

# New Bill to level up the nation

- Levelling Up Missions, such as eradicating child illiteracy and closing gaps in life expectancy and living standards, to be enshrined in law
- Local communities get extra powers to tackle scourge of boarded up shops and empty homes
- Legislation to underpin biggest shift of power from Whitehall in modern times

The government has today (11 May 2022) introduced plans to transform struggling towns and cities, supporting local leaders to take back control of regeneration, ending the blight of empty shops on their high streets and delivering the quality homes that communities need.

The [Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill](#) will enshrine in law the government's commitment to long-term missions to spread opportunity, drive productivity and boost local pride in every corner of the country.

Levelling Up Secretary Rt Hon Michael Gove MP said:

As a country, we need to be firing on all cylinders. That is why we must level up the UK; spread prosperity and opportunity, and make sure everyone can share in our nation's success.

This Bill puts in place the reforms we need to level up. It enshrines our levelling up missions in law, which will shift resources and focus throughout this decade to the parts and people of the country who need it most. It enables every part of England which wants a London-style mayor to have one. It empowers local people, not the big developers, to take back control of regeneration in their community.

It shifts power out of Whitehall by giving local leaders the powers they need to tackle the blight of empty shops on high streets and to regenerate their communities. This is underpinned by a firm belief that by far the best placed people to level up communities are the people who live there.

We want everyone to be given the opportunity to stay local but go far.

## **Levelling Up**

The government's defining mission is to level up the UK; to increase and spread prosperity and opportunity across the UK, and break the link between geography and destiny. The Bill puts the legal foundations needed to deliver this mission in place, so that all parts of the country will be able to share equally in our nation's success.

Measures include:

- Creating a legal duty for the government to set and report on a number of missions for levelling up the country.
- These missions will include: closing the gap in pay and productivity between the richest and poorest areas, effectively eradicating child illiteracy and innumeracy, closing gaps in healthy life expectancy, getting the rest of the country's transport connectivity much closer to the standards of London's, and making sure everyone has a local community they can be proud of.
- The deadline for each mission is 2030, but the Levelling Up Bill will create a duty for the government to report on progress annually.
- The legislation needed so that every part of England that wants a strong devolution deal can have one.
- Enabling more areas to have the kinds of devolved powers which currently only the largest cities enjoy, helping drive improvements on local priorities such as transport and skills.
- New provisions on council borrowing to protect taxpayers' money while enabling local areas to make much needed investment.

## Regeneration

The Bill will also directly give local leaders the powers they need to regenerate their communities, and transform their high streets and town centres. A new infrastructure levy will see the big developers contribute more towards better local roads, schools, hospitals, and genuinely affordable housing. Communities will also receive a share of the Levy revenue raised – as long as they have a parish or town council – and we are exploring how this could be expanded.

Measures include:

- New powers for local leaders to run High Street Rental Auctions, where they can auction off tenancies in shops that have been vacant for over a year. This will help to end the plague of empty shops that blight so many high streets.
- Councils will also be able to double council tax on empty and second homes, ensuring everyone pays their fair share towards local services and boost levelling up.
- The 'al-fresco dining revolution' will be made permanent, injecting new life into the high street through creating a sustainable process for communities, business and local authorities, making it permanently cheaper and quicker to get a licence for outdoor dining.
- A new, locally set infrastructure levy, charged on the final value of property when its sold, will replace much of the broken S106 payments system. This will see the big developers contribute far more of the money they make from development towards building better local roads, rail, schools, hospitals, and more affordable housing.
- Legislation to make it easier for councils to regenerate their town centres through Compulsory Purchase Orders, making the process quicker and easier to use.

## **Right homes in the right places**

The Bill will also deliver new reforms to the planning system, ensuring new development is more beautiful, produces more local Infrastructure, is shaped by local people's democratic wishes, improves environmental outcomes, and occurs with neighbourhoods very much in mind.

Measures include:

- Local plans – the way in which councils set the vision for future development in their area and decide whether to give planning permission – will gain stronger legal weight and be made simpler to produce. Communities will have a major say in these plans giving them more opportunity to shape what happens in their areas. Currently 61% of councils do not have an up to date local plan, which leaves communities exposed to development on which they haven't had a meaningful say.
- A digitised planning system making plans and planning applications fully available on your smartphone.
- Stronger protections for the environment in local plans, empowering councils to make better use of brownfield land and protect precious greenbelt land.
- Local design codes will be made mandatory so that developers have to respect styles drawn up and favoured locally – from the layout or materials used, to how it provides green space.

The government has today also outlined a new deal for millions of renters in private and social housing.

By ending Section 21 evictions and extending the Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector, all renters can expect a decent, safe, and secure home. At the same time, these measures deliver a fairer system for good landlords who can struggle to recover their properties when faced with anti-social behaviour or wilful non-payment of rent.

Details on further support for tenants in social housing will be unveiled later this year which will include a review of the Decent Homes Standard, new consumer regulation and regular inspections of the largest landlords.

## **Further information**

The planning measures have been informed by over 40,000 responses made to the government's 2020 'Planning for the Future' White Paper, and inquiry by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee.

In order to continue to support the hospitality sector, we will also extend the temporary pavement licence process for one further year while we seek to make permanent these provisions through the Bill, subject to Parliamentary approval.

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## PM opening remarks at press conference in Finland: 11 May 2022

Thank you very much President Sauli Niinistö and thank you for hosting me today. It's wonderful to be in Helsinki this evening, at this pivotal a moment in our shared history.

It's pivotal because, as I also discussed with colleagues with Prime Minister Andersson in Sweden, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has changed the equation of European security and it has rewritten our reality and reshaped our future.

We've seen the end of the post-Cold War period, and the invasion of Ukraine sadly has opened a new chapter.

That invasion has already failed for two reasons.

Firstly because of the unbreakable spirit of the Ukrainian people who have fought back and rallied the world behind them.

And secondly because that Ukraine struggle for freedom, that heroic fight, has brought the world together in condemnation of this assault on our values.

And it would be fair to say it has also brought Finland and the UK even closer together today.

The security declaration, the solemn declaration, we have signed today ensures our two nations can intensify our partnership and take it to unparalleled heights – both latitudinal and metaphorical.

From the High North to the Baltics and beyond, our armed forces will train, operate, and exercise together – marrying our defence and security capabilities and formalising a pledge that we will always come to one another's aid.

Because this is not a short term stop gap as you consider NATO membership, but an enduring assurance between our two nations.

An assurance that brings us even closer together as we face the challenges of today, the threats of tomorrow, side-by-side.

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# New Charter to improve media access to courts

- new agreement to cement journalists' rights when reporting trials and hearings
- Charter outlines how courts service provides help and information to media
- key move to increase public confidence in the justice system

The document brings together practical guidance for journalists attending courts and tribunals so that it will be easier for them to get the access, documents and information they are entitled to.

It has been developed by the Media Lawyers Association and HM Courts and Tribunals Service and was unveiled at the Society of Editors Annual Conference today (11 May 2022).

The Charter sets out advice on how journalists can request to observe video hearings or tune in remotely, given that there are currently around 12,500 hearings held remotely per week, compared to just a handful before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Justice Minister James Cartlidge said:

Justice has to be seen to be done to maintain public confidence and the media play a vital role as their eyes and ears in the courts.

This Charter will help ensure reporters retain the access to courts and information they require to keep the public informed.

The Charter outlines how courts and tribunals provide designated seats in courtrooms for journalists and that wi-fi is available to them so they can report live on social media platforms or news websites.

Details of the protocol for sharing court lists, documents and information about defendants with the media is also included.

John Battle, Head of Legal and Compliance at ITN and Chairman of the Media Lawyers Association, said:

The Charter is a significant step forward. It brings together in one document the basic rights reporters have when reporting the courts.

The Charter will help court reporters to carry out their vital role informing the public about the justice system. It is fundamental for justice, the rule of law and democracy that the courts are

reported.

Dawn Alford, Executive Director of the Society of Editors said:

The Society of Editors welcomes today's launch of the Reporters' Charter which will, no doubt, become an invaluable tool for journalists and court staff and ensure that the rights of reporters to attend court and receive documentation are better recognised and applied in practice.

We congratulate the Media Lawyers Association and HMCTS on this achievement. The Society is delighted to endorse, promote and distribute the Charter.

### Notes to editors

- The Reporters' Charter is available to view on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and the [Society of Editors website](https://www.societyofeditors.org.uk)
- Decisions on whether a hearing is public or private, and available to observe remotely, lie with independent judges.

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## [Minister visits government funded veterans support hub in Wales](#)

Woody's Lodge was awarded £35,000 by the government through the Afghanistan Veterans' Fund, to support Welsh veterans impacted by the Afghanistan withdrawal. The grant is being used to increase awareness of the service that they provide and maintain their support team across Wales. The grant has also funded extended home visits for veterans to help them adjust to daily life.

Woody's Lodge was Inspired by the late Paul "Woody" Woodland, who lost his life in service. Paul realised that living in green spaces would support positive mental and physical health, and this has been replicated through the creation of Woody's Lodge in the south Wales countryside.

The charity provides safe indoor and outdoor spaces and activities for veterans to re-establish connections and talk about problems they face.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Steve Barclay said:

It was great to visit Woody's Lodge in South Wales today to hear about the amazing work they do with veterans to help provide expert advice and support to them and their families.

I want the UK to be the best place in the world to be a veteran and that means ensuring we give those who have proudly served our country to keep us all safe the support they expect and deserve.

The charity also acts as a referral pathway for NHS Wales, and has hosted over 20,000 veterans socially through its farm hubs and drop-in centres.

Joined by Alun Cairns MP and the Secretary for State for Wales, the Minister met with CEO Graham Jones and Chairman David Trotman, to find out more about how the charity has supported veterans during difficult times such as the Afghanistan withdrawal and the recent anniversary of the Falklands conflict.

The Minister then went on to see a presentation on their Memory Lane app and games, which they have developed for veterans on what they call 'memory Mondays'. The theme for Mental Health Awareness Week this year is loneliness. Woody's has been integral in preventing isolation in veterans of all ages – the charity has dedicated social events for veterans with dementia to socialise, and regular events for veterans and their families.

Secretary of State for Wales, Simon Hart said:

We are immensely proud of our veteran community in Wales and recognise that ex-service men and women may need extra support. It was a pleasure to meet and congratulate the staff at Woody's Lodge who do such incredible work.

And I was especially pleased to talk to some veterans about their own personal experiences and the help they have received.

CEO of Woody's Lodge Graham Jones said:

Woody's is delighted to welcome The Government's Chief of Staff, Stephen Barclay, as well as Secretary of State for Wales, Simon Hart and our local MP and supporter Alun Cairns.

This visit will enable us to present The Charity's work in supporting the Armed Forces Community as well as those from the Emergency Services and their wider families.

It is a great opportunity for our Veterans to meet and talk to our visitors today, about their experiences during their Service Careers and about their lives following this and how Woody's supports them and their families.

Veterans Commissioner for Wales Colonel James Phillips said:

The Veteran's community forms an important part of Welsh society. Our ex-servicemen and women and their families deserve access to

high quality support and I am delighted Woody's Lodge will be able to grow and further assist communities throughout Wales following receipt of the UK Government grant.

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## Introducción del requisito de visa para personas salvadoreñas que visitan el Reino Unido

Con efecto inmediato, todas las personas salvadoreñas necesitarán una visa antes de viajar al Reino Unido, incluso para aquellos cuyo objetivo es una visita, anunció el Gobierno del Reino Unido hoy (miércoles 11 de mayo).

La decisión de imponer un régimen de visas se tomó debido al aumento sostenido y significativo durante los últimos cinco años en el número de personas salvadoreñas que no tienen la intención de realizar una visita corta, sino que presentan solicitudes de asilo a su llegada al Reino Unido. Antes de 2017, el Reino Unido recibía menos de 40 solicitudes de asilo al año de personas salvadoreñas; en 2021 la cifra fue de 703. Esto convierte a El Salvador en la fuente con más solicitudes de asilo en 2021 que cualquier otro país cuyos ciudadanos pueden visitar el Reino Unido sin visa.

Los cambios, que entrarán en efecto inmediatamente, aplicarán a todos los salvadoreños que viajen al Reino Unido. Sin embargo, habrá un período de transición de cuatro semanas hasta el miércoles 8 de junio, durante el cual los visitantes que hayan comprado su viaje antes de las 09:00 horas Tiempo de Centro America (16:00 BST/ 15:00 GMT) del 11 de mayo podrán entrar al Reino Unido sin una visa.

El Embajador Británico en San Salvador David Lelliott mencionó:

Los cambios anunciados hoy ubican a El Salvador con muchos otros países que requieren visas y con los cuales el Reino Unido cuenta con relaciones fuertes y amistosas. Las visas proporcionan acceso al Reino Unido, mientras ayudan a proteger sus fronteras.

La Embajada Británica en San Salvador ha trabajado de cerca con el Gobierno del Reino Unido para establecer arreglos con el fin de permitir que los viajeros salvadoreños puedan aplicar a sus visas en El Salvador, y que puedan seguir uniéndose a los muchos visitantes que el Reino Unido recibe de todo el mundo.

Un Centro Temporal de Aplicación de Visas del Reino Unido operará

regularmente en El Salvador, en el cual, los viajeros podrán entregar su pasaporte y proporcionar sus datos biométricos. La primera sesión de este centro está programada para operar el 19 y 20 de mayo, con el objetivo de permitir a los solicitantes recibir sus visas antes del final del período de transición del 8 de junio, con una sesión futura del Centro de Aplicación de Visas planeada para principios de junio.

Las solicitudes de visa se envían y pagan en línea en el sitio web: <https://visa.vfsglobal.com/ind/en/gbr>, después de lo cual los solicitantes reservan una cita para proporcionar sus datos biométricos y entregar su pasaporte.

El Gobierno del Reino Unido busca procesar las aplicaciones de visas dentro de los siguientes 15 días laborales (británicos) luego de recibir el pasaporte y los datos biométricos. Los solicitantes pueden aplicar a una visa hasta con tres meses de anticipación.

Una visa de múltiples entradas al Reino Unido de seis meses de duración tiene un costo de £100 (US\$130). Visas con duraciones más largas también están disponibles. Algunos Centros de Aplicación de Visas, incluyendo el Centro Temporal en San Salvador, son servicios pagados por el usuario, que tendrán un costo adicional de £55 (US\$75) por aplicación. Esta tarifa incluye el costo del retorno por correo del pasaporte y de cualquier documento entregado por el solicitante luego de que la decisión de su visa ha sido tomada. Los salvadoreños también pueden usar Centros de Aplicación de Visas en otros países.

Nacionales salvadoreños que hayan comprado su viaje al Reino Unido antes de las 09:00 horas Tiempo de Centro América (16:00 BST/15:00GMT) del 11 de mayo 2022 podrán ingresar al Reino Unido sin una visa hasta el miércoles 8 de junio 2022. Cualquier pasajero llegando después del 8 de junio requerirá una visa para ingresar al Reino Unido, sin importar la fecha en la que su viaje fue comprado. De igual manera cualquier persona que compre su viaje después de las 09:00 horas de Centro América (16:00 BST/15:00GMT) del 11 de mayo 2022 también necesitará una visa, aun si llega el 8 de junio o antes.

Visitantes salvadoreños que se encuentran ya en el Reino Unido no se verán afectados por este nuevo requerimiento por el resto de su visita, pero una vez abandonen el Reino Unido requerirán una visa para poder ingresar nuevamente.

Las personas salvadoreñas ya están obligados a obtener una visa para otros fines (que no sean de visita), como para trabajar o estudiar. Los solicitantes de visas de estudiante u otras visas ahora tendrán la opción de utilizar el nuevo centro de aplicación de visas en El Salvador, en lugar de tener que viajar a otros países como lo han hecho hasta ahora.

## **Notas a los editores**

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