

[Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on North Korea missile test](#)

This is yet another reminder of the grave danger that North Korea poses to her neighbours, particularly Japan and South Korea, who are our friends and allies.

Regardless of the variety of missile launched, any test of this kind breaks UN Security Council Resolutions once again.

I expect this will be on the agenda at the upcoming G20 summit and addressed at the UN over the coming days.

The international community must redouble its efforts to impose a price on this regime, which strains every nerve and sinew to build nuclear weapons and launch illegal missiles, even as the people of North Korea endure starvation and poverty.

[Press release: A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon upgrade takes shape](#)

The project team delivering the biggest road upgrade under construction in the UK have been sharing an update about ongoing work on site, within the surrounding environment and with local communities.

New aerial photographs have been published today (Tuesday 4 July) revealing how the new road is emerging. Alongside this progress, foundations and bridge columns for some of the project's 34 new bridges have been installed and the team have been giving an update on the industry leading care for the environment that the project is delivering while building the new road.

Work on building the £1.5bn upgrade to the A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon started in November last year. The project includes widening a total of seven miles of the A14 in each direction (across two sections), a major new bypass south of Huntingdon, widening a three-mile section of the A1 and demolition of a viaduct at Huntingdon, which will support improvements in the town.

A new road emerges

Barely seven months after work started on the £1.5bn upgrade scheme, the outline for the 12-mile long Huntingdon bypass has emerged through the Cambridgeshire landscape, revealing how much progress has been achieved so

far.

Chris Griffin, A14 project manager at Highways England, says:

We are continuing to make good progress throughout the scheme. We have had mild and dry weather this winter and spring and have been making the most of it to move the project forward quickly and safely.

I am pleased that the outline for most of the new road's path has now been created and it won't be long before some of our first structures are completed.

The project's earthworks team has been stripping top soil over more than 17 miles out of the project's total length of 21 miles to create several sections of the future new road including: the Huntingdon bypass, the new Swavesey junction, and the five-mile long local access road, which will link local communities between Huntingdon and Cambridge without the need to use the A14.

Building a road with its environment in mind

Chris says:

From the skies, the outline of the Huntingdon bypass forms a thin brown strip running through the jigsaw of green and yellow fields between Swavesey and the east coast main line railway.

We are careful to minimise our impact on the surrounding environment while we work, and the environment keeps reminding us that it is all around us too. On a progress visit through the River Great Ouse viaduct site recently, I was joined by an unexpected companion: a heron standing in one of the lakes near the temporary bridge, seemingly surveying the piling team's work.

An important part of the project has been the planning of environmental mitigation so that, by the time the project is completed, its footprint on the surrounding natural environment is as small as possible. A team of ecologists is working with wildlife including water voles, great crested newts, kestrels, bats and barn owls, as well as some protected plant species, to create new habitats. More information will be made available as work progresses.

In addition, the team will replant twice as many trees as have been felled throughout the project by the time it is completed. The trees will be carefully selected to fit in with the existing local environment.

Creating the new road's building blocks

Chris continues:

With construction gathering pace, we have now started tackling some of the biggest challenges on the project and it is exciting to see our innovative plans take shape on the ground, including the foundations and some of the columns for the viaduct on both sides of the River Great Ouse.

Columns for some of the 34 bridges to be built throughout the project have now started appearing along Ermine Street (A1198), the A1 and at the site of the future, 750-metre long River Great Ouse viaduct. The foundations for the viaduct columns are as deep as 35 metres and are made up of steel-reinforced concrete.

The piling team has drilled deep under the layers of clay and silt either side of the River Great Ouse to ensure the foundations and the viaduct columns themselves are stable enough to carry the 800 concrete bridge deck panels, weighing 25 tonnes each, on which the new carriageway will be built.

View from the River Great Ouse temporary bridge with piling machinery digging the column foundations.

While the foundations and columns for some of the bridges and the viaduct are being installed, work to cast the concrete panels for the bridge decks, including the 800 needed for the viaduct alone, has also started.

Bridge deck concrete panels being cast at the on-site casting plant near the Brampton compound.

The concrete panels are being cast on the construction site, near the Brampton compound, to avoid having to transport them via the road network, further minimising disruption for road users.

Another way in which the project minimises its use of the surrounding road network is through the use of materials from several borrow pits dotted along the construction site. Instead of having to bring over the 5 million tonnes of materials needed to build the road, more than half of it is being supplied from the site itself.

Working with local communities

Another important aspect of the project is its focus on connecting local communities.

Highways England strategic engagement manager Mike Evans explains:

The A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon upgrade is the biggest road project

currently in construction in the UK, and we want to make sure that the communities living alongside it have access to the information they need.

The project team launched our mobile visitor centre back in March, which they use to visit towns and villages along the length of the route and further afield to share updates about the scheme including information to help people plan their journeys, possible job opportunities and other topics of interest.

Mike adds:

The centre has been a great success so far, with many visits completed at different locations along the whole route and more dates planned in the coming months. We are always open for bookings so please contact us today to enquire.

Mike continues:

Our commitment to the local community is also to give them the opportunity to respond to the changes our project brings. We launched the A14 Community Fund last year to support a range of activities with a focus on bringing communities closer together.

Groups can submit projects linked with the new road within a range of themes including the environment, art or skills and selected projects will receive a grant of up to £10,000.

The first three rounds of funding applications have been completed and more than £50,000 have been allocated to eight different projects including primary school murals, skills projects for unemployed people, projects linked to cycling and to wildlife.

Find out more information about the [A14 Community fund](#).

To book the mobile visitor centre to attend a public event for free, call 0800 270 0114 or email A14CambridgeHuntingdon@highwaysengland.co.uk.

For the latest information about the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement scheme, [visit the project page](#), follow [@A14C2H](#) on Twitter and like our [Facebook page](#).

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.

Press release: Warning for owners of unregistered boats after skippers prosecuted in Northamptonshire

Boat owners are being urged to make sure their vessels are registered – or face paying hefty fines.

The call comes after Environment Agency inspectors found two boats moored without their registration plates on the rivers Great Ouse and Nene.

The discovery resulted in the vessels' owners being prosecuted and ordered to forfeit a combined total of more than £1,200.

Boats must be registered

It is a legal requirement for boaters to [register any craft](#) they keep, use or let for hire on Environment Agency waterways, and to clearly display a valid registration plate. Not doing so carries a maximum fine of £1,000, as well as a criminal record.

Mr Kevin Sagers of Lyn Road, Ely, and Mr Christopher King of Riverside Mead, Peterborough, both failed to register their vessels as required by law.

Mr Sagers, whose unregistered boat, named Lazy Lady, was found on 9 December 2016 on the Great Ouse at Littleport in Cambridgeshire, was proved guilty in absence and ordered to pay penalties totalling £734. Mr King, whose vessel, called Little Jo Larkin, was discovered on 26 July 2016 on the Nene at Stanground Marina in Peterborough, pleaded guilty and had to pay £493.

Their cases were heard at Peterborough Magistrates' Court on 14 June and 22 June, respectively.

Offenders face £1,000 fines

Nathan Arnold, partnerships and development team leader at the Environment Agency said:

Our historic and precious waterways are an important part of our nation's heritage and are enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people every year.

A significant part of caring for them, protecting them, and

ensuring people continue to enjoy them is funded by boaters paying their way. Those who don't contribute as they should are threatening the future of our waterways – and we won't hesitate to take action against them.

Unregistered boats are hazardous

As well as not contributing to the upkeep of waterways, unregistered boats can be unsafe, hazardous to other river users, and a pollution risk to the local environment.

The Environment Agency looks after 353 miles of navigable waterways in the [Anglian network](#), which includes the Ancholme, Black Sluice, Glen, Welland, Nene, Great Ouse and Stour, as well as associated locks and navigation facilities like moorings, showers and toilets.

More information about boating and waterways, including registering vessels, is available via www.gov.uk/ea. If you suspect a boat is illegal, please contact the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506 or email waterways.enforcementanglian@environment-agency.gov.uk.

[Speech: Sajid Javid's speech to the LGA conference 2017](#)

Good afternoon everyone.

This week we're marking the LGA's 20th birthday, a great achievement.

When the association was formed, back in the spring of 1997, the national political scene was very different from today

We had a Conservative Prime Minister leading a minority government and facing big questions over Europe...

A charismatic, populist leader of the opposition promising the earth to young voters...

The Liberal Democrats could fit all their MPs in a minibus...

Plus ca change, as they say...

The LGA's 20th anniversary should be a time for celebration.

For focussing on the very best of local government, highlighting successes and raising a glass to future achievements.

But this year, I don't think any of us are in the mood for revelry.

In the past 4 months we have seen terrorist attacks in Westminster, in Manchester, at London Bridge, and in Finsbury Park.

And of course, last month saw the tragic catastrophe at Grenfell Tower.

So much of the response has been exemplary.

Selfless men and women from our emergency services, in local government and across the public sector working all hours to keep their communities safe.

These local heroes have shown what public service really means.

They have my thanks, and those of a grateful nation.

I would also like to pay tribute to the role that you in this room have played.

The past months have not been easy.

But, again and again, I've seen you coming together to support each other through these testing times.

Nine London councils have been involved in the recovery at Grenfell – and I am grateful to the LGA for the work they have been doing with my department to ensure that other towers around the country are safe for the families that live in them.

But none of this changes the fact that, in Britain in 2017, the fire at Grenfell simply should not have been possible.

Nor does it change the fact that there were serious failings in the immediate aftermath; failings that created unnecessary suffering for residents who had already suffered too much.

So while I don't want to ignore or disregard the amazing work the LGA has done over the past 20 years, you'll forgive me if, today, I reflect on what has gone wrong in local government – and what we need to do to, together, to fix it.

Grenfell and the crisis of trust

I've been in politics and government for 7 years now.

And nothing I've seen in that time hit me harder than what happened to the people of Grenfell Tower.

It was a disaster on a scale we hadn't seen for many years.

The television pictures were harrowing.

But what the survivors saw and experienced...

Well, I cannot even begin to imagine how hard it must be for them.

When I visited the community support centre I spoke to one family that lived about halfway up the tower.

Mum, dad and children.

When the fire broke out they followed official advice: they stayed put and waited for help.

But as the flames and smoke closed in, the father decided it was time to get his family out.

And as they headed for the exits he stayed at the back, making sure nobody was left behind.

The mother led her children to safety.

But in the smoke and confusion, she lost touch with her husband.

When I met her she was hopeful they were about to be reunited, that she would see her husband again soon.

When I met her son, he was trying to find the words to tell his mother that his father's body had been found in the stairwell.

It's not a conversation I'll ever forget.

I'm not afraid to say that it shook me to my core.

Like my parents, that family had come to this country in search of opportunity, in search of a better life.

And we, as a country, failed them.

Just as we failed all the victims of that terrible tragedy.

There are many questions that need answering about the Grenfell Fire.

There may have been failures by individuals, failures by organisations and failures of public policy at all levels stretching back several decades.

The public inquiry will get to the bottom of what happened.

We must allow that inquiry, and the criminal investigation, to run their course, and be careful not to prejudge or prejudice either of them.

But, speaking to survivors, people in the local community, and people in tower blocks around the country, one thing is abundantly clear.

Local government is facing a looming crisis of trust.

A decade ago, up in Blackpool, David Cameron said that you can't drop a fully-formed democracy out of an aeroplane at 40,000 feet.

He was talking about foreign wars and military interventions, but it's a lesson that all of us here today would do well to remember.

Because all politics is local.

Whether you're councillor or an MP, we are elected by our local communities to serve the people of our local communities – to ensure their interests are put first.

We see and feel the effect of our decisions on our streets, and in the services we use every day.

And when something isn't working, when something isn't right, it is our duty to speak up and do something about it.

I know how hard many of us work to do just that.

But if the events of the past few weeks have taught us anything, it's that we have to raise our game.

The ties that bind local government to local communities have not snapped.

But if we don't act now, such a time may one day be upon us.

Rebuilding trust

We must rebuild, refresh and reinforce the trust that local people have in local democracy.

But that won't happen by hiding away.

Just as we can't drop a democracy out of an aeroplane, so we can't rebuild one from behind castle walls.

If people are going to trust their elected representatives, they have to see them working in the harsh light of the public eye, not in comforting shadows behind closed doors.

Not only must democracy exist; it must be seen to exist.

It can't be about decisions made in private meeting rooms.

Nor can it be about experts telling people what's best for them without ever taking the time to listen to their worries and concerns.

After all, government is about serving people – not simply telling them what to do.

And local government must show that it is FOR the people – not just OF the people.

Supporting communities

So our mission has to be local government that is truly engaged with and supportive of communities.

These aren't communities as government-designated groups.

People carefully categorised into boxes that can be ticked on official forms.

I'm talking about the genuine communities made up of people connected by common bonds and shared values – whether built around neighbourhood, background, or beliefs.

It's what I've seen at Grenfell Tower.

The council may have built the tower, but the people built the community.

A network of mutual support that government can never replicate and should never attempt to replicate.

A community where support is given not because of any entitlement, but simply out of love and compassion and basic human decency.

And while it's been inspiring to see the community around Grenfell Tower swinging into action, it can't help but make the loss all the more heartbreaking.

It is these kind of communities we need to be much, much better at supporting.

Above all else they must be listened to. They must be heard.

It must be an honest and open discussion across all communities.

Where consultation isn't just treated as a legal necessity, but a genuine engagement in which all views – even ones we don't like – are treated as if they could actually be right.

Where we value voices, dissenting or otherwise.

It will require us to tackle some deep-rooted issues which for too long we have collectively failed to deal with.

Honesty about the housing we need

Just look at housing.

It's hard to believe now, but just a few years ago it was fashionable for people to question the need for more house building.

They'd point to obvious flaws in the housing market, or too many empty homes, or immigration.

Today, most people recognise that even if those issues were solved overnight, it would still not be enough.

There's a serious shortage of decent, affordable housing in this country.

It's not the fault of any one government or party – we all carry some of the blame.

Since the 1970s – under Wilson, Callaghan, Thatcher, Major, Blair, Brown, Cameron and now May – we've supplied an average of 160,000 new homes each year.

That's far below what's needed

And that failure of supply to keep up with demand has led to predictable results.

Across the country the average house now costs almost 8 times average earnings – an all-time record.

Unless they can get a leg up from their parents, for many young people the dream of home ownership is just that – a dream.

And it's in housing that that we see most starkly the problems of inequality in this country.

Between those with wealth, and those without.

Between old and young.

And between those with security, and those who live with uncertainty day-in day-out.

The simple fact is that to put this right we need to build more homes that people want to live in, in places people want to live.

Between 225,000 and 275,000 of them every year, according to independent estimates.

That may sound simple enough, but as I said it's a goal that has proved elusive for every government since the 1970s.

So we need to rethink the entire process of development and, as ever, that starts with planning.

Years after local plans were introduced, some councils still haven't produced one.

Others produced a plan when the policy was first introduced, but haven't touched it since and are left with a dusty document that's hopelessly out-of-date and irrelevant to the real needs of their communities.

And then there are those councils that have an up-to-date plan, but have failed to be honest about the level of housing they need in their area.

It's not good enough.

The era of tolerating such poor, patchy performance is over.

Today I can confirm that this month we will launch a consultation on a new way for councils to assess their local housing requirements, as we promised in the [housing white paper](#).

Our aim is simple: to ensure these plans begin life as they should, with an honest, objective assessment of how much housing is required.

That means a much more frank, open discussion with local residents and communities.

It also requires a new approach.

One that is straightforward, so everyone can understand the process.

One that is transparent, so decisions are not hidden behind complexity or bureaucracy.

And one that is consistent, so every community, from the biggest city to the smallest hamlet, can be confident their council is assessing housing need properly and fairly.

After all, nothing is more corrosive to trust than the idea that some areas are being treated better than others.

Where housing is particularly unaffordable, local leaders need to take a long, hard, honest look to see if they are planning for the right number of homes.

And it's not enough that plans start honest; they need to stay that way.

So we'll also insist they are reviewed at least every 5 years.

I'm under no illusion that these plans will require courage to both conceive and execute.

There will be tough decisions, difficult conversations.

But that is what political leadership is about.

Showing real ambition for the communities you serve and doing the right thing, not the easy thing.

Now I know you're sitting there thinking "That's great Saj, but I don't need more bureaucracy."

"I want to build houses, not piles of paperwork."

Well, let me assure you that the last thing I want to do is to add unnecessary burdens to local government.

Yes I want these plans to be more honest, and yes I want the local debates and challenges to be taken head on.

But I also want these plans to be simpler, faster, and cheaper to produce.

That's exactly what the consultation will propose.

Providing the right infrastructure

The new system will make a big difference but I'm not naïve.

I know that plans and ambitions are not enough on their own.

If there was one thing that made our housing white paper different from its predecessors, it was the recognition that there is no single magic bullet that will solve all the problems of our housing market.

It's simply too big and too complex for one policy to fix, and that's why action is needed on many fronts.

Look at infrastructure.

Across the country there are housing sites that never get going because the final piece of funding for infrastructure is missing.

The larger the site the bigger the problems.

Many crucial strategic housing schemes struggle to get off the drawing board because it proves impossible to co-ordinate and pay for the upfront infrastructure that's required.

And as far as local communities are concerned, it comes back to trust.

Most people are willing to accept new housing in their areas, they know that their children and grandchildren need places to live.

But they also don't want to see massive development being imposed on an area where schools, GP surgeries, roads, buses and trains are already under pressure.

They'll accept the new homes, but they also want the right infrastructure put in at the right time in a joined up way.

It's not exactly an unreasonable request.

So where there are ambitions to do that, we will help through our [Housing Infrastructure Fund](#).

We announced plans for the fund earlier this year and I'm delighted that we're publishing the prospectus today.

It's an invitation to bid for a share of £2.3 billion that has been set aside to pay for the infrastructure we need alongside new homes.

Housing deals

I know infrastructure isn't the only barrier to delivering new housing.

I know in some places you may need extra support to deliver ambitious proposals to meet your housing demand.

Well if you're prepared to do what it takes to meet that demand and deliver genuinely additional housing, then I will consider all tools at my disposal to support you in that.

But only if you're ambitious enough.

By ambitious I mean greater collaboration with neighbouring areas.

A more strategic approach to decisions on housing and infrastructure.

More innovation and high quality design in new homes.

And an eye for creating the right conditions for new investment.

I want to strike some housing deals with a small number of places, so if you are one of those ambitious councils, you know where to find me.

Strong political leadership

If we can tackle the injustices caused by our broken housing market we will be making a significant step towards rebuilding the trust in local politics.

But it is far from the only injustice that we need to deal with.

And as with housing, fixing any of these problems is far easier said than done.

We are talking about deep-set issues and it would be dishonest to suggest it is anything other than the work of years to address it.

That work will need strong local leadership.

In May we saw 6 new mayors elected by millions of people right across the country, including here in the West Midlands.

All 6 have wide-ranging new powers they can use to improve the lives of the communities they serve.

The driving force behind this devolution was the desire to bring decision-making to a more local level.

So my challenge to all those newly-elected mayors, whatever Party they're from, is to make good on that purpose – by using their powers to work with communities, tackling the problems that matter most to them and the wider community.

Whitehall is listening

I'm sure many of you will have been sitting there thinking that's all well and good but Whitehall could do a bit more listening of its own.

And you're right.

Last month's general election result was not the one that I wanted.

I'm sure it's not the result anyone in this room expected.

I'll let the pollsters and pundits argue and debate over "what it meant".

But I know one thing for sure.

The people of the UK may have delivered a hung Parliament, but they did not deliver a demand for inaction.

32 million people made their voices heard last month and they will not forgive us if we fail to heed their call.

Things have to change, things have to get better.

The work of local government will be central to that, and I'm determined you'll be listened to – just as we have listened in the past.

You asked for extra money for adult social care, and I made sure it was delivered in the settlement.

You asked for greater devolution of powers, and we paved the way for metro mayors across the country.

And you asked for more resources to help you plan for the homes you need, and through the Housing Infrastructure Fund and higher planning fees, we're helping with that too.

I can't promise you'll always get what you want.

But whether you ask for help, identify risks, or suggest opportunities, I can promise that we will listen.

Conclusion

In the midst of all the uncertainty, I know that your cool-headed commitment to deliver for your communities will carry on.

I don't care whether you're on the blue team, the red team, the yellow team or any other team for that matter.

I know that you are in local government for the right reasons.

Because you want to house the homeless.

You want to maintain the roads.

You want to keep the streets clean or make our parks beautiful.

You want to see that our young people are taught properly and our elderly are cared for with the dignity they deserve.

Doing all this requires practical action, yes, but not everything can be converted into pounds and pence.

Good leadership matters too.

And ultimately, for all of us, whether we're in local or national government, our first role is to lead.

What happened in Kensington 3 weeks ago showed just how important leadership is.

So my challenge for local government this year is not only to provide the services your communities deserve, or plan for new homes and growth they need, but also to be the leaders they can trust.

To listen to your communities.

To treat them with care and respect.

And, above all, to keep them safe.

Grenfell will forever serve as a reminder of what went wrong.

Let us rise from those ashes and promise to be better.

Speech: Grenfell Tower disaster: David Lidington statement

The public inquiry into the Grenfell Tower disaster has understandably been the subject of much commentary. People have every right to feel passionate about this. The community – and the whole country – want answers following such a horrific tragedy.

That is why it is right that there should be a judge-led inquiry into the disaster, and that the residents are consulted before the terms of reference are decided. Our judiciary is respected the world over as fair, free from improper influence, and truly independent from government and Parliament. As Lord Chancellor, I am clear that their motives and integrity should always be respected and not impugned by politicians. I have complete confidence that Sir Martin Moore-Bick will lead the inquiry into this tragedy with

impartiality and with a determination to get to the truth and see justice done.