft
6. do not fly over congested areas and never fly within 50m of a person, vehicle or building not under your control
7. if you wish to use a drone for commercial purposes (get paid) then you need to have permission from the CAA
8. ensure any images obtained do not break privacy laws
9. if your unit wishes to buy a commercially available drone for Defence activities (photographs, multimedia, and surveys at height) it becomes

regulated by the MAA and you must follow their rules  
10. finally, Follow the [Drone Code](#), have fun and fly safe

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## [Press release: August 2017 Price Paid Data](#)

HM Land Registry Price Paid Data tracks land and property sales in England and Wales submitted to us for registration.

This month's Price Paid Data includes details of more than 98,500 residential and commercial land and property sales in England and Wales lodged for registration in August 2017.

Of the 98,513 sales lodged for registration:

- 74,734 were freehold
- 7,198 were newly built
- 31,953 sales took place in August 2017
- 663 were residential sales in August 2017 in England and Wales for £1 million and over
- 392 were residential sales in August 2017 in London for £1 million and over

### **Number of sales lodged for registration by property type**

<b>Property type</b>	<b>August 2017</b>
Detached	22,782
Semi-detached	26,056
Terraced	26,515
Flat/maisonette	17,085
Other	6,075
Total	98,513

The most expensive residential sale in August 2017 was of a flat in Knightsbridge, London SW1 for £18,250,000. The cheapest residential sale in August 2017 was of a terraced property in Cannock Chase, Staffordshire for

£5,300.

The most expensive commercial sale in August 2017 was in the London Borough of Harrow for £900 million. The cheapest commercial sales in August 2017 were in Basildon, Essex and the London Borough of Haringey, each for £100.

[Access the full dataset](#)

## Notes to editors

1. Price Paid Data (PPD) is published at 11am on the 20th working day of each month. The next dataset will be published on 27 October 2017.
2. [Price Paid Data](#) is property price data for all residential and commercial property sales in England and Wales that are lodged with HM Land Registry for registration in that month, [subject to exclusions](#).
3. The following information is available for each property:
  - the full address
  - the price paid
  - the date of transfer
  - the property type
  - whether it is new build or not
  - whether it is freehold or leasehold
4. Price Paid Data can be downloaded in txt, csv format and in a machine readable format as [linked data](#) and is released under [Open Government Licence \(OGL\)](#). Under the OGL, HM Land Registry permits use of Price Paid Data for commercial or non-commercial purposes. However, the OGL does not cover the use of [third party rights](#), which HMLR is not authorised to license.
5. Price Paid Data includes Standard Price Paid Data (SPPD) for single residential property sales at full market value and Additional Price Paid Data (APPD) for transactions previously excluded from SPPD such as:
  - transfers to a non-private individual, for example a company, corporate body or business
  - transfers under a power of sale (repossessions)
  - buy-to-lets (where they can be identified by a mortgage)
6. The information available for each property will indicate whether it is APPD or SPPD and the record's status – addition/change/deletion (A/C/D).
7. The [Price Paid Data report builder](#) allows users to build bespoke reports using the data. Reports can be based on location, estate type, price paid or property type over a defined period of time.
8. As a government department established in 1862, executive agency and trading fund responsible to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy

and Industrial Strategy, HM Land Registry keeps and maintains the Land Register for England and Wales. The Land Register has been open to public inspection since 1990.

9. With the largest transactional database of its kind detailing over 24 million titles, HM Land Registry underpins the economy by safeguarding ownership of many billions of pounds worth of property.

10. For further information about HM Land Registry visit [www.gov.uk/land-registry](http://www.gov.uk/land-registry).

11. Follow us on:

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## [Speech: PM speech at 20th anniversary of Bank of England independence event](#)

Thank you, Governor, for that introduction.

As one who began her professional life at the Bank of England some forty years ago, it is a great pleasure to address this conference today.

When I first started working for the Bank, back in 1977, it was a very different institution from the one we see today. Central banking then was a profession shrouded in secrecy.

The spirit of that time is captured in a story which the former Governor Mervyn King tells.

When Lord King first joined the Bank of England, he asked Paul Volcker, the eminent Chairman of the Federal Reserve under Presidents Carter and Reagan, what quality a central banker should seek to embody: 'mystique' was his reply.

Much has changed in the years since, and for the better.

You, Governor, have contributed to that improvement, through the reforms you have led at the Bank of England. Today, openness and transparency are defining characteristics of a modern central bank.

### **20 years of independence**

And this conference celebrates an important milestone in the evolution of this institution: the granting of operational independence.

The newly elected Labour Government decided shortly after the 1997 general

election that they would do what successive Governors, and indeed some Conservative Chancellors, had long talked about: give the Bank responsibility for setting the official short-term interest rate.

As a newly-elected MP at that time, I remember those debates well. Looking back on them now, after 20 years in which independent monetary policymaking has become the norm around the world, the disagreements which then divided the House of Commons on the issue seem rather academic.

The successful adoption of inflation targeting in 1992 had already taken much of the political heat out of rate setting.

And fears that the absence of a formal dual mandate to protect employment as well as target inflation might put jobs at risk have proved unfounded.

I would like to pay tribute to you, Governor, to your predecessors Lord King of Lothbury and the late Lord George, and to all the members who have served on the Monetary Policy Committee over the last two decades.

You have been a dedicated group of public servants, motivated to serve the public interest and to discharge the responsibility which Parliament has given you to the best of your ability. There is much to be proud of over the last twenty years.

Whatever the debates at the time, there was never any real disagreement about what the central aim of monetary policy should be – to eliminate the high inflation which had bedevilled the British economy for decades.

From the start of inflation targeting in 1992, and operational independence in 1997, that is what the Bank has helped to achieve.

As it has in other countries, central bank independence has helped improve credibility and accountability, has successfully anchored inflation expectations and has contributed to low and stable inflation.

The results have been impressive.

Since independence, UK inflation has been much more stable than it was in the previous twenty years, when it fluctuated from 1% to 22%.

We know that high inflation hurts ordinary people, and that low and stable inflation benefits households and businesses.

The fact that inflation of 22% sounds outlandish to us today is a tribute to your success.

## **Ten years on from financial crisis**

But as we reflect on the undoubted successes of the last twenty years, we cannot do so with any complacency. Yes, inflation targeting and operational independence contributed to a period of steady growth, low and stable inflation, and general expansion in the ten years after 1997.

But problems were developing which would later become apparent during the financial crisis of 2007-08.

The Great Recession which followed that crisis brought some of the most challenging economic times our country has known.

The Bank was inevitably caught up in the dramatic events of 2007 and 2008. The tripartite regulatory system, of which the Bank was a part, did not prove to be a success.

It failed the country during the financial crisis and we have had to live with the consequences of that failure ever since.

Our GDP fell by more than 6%, as the UK endured our deepest recession since the Second World War. Successive Governments have been forced to take difficult decisions to restore the public finances to order. These have been decisions which no government would ever want to take.

The British people, who played no part in causing the financial crisis, have had to make sacrifices in order to return the economy to health and ease the burden of debt on future generations.

Real progress has been made over the last seven years.

The Bank has played its part, using its independent monetary policy tools of interest rates and Quantitative Easing to support our economy through the crisis and into the recovery.

The Government has worked to repair our country's finances and the latest public sector borrowing figures show that the deficit has been reduced by more than two thirds, from a post-war high of 10% of GDP in 2009-10 to 2.3% of GDP in 2016-17.

But in truth, much work remains ahead of us, and for all our progress, we should neither forget nor underestimate the scale of the sacrifices which have been necessary to get us this far.

## **A well-regulated free market**

The impact those sacrifices have had on ordinary working people has led some to lose faith in free market capitalism.

And globalisation, which has brought us a great many benefits, has also brought changes which have contributed to a wider sense that our economy is not working as it should for everyone in our society.

These are understandable responses. There are genuine problems with our economy which need to be addressed.

But as we do so, we should never forget the immense value and potential of an open, innovative, free market economy which operates with the right rules and regulations.



When countries make the transition from closed, restricted, centrally-planned economies to open, free market policies, the same things happen.

Life expectancy increases, and infant mortality falls.

Absolute poverty shrinks, and disposable income grows.

Access to education is widened, and rates of illiteracy plummet.

Participation in cultural life is extended, and more people have the chance to contribute.

It is in open, free market economies that technological breakthroughs are made which transform, improve and save lives.

It is in open, free market economies that personal freedoms and liberties find their surest protection.

A free market economy, operating under the right rules and regulations, is the greatest agent of collective human progress ever created.

It was the new combination which led societies out of darkness and stagnation and into the light of the modern age.

In essence, it is very simple.

It consists of an open market place, in which everyone is free to participate, regulated under the rule of law, with personal freedoms, equality and human rights democratically guaranteed, and an accountable government, progressively taxing the economic activity which the market generates, to fund high-quality public services which are freely available to all citizens, according to need.

That is unquestionably the best, and indeed the only sustainable, means of increasing the living standards of everyone in a country.

And we should never forget that raising the living standards and protecting the jobs of ordinary working people is the central aim of all economic policy.

Helping each generation to live longer, fuller, more secure lives than the one which went before them.

Not serving an abstract doctrine or an ideological concept – but serving the real interests of the British people.

## **Restoring faith in a free market economy**

And those of us who believe that the interests of the British people are best served through a successful open, free market economy need to be honest about where it is not currently working or delivering for ordinary working people today.

That is why the Government is leading a determined programme of wide-reaching economic reform.

We have already overhauled our system of banking regulation, to put the Bank of England at the centre of the new framework.

The Financial Policy Committee protects financial stability through macro-prudential regulation.

The Prudential Regulation Authority serves as a micro-prudential regulator.

And the Financial Conduct Authority regulates the conduct of businesses in our vibrant financial sector.

We implemented the recommendations of the Independent Commission on Banking and the Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards, putting in place strict new rules on bank ring-fencing and enhancing individual accountability to raise standards.

Our economy has made great strides in the last few years, but we know that for too long, too many communities across the United Kingdom have not seen the benefits of economic growth and prosperity. That waste of potential is bad for the areas concerned and bad for our country's wider productivity.

The Bank has always taken the economic health of our whole UK seriously, as your formidable network of local agents, based out in the nations and regions of the UK, testifies.

And through our Industrial Strategy, the Government is playing its part in promoting growth across the whole country. That strategy will help business invest in the latest technologies, turn local areas of excellence into national export champions, and support the skills and innovation we need to succeed in the industries of the future.

A thriving financial services sector, providing high-quality jobs right across the United Kingdom, is vital to our future prosperity. That sector benefits from a strong and respected framework of regulation, which incentivises innovation. And we will work with the sector to ensure the UK remains the world's financial centre and the global hub of fintech.

Britain now has a record number of people in work and our flexible labour market has contributed to that success. Many people value the flexibility of our system, but that flexibility cannot be one-sided.

That's why I commissioned Matthew Taylor to conduct a thorough review into modern employment practices in our economy. His report recommended that all work should be fair and decent, with scope for development and fulfilment. That is an ambition we fully share.

Britain has some of the world's very best higher education institutions, researchers and engineers. But we know that our system of technical education leaves too many of our young people without the skills they need to get a job – that holds them back and hurts our economy.

So our new T-level qualifications will reverse decades of drift and create a new, high quality, vocational equivalent to A-Levels.

Britain sets the global standard for high quality corporate governance. International firms are attracted to the UK in part because of the strengths of our regulatory system. But we know that to stay competitive, we must keep our standards high and ensure that bad examples of corporate governance do not undermine the public's faith in our market economy.

So our reforms to corporate governance will give workers and shareholders a stronger voice in the board room and ensure that our biggest firms are incentivised to take decisions which are in the right long-term interest of their businesses.

These reforms will bring greater transparency, openness and accountability to markets and to the corporate sector; the very same principles that the Bank has lived up to in its work through the Monetary Policy Committee.

## **The need to reform**

Now, some argue that a free market economy is an end in itself, and that drawing attention to the downsides is somehow anti-business.

Others would use the imbalances which are now apparent as a justification for the total rejection of the free market economy, which has done so much to improve our lives.

Instead they advocate ideologically extreme policies which have long-ago been shown to fail, and which are failing people today in places like Venezuela.

My argument has always been that if you want to preserve and improve a system which has delivered unparalleled benefits, you have to take seriously its faults and do all you can to address them.

Not to do so would put everything we have achieved together as a country at risk.

It would lead to a wider loss of faith in free markets, and risk a return to the failed ideologies of the past. A return to protectionism in international trade, and to inflationary policies at home.

Far from somehow protecting the poorest and most vulnerable in our society, that outcome would surely hurt them the most.

## **New economic partnership with the EU**

This is a crucial time to address these fundamental economic questions.

Last week in Florence, I set out my vision for the new economic partnership I want our country to build with the European Union in the years ahead.

That vision is rooted in a belief in a well-regulated, open, free market

economy, with sound money and stable prices.

As I set out, in leaving the EU, the UK will no longer be members of its single market or Customs Union. That, of course, will mean changes. You cannot have all the benefits of membership of the single market without its obligations.

So, our task is to find a new framework that allows for a close economic partnership, but which holds those rights and obligations in a new and different balance.

In forging that new partnership, we start from an unprecedented position.

At the point of our exit, we will have exactly the same rules and regulations as the EU, as our EU Withdrawal Bill will ensure they are carried over into our domestic law.

The challenge, then, is not how to bring our rules and regulations closer together, but what to do when one of us wants to make changes.

That fact should give us confidence. And I believe there are further good reasons to be ambitious and optimistic about what lies ahead.

The UK is one of the largest economies in the world and EU's biggest export market.

Businesses and jobs across the continent rely on our shared trade.

And, more fundamentally, we share a common commitment to the principles of an open free market economy, which I referred to earlier.

We believe in free trade, in rigorous and fair competition, in strong consumer rights, and in a rejection of protectionism.

And whether it is on goods or on services – including the excellent financial services for which the UK has a global reputation – creating needless new barriers to trade between the EU and its biggest market would benefit no one.

The UK's financial markets provide support for businesses and consumers right across the EU, reducing the cost of capital and supporting choice and innovation for consumers. It is in neither the EU's nor the UK's interest to see these financial service markets fragment, and that is another reason I am confident we can agree a new partnership that enables us to continue to work together to bring prosperity for all our peoples.

## **A balanced approach**

And that is a responsibility which democratically elected governments, and institutions dedicated to the public good, like the Bank of England, both share: to promote the prosperity of the people we serve.

For the Bank of England – strengthened and improved since the financial crisis – that means discharging its responsibilities to keep inflation on

target and maintain the wider health and sustainability of the financial sector. For the Government, that means stepping up to its role, ensuring that the rules and regulations which define the free market are designed to make it serve the interests of ordinary working people.

Success in this mission must be underpinned by a balanced approach to public spending.

That means continuing to deal with our debts, so that our economy can remain strong and we can protect people's jobs.

At the same time, it means investing in our vital public services, like schools and hospitals, which our successful management of the economy has made possible.

To abandon that balanced approach with unfunded borrowing and significantly higher levels of taxation would damage our economy, threaten jobs, and hurt working people.

It would mean paying even more in debt interest, which already costs us more each year than we spend on schools.

Ultimately, it would mean less money for the public services we all rely on.

## **Conclusion**

So we can already see in outline the challenges and opportunities which will define the Bank's third decade of independence.

Building a new economic partnership with the European Union, which will deliver prosperity for all our people, and making the most of the opportunities which Brexit presents.

Reforming our economy, so that the benefits of a well-regulated free market are felt in all parts of our country, and by everyone in our society.

And taking a balanced approach to public spending, so debt falls as our economy grows, and we can invest in the public services on which we all depend.

I have no doubt that Bank will continue its work to deliver the monetary and financial stability that is essential for a successful economy, as we make the most of the opportunities ahead.

Governor, I wish you and your distinguished guests well over the next two days as you explore what the future may hold.

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# News story: False Caliphate faces collapse as UK marks three year tackling Daesh

Daesh fighters are being pinned down by the Royal Air Force in their former stronghold of Raqqa as the UK marks three years of tackling the barbaric cult in Iraq and Syria.

Royal Air Force aircraft destroyed 17 targets in Syria in a single day last week as the air campaign intensifies, forcing Daesh to splinter and retreat from areas it ruled when the UK voted to begin air strikes in September 2014.

British aircraft have struck Daesh 1,340 times in Iraq and 262 times in Syria. In that time the group has lost territory, finances, leaders and fighters as the 73-member coalition has liberated cities in both countries.

Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, said:

Britain has made a major contribution to the campaign that has crippled Daesh since 2014, forcing this miserable cult from the gates of Baghdad to the brink of defeat in Raqqa. By air, land and sea UK personnel have played a tireless role in striking targets and training allies.

As the second largest contributor to the Global Coalition's military campaign, the UK has flown more than 8,000 sorties with Tornado and Typhoon jets and Reaper drones, providing strikes, surveillance and reconnaissance, refuelling and transport.

Since 2014 the UK has hit Daesh with over 1,500 strikes, bombarding targets including heavy machine-gun positions, truck-bombs, mortar teams, snipers and weapons stores.

RAF Typhoons, Tornados and Reapers have hounded Daesh day and night, striking from Raqqa and Dayr az Zawr in Syria to Qayyarah and Al Qaim in Iraq.

Air Chief Marshal, Sir Stephen Hillier, said:

This has been an immense effort by RAF airmen and airwomen over the last three years of continued operations, countering Da'esh in Iraq and Syria. However, the tempo continues with RAF aircraft destroying 17 targets in Syria in a single day last week.

Three years ago Daesh was barely an hour from the gates of Baghdad, but today

it has lost more than 73 per cent of the territory it occupied in Iraq and 65 per cent of its former territory in Syria.

The Royal Air Force has played an essential role to allies, helping Syrian Democratic Forces engaged in ground close combat and the Iraqi Security Forces who continue their advance having liberated Mosul and Ninewah province.

More than 5.5 million people have been freed from Daesh's rule and over 2 million displaced Iraqi civilians have returned to their homes. In Mosul alone, it is estimated that over 265,000 people have returned.

On the ground, around 600 British soldiers are in Iraq, helping to train that country's forces. UK troops have so far helped train over 58,000 Iraqi Security Forces in battle winning infantry, counter-IED, engineering and combat medical skills.

Recognising the valuable contributions made by many serving military personnel, Sir Michael announced an Iraq and Syria Operational Service Medal during his recent visit to Iraq.

The UK's commitment from all three Services to the fight against Daesh across the region now numbers just over 1,400 military personnel, with the latest uplift of 44 Royal Engineers announced in September demonstrating the UK's contribution to the campaign.

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## [News story: Help to Buy supports over 320,000 people in buying their own home](#)

The government's [Help to Buy](#) schemes have continued their success, supporting over 320,000 people across the UK to buy a home. [Over 1 million Help to Buy: ISAs have now been opened by first time buyers](#), offering government bonuses of up to £3,000 towards the cost of a first home.

[Help to Buy statistics](#) released today (Thursday 28 September) show that:

- over 320,000 completions have taken place using one or more of the Help to Buy schemes
- over 275,000 first time buyer households are now on the housing ladder thanks to Help to Buy
- the average house price across the schemes is £196,092, below the average UK house price
- over 90% of completions across the Help to Buy schemes have taken place outside of London

Stephen Barclay, Economic Secretary to the Treasury said:

Help to Buy supports people who want to turn their dream of owning a home into a reality. The schemes have now helped over 275,000 first time buyers across the country achieve home ownership.

This government is determined to help hardworking people across the UK get on in life and climb the housing ladder.

Housing and Planning Minister Alok Sharma said:

This government is committed to fixing the broken housing market and to help more people find a home of their own, with the support of a range of low cost home ownership products.

Our Help to Buy: Equity Loan scheme continues to make home ownership a reality for thousands of households, right across the country.

Stewart Baseley, executive chairman of the Home Builders Federation said:

These latest figures are yet another sign that Help to Buy is achieving its objectives to support first time buyers, increase housing supply and boost the economy.

This help for first time buyers is encouraging builders to invest, with permission being granted for more new homes than ever before. This investment by home builders is not just only giving tens of thousands of families a place to call home, it's generating jobs and driving local economic growth in communities around the country.

More than 130,000 completions have now taken place through the [Help to Buy Equity Loan scheme](#), which offers buyers up to 20% in an equity loan so they only need to provide a 5% deposit.

The most completions using the [Help to Buy: ISA](#) have taken place in the North West, Yorkshire and The Humber, and West Midlands. In total, 83,686 completions have taken place across the UK using the ISA bonus since its launch in December 2015.

The London Help to Buy scheme provides an equity loan of up to 40% for buyers in the capital with a 5% deposit. It has helped over 4,500 buyers in the capital across 33 boroughs purchase their own property between February 2016 and June 2017.