

New appointments and a fresh focus on hearings for the Planning Inspectorate

The Planning Inspectorate has made three appointments to senior leadership posts, with all successful candidates coming from within the organisation.

They are:

- Sean Canavan – Director of Strategy
- Rachel Graham – Chief Digital and Information Officer
- Richard Schofield – Head of Planning Inspector Profession

Sean will take over the role of Director of Strategy from Christine Thorby who leaves the Planning Inspectorate at the end of this month.

Rachel Graham's new leadership role for digital and information has been created to reflect the increasing importance that data and digital continues to have in all aspects of the Planning Inspectorate's work including contributions to the reforms of the planning system.

As Head of Planning Inspector Profession, Richard, a highly experienced inspector, will lead on all professional development of inspectors, and he will be the main liaison with Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and other key stakeholders.

Sarah Richards, Chief Executive of The Planning Inspectorate, said:

"I am pleased that these are all internal promotions. These appointments reflect the impressive skills and expertise of our staff and the benefits of nurturing and developing talent across the Planning Inspectorate. The knowledge and expertise of each will be invaluable in continuing the work of the Executive Team and delivering our priorities in future."

The appointments come at an exciting time as delivery of the revised [five-year strategic plan](#) continues and with important work taking place currently to improve key areas including the following:

Digital Improvements

Appeals Service

We are working on digital improvements to the planning appeal journey so that it is easier, faster and more cost effective to appeal a planning decision.

We have been piloting the service for householder appeals with three local planning authorities (see our [previous blog post](#)). This has provided useful data and we are now looking to expand the pilot from late April/early May when we will include further types of planning appeals with a selected group of Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and enable the service to be accessed

via GOV.UK

This is a big step forward as it enables us to increase the number of appeals being submitted via the new service meaning we learn quicker about what works and what needs improving. This is critical not only for improving the service we offer to customers but so that we can use that feedback when developing the appeal submission process for all our other types of appeals; work that is planned for the next 6 months.

Applications Service

The Applications Service covers any application dealt with by the Planning Inspectorate and the work to modernise our applications service has been progressing well. The majority of applications are National Infrastructure planning applications, with other applications including Common Land, Drought Orders and Permits, Compulsory Purchase Orders, and Necessary Wayleaves.

The National Infrastructure service is the first of our applications services being developed. We are planning to go live with a first public pilot in early April 2022 with a new 'Register to have your say' service. This will streamline the service to deliver value to users and bring us one step closer to our vision of "Making the National Infrastructure Consenting process inclusive, efficient and understandable for everyone."

Our performance: improving and a new focus on hearings

During the second half of 2021 we focused on proposals for national infrastructure, examining local plans and deciding more appeal cases requiring hearings or inquiries. This work is most likely to be of greatest community interest or greatest economic significance as the country rebuilds its economy after the pandemic.

- we recently submitted reports to the Secretary of State for a new power station at Sizewell and for improvements to the A47 between Blofield and North Burlingham in Norfolk
- we continue to receive new Local Plans for examination, including the plan for the Manchester Combined Authority area
- we have closed more than 700 cases through inquiry in the last year and reduced the number of cases awaiting an inquiry by nearly a quarter

Over the last few months, we have successfully held more site visits, hearings and inquiries than in previous months. We are now deciding more cases than we are receiving. Our decision speeds will improve as our overall caseload falls.

We are now implementing further improvements for planning appeals decided after a hearing. We know our decisions on appeals requiring hearings have, for quite some time, taken longer than our customers expect. Although we have made progress in reducing the overall number of live appeals needing hearings, the average time it takes to decide these cases is still around a

year.

From April 2022 we will be aiming to decide these appeals in an end-to-end time of no longer than 24 weeks, using many of the approaches we used to improve the inquiry process after the Rosewell Review. We will:

- validate hearing appeal casework within five working days of submission
- start the appeal and assign an inspector within a week of validation
- set out and require all parties to follow the timetable from the start
- have a stronger focus on the timely submission of evidence and documents by parties, including agreed statements of common ground and draft developer contribution/S106 agreements
- hold the hearing within 10 to 14 weeks of the start date
- engage with parties early in the programme. The inspector will identify if elements can be addressed through written representations and what elements require discussion in the hearing itself

We will continue to progress existing appeals on their current timetables. These improvements for new appeals will provide much needed certainty, with the appeal process being an essential part of a fair planning system.

[New fund gives communities power to deliver affordable homes](#)

Over 1,200 new affordable homes will be delivered across England with communities put in charge of where and how they will be built, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announced today, Friday 25 March 2022.

The £4 million Community Housing Fund (CHF) programme helps community groups build homes in their local area by covering a range of costs incurred in the process – including renting the town hall for a public meeting, paying for searches, administration costs or legal advice, design work and planning applications. Once planning permission is granted, community groups can fund the build through the government's Affordable Homes Programme, a Housing Association or developer or via a bank loan.

The fund will help level up the country by regenerating derelict areas and delivering homes that are affordable for local people, so more residents can live in the places they love.

The new houses will be part of locally-based organisations such as land trusts or housing co-operatives meaning they stay under the control of the community.

Housing Minister Rt Hon Stuart Andrew MP said:

Part of our Levelling Up mission is to build the quality homes that communities want and need. Community led housing is a great way to ensure local housing needs are met by putting local people in the driving seat.

It is about residents playing a leading and lasting role creating genuinely affordable homes which regenerate and restore pride in communities.

Community led housing also helps improve the design and construction quality of homes using modern methods of construction and gives more opportunity for smaller house builders to work on projects, growing local economies.

Tom Chance from Community Led Homes added:

Community led housing groups are rooted in their communities and truly understand local housing needs. There are so many fantastic community led housing projects planned across the country. This programme will help many of these projects come to fruition.

The fund will help deliver 52 housing projects in England, from Cornwall to Berwick-upon-Tweed. Bradford's Greenwood Community Led Housing group, will build 62 supported homes for people with autism, learning disabilities or dementia. In Leeds, 34 affordable homes are being built to regenerate a deprived part of the city following extensive involvement of residents in the design of the buildings.

Today's announcement follows the publication of the Bacon Review which recommended that reigniting the Community Housing Fund will create more opportunities for communities to build.

-The Community Housing Fund Revenue Programme 2021/22 is funded by DLUHC and will help community-led housing groups in the latter stages of pre-development.

The Community Led Homes Partnership (CLH) will manage the grant programme, assessing all applications and administering the grants.

CLH is a partnership of four leading community-led housing organisations: Confederation of Co-operative Housing, Locality, National Community Land Trust Network and the UK Co-Housing Network.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will be publishing its response to the Bacon Review soon.

[Community Led Homes](#) exists to make community led housing a mainstream housing option. We provide training, funding and practical support to local groups, councils and developers. By bringing people together from the grassroots to those in power, communities can create the homes they want and need.

Full regional breakdown

Local Authority	Organisation	Project name	Funding amount (£)	Postcode of project site	Affordable homes
Bristol City	Ambition Lawrence Weston	Astry Close Community Led Housing	21350	BS11 0RA	34
West Sussex	Angmering Community Land Trust	Mayflower Way	113770	BN16 4AY	12
Bristol City	Ashley Vale Action Group Limited	Bridge Farm	50000	BS16 1BQ	22
Northumberland	Berwick Youth Project	Old Grammar School	32000	TD15 1HF	8
Rother	Bexhill Community Land Trust	Cemetery Lodge / Turkey Road	109323	TN39 5JE	22
Brighton and Hove	Bunker Housing Co-operative Limited	Hinton Close	71743	BN1 7BT	10
Calderdale	Calder Valley Community Land Trust Limited	High Street, Hebden Bridge	37966	HX7 6AZ	20
County Durham	Canney Communities	Canney Communities: Project 1	44630	DL14 8QH	16
Stratford-on-Avon District	Claverdon Community Land Trust	Curliou Lane, Norton Lindsey – Affordable Housing Development	47960	CV35 8DL	10
Cornwall	Cornwall CLT Limited	Ennor Farm St Mary's Isles of Scilly	59091	TR21 0LP	12
Cornwall	Cornwall CLT Limited	Trekersby	49937	TR16 5AG	10
Cornwall	Cornwall CLT Limited	Gwennap	38499	TR16 6BD	10
Kingston upon Hull	Cosmo Community CIC	Cosmo Community CIC	51087	HU5 2DD	20
Eastbourne	Eastbourne Community Land Trust Limited	Bibbenden Close	71310	BN23 7HX	5
Stroud	Eastington Community Land Trust Limited	Eastington CLT: Project 2	33189	GL10 3AQ	31
Holmfirth West Yorkshire	EcoHOLMEs CLT	The Chippings	67470	HD9 1SX	10

Manchester	Edward Mayes Trust	Mayes Gardens	22176	M4 7FN	2
Sheffield	Five Rivers Cohousing Company Ltd	Wisewood Cohousing	62040	S6 4TW	22
Bristol City	Furze Co-operative	Furze Co-operative	78326	BS7 9UH	15
East Riding of Yorkshire	Heron Educational Foundation	Heron Homes Humbleton	15830	HU11 4NN	6
Wealden	Herstmonceux Community Land Trust Limited	Strawberry Field	122507	BN27 4RT	9
Liverpool City	Homebaked Community Land Trust CIC	Homebaked	22450	L4 0UF	8
Gateshead	Hospital of King James Gateshead	The Hospital of St James at Gateshead	191399	NE8 3PA	51
Bradford	Inspired Neighbourhoods Housing Trust	Greenwood Community Led Housing	330192	BD2 1JX	62
Birmingham	Kajans Women's Enterprise Ltd	Kajans Community-Led Affordable Housing	67207	B18 5AU	52
South Lakeland	Kendal Almshouse Charity	Kendal Almshouse Charity. Romleigh Development.	34028	LA9 5QR	3
East Cambridgeshire	Kennett Community Land Trust	Kennett Garden Village	53525	CB8 7QF	60
Leeds	Leeds Community Homes	Mistress Lane	125000	LS12 2HL	34
Manchester	LGBT Foundation Ltd	Manchester LGBT Extra Care Housing	54926	M16 8AJ	103
Bristol City	Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust	Home Made	40000	BS7 9YD	5
Bristol City	Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust: Turner Gardens	Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust: Turner Gardens	45000	BS7 9YD	19
Wiltshire	Nadder Community Land Trust Ltd.	The Old Sports Centre	18275	SP3 6HJ	6
Oxford City	Oxfordshire Community Land Trust	Dean Court Affordable Homes for Rent	67375	OX2 9DD	8

East Hampshire	Petersfield Community Land Trust	Reservoir Lane	102045	GU32 2HY	12
Sefton	SAFE Community Homes CIC	Destination Bootle	82700	L20 4AP	187
Somerset West and Taunton	Somerset Co- housing Community Land Trust Limited (Somerset Co- operative CLT)	Wiveliscombe	182276	TA4 2NY	29
Devon	South Dartmoor Community Energy	South Dartmoor Community Energy/Teign	64845	PL21 0DN	30
South Tyneside	South Tyneside Churches KEY Project	South Tyneside Churches KEY Project	5000	NE33 5RU	10
Bristol City	Southmead Development Trust	Southmead Regeneration – Glencoyne Square	268205	BS10 6EU	95
Cornwall	St Ives CLT	St Ives CLT: Project 1 Old Vicarage Flats	30000	TR26 2DS	6
East Cambridgeshire	Swaffham Bulbeck Community Land Trust	Pony and Cemetery Fields Development	101736	CB25 0LU	18
South Oxfordshire	Thame Community Land Trust	Thame Homes for Thame Families	137299	OX9 2DR	31
Herefordshire	The Buchanan Trust	North Farm	28942	HR8 1JY	2
Maidstone	The Honywood and Douglas Charity (211272)	Honywood and Douglas Charity 23 High street Lenham	50224	ME17 2QD	3
East Suffolk	Ufford Charities	Refurbishment and Extensions to the Ufford Almshouses	7975	IP13 6DS	2
Rutland	Uppingham Homes CLT	The Badley Orchard Housing Development	22348	LE15 9EB	6
Bristol City	We Can Make Knowle West CIC	We Can Make good homes	75000	BS4 1NL	17
Chichester	Westbourne Community Trust	Mill Road Affordable Housing Project	62900	P010 8TH	12

Cornwall	Wheal Luna	Wheal Luna	29925	TR5 0NH	4
Calderdale	Women Centre Ltd	Women Centre Housing Initiative	22191	HX1 1JN	23
City of York	Yospace CLT Limited	Lowfield Green: Project 1	33595	Y024 3FH	19
City of York	Yospace CLT Limited	Morrell House – Fully Mutual Housing Co-op (FMHC)	74154	Y030 6EZ	17

Welsh grassroots football facilities receive regeneration funding

- 17 projects to benefit from first tranche of £230 million investment in football facilities across the UK to level up access to quality sport provision.
- Improvements to be made in partnership with the Football Association of Wales.

Grassroots football facilities across Wales will benefit from an initial £1.3 million of UK Government funding for improvements, as part of a major commitment to levelling up access to physical activity across the nation.

Seventeen projects across Wales will receive funding to create and improve pitches, changing rooms and pavilions, so that more local communities can access high-quality facilities.

Projects have been chosen for their ability to deliver improved facilities in deprived areas, support multi-sport use and increase participation among currently under-represented groups, including women, girls and disabled players.

Examples include Baglan Football Field in Rhondda Cynon Taf, which will receive £100,000 towards converting their grass pitch to 3G artificial grass, improving facilities for the women's game and catering for the needs of everyone in the community. Over £57,000 has been granted to Ysgol y Grango School Club Hub in Wrexham to provide better facilities for more community clubs. £35,000 will go to upgrading the surface and replacing floodlights at Cae Piod in Ceredigion.

[A full list of funded projects can be found here.](#)

The funding, combined with contributions from clubs and other local partners, will improve the quality of community facilities, bring people together to enjoy playing sport in their local area, regenerate communities and enhance social cohesion.

It forms part of a £25 million UK-wide investment in grassroots facilities during this financial year, out of a total of £230 million set to be invested to help to build or upgrade up to 8,000 quality pitches across the UK over the next four years. The funding will also support the construction or refurbishment of clubhouses, changing facilities and community buildings.

The Football Association of Wales is delivering the programme on behalf of the UK Government in Wales. Following the UK Government's commitment, the Welsh Government has also opted to invest £1.3 million to improve grassroots facilities this year – the FAW is working with both governments to maximise the benefits of this combined investment for local communities.

UK Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston said:

We are committed to improving access to high quality sports facilities for the underprivileged and underrepresented in Wales.

From female changing rooms at Treborth Playing Fields in Bangor to new pitches in Welshpool and Swansea, this will ensure more people can enjoy the physical and mental health benefits of sport at top class facilities in their local community.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

“Grassroots football clubs are at the heart of their communities, providing sporting opportunities but also bringing incalculable health and social benefits to local children and adults.

“They play a hugely important role and I’m thrilled that the UK Government is making this investment in facilities the length and breadth of Wales which will help the clubs and groups receiving this funding to continue their fantastic work.”

The Football Association of Wales is pleased to be working closely with the UK and Welsh Governments to improve facilities across Wales and are grateful for their support.

Improving the facilities across Wales is the FAW's number one strategic objective. This initial round of funding marks the beginning of an exciting journey, and the FAW will continue to work closely with all of its stakeholders, to create a facilities investment fund in order to deliver impactful projects across all corners of Wales as we strive to make football inclusive and accessible to all.

Today's announcement follows a joint 'Expression of Interest' submitted to UEFA by the Football Associations of England, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales on Wednesday (23 March).

The Governments of the UK, Ireland, Scotland and Wales have confirmed their support for the EOI submission and, given the Northern Ireland Executive is currently not meeting formally, officials there continue to observe the process closely.

Formal discussions on the technical specifications for the tournament are expected to take place with European football's governing body over the coming weeks, before a final decision is made on submitting a formal bid.

On the prospects of hosting UEFA EURO 2028, Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston added:

This is welcome news from the FAs, and the Government remains committed to working closely with them and our partners in the Government of Ireland and the Devolved Administrations to bring UEFA's flagship festival of international football to the UK and Ireland.

Our unprecedented partnership creates the potential for the best EUROs ever, and we are passionate about bringing another world-leading sporting event here, creating a real celebration of football for people across the UK and Ireland.

The government continues to demonstrate its commitment to sport and recreation, recently announcing that it is also investing £30 million to refurbish more than 4,500 tennis courts across the UK.

[Bernadette Conroy appointed as new Chair of the Regulator of Social Housing](#)

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, has today (25 March 2022) confirmed Bernadette Conroy as the new Chair of the Regulator of Social Housing. The appointment follows a hearing by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee on Monday 21 March, after which they endorsed her suitability for the role.

She has been appointed for a period of three years, commencing on 1 April 2022.

Minister for Rough Sleeping, Eddie Hughes MP, said:

I am delighted to appoint Bernadette Conroy as the new Chair of the Regulator of Social Housing.

Bernadette brings with her a wealth of experience which will be invaluable as we transform how the social housing sector is regulated and I look forward to working closely with her over the next three years.

Chair of the Regulator of Social Housing, Bernadette Conroy, said:

I am honoured to be appointed as the new Chair of the Regulator of Social Housing. This is a challenging time in the sector as we look to implement the enhanced regulation set out in the Social Housing White Paper.

I look forward to building on the strong leadership of my predecessor, Simon Dow, as we create a more diverse Regulator that embraces proactive consumer regulation.

Bernadette Conroy is an experienced Chair and Non-Executive Director (NED) operating across a number of sectors. These include financial services regulation, where she is a NED for the Financial Conduct Authority and housing, where she is Chair of Network Homes. She is also the Independent Chair of the Buildings and Estates Committee of Cambridge University with responsibility for the development and maintenance of the University's estate and its capital build programme and a NED for Milton Keynes Development Partnerships. Prior to taking on a non-executive portfolio, Bernadette held a number of executive roles in financial services, latterly as Global Head of Strategy and Planning for HSBC Corporate, Investment Banking and Markets. She has an MA in Mathematics from Cambridge University and an MBA from INSEAD. In 2020, Bernadette received the Sunday Times Not for Profit Non-Executive Director of the Year award.

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) is one of DLUHC's key arm's length bodies. It seeks to promote a viable, efficient, and well governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. The RSH is also responsible for regulation of consumer standards, ensuring that existing tenants are provided with homes that are safe, and that landlords deliver good services.

Bodies such as the RSH are one of the ways the government is improving the lived experience of social housing tenants and ensuring they can hold landlords to account. The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper, published in November 2020, recognised the fundamental role of effective regulation in protecting and empowering social housing tenants, ensuring that landlords are effectively held to account to deliver the services expected of them.

It set out the government's commitment to significantly expand the Regulator of Social Housing, legislating to remove the 'serious detriment' test (where there is evidence of a standards breach at organisational level) and introduce a new, proactive approach to regulation of consumer issues such as quality of homes, landlord services and transparency, while maintaining robust economic regulation of the sector. Regulation of the social rented sector will also play support delivery of the commitment made in the Levelling Up White Paper to reduce non-decency in the rented sectors by 50%.

The Panel for the campaign was made up of:

- Lord Gary Porter, Panel Chair, Departmental Non-Executive Director
- Tracey Waltho, Director General Housing and Planning, Departmental official
- Debbie Gillatt, Senior Independent Panel Member

Bidding opens for two landmark Green Freeports in Scotland

- From today, consortiums can apply to set up 2 new Green Freeports in Scotland
- The UK and Scottish governments jointly set out their vision for prospective bidders
- Proposals must support ambitious net zero targets, create good quality jobs and deliver investment
- Builds on UK government's plan to level up whole of UK working with the devolved governments.

The UK and Scottish governments have today set out their shared vision for what Green Freeports in Scotland should look like, with bidding now open for the ground-breaking sites (25 March 2022).

A new prospectus for potential bidders sets out how the Green Freeports will regenerate local areas, create high quality jobs and support transition to a net zero economy.

Consortiums will have 12 weeks from today to assess the prospectus and prepare their bids, which will be jointly assessed by officials working together from the UK and Scottish governments, with ministers having an equal say on the final selection.

This comes after a landmark agreement was reached earlier this year by the governments to collaborate on two new Green Freeports, with £52 million in UK government funding provided.

Both governments are looking for Green Freeports in locations that take full

advantage of the diverse potential of Scotland's communities and welcome proposals from a wide range of groups.

Secretary of State for Levelling Up Michael Gove MP said:

I'm proud that today we have launched the bidding process for Green Freeports. They are a key part of our levelling up agenda, and will bring jobs and prosperity to the successful areas.

We have worked closely with the Scottish Government to ensure that Green Freeports support their transition to the net zero economy and help to regenerate local areas.

I am excited to see the innovative proposals come forward, and these Green Freeports built so they can start to deliver for the people of Scotland.

Applicants are being encouraged to show how the new Green Freeports will:

- Help boost the Scottish economy. This includes boosting the number of skilled jobs available for local people and creating an economy that makes a positive contribution internationally, delivering high quality, fair work for everyone.
- Support Scotland's transition to a net zero economy by reducing emissions and responding to climate change in a way that is fair for Scotland's communities. For example, making sure that vessels using the port reduce the use of fossil fuels.
- Form strong partnerships with ports, local businesses, academic institutions and local authorities that will contribute to both the net zero and levelling up agendas.
- Bring new investment into the surrounding areas and increase trade. This could be through developing specific spaces to develop and trial new ideas and technologies, and supporting innovative new firms.
- Advance equality and diversity, particularly for groups who are currently underrepresented in the Freeport industries and show how people affected by socio-economic disadvantage can benefit.

Scottish Government Economy Secretary Kate Forbes said:

This joint prospectus recognises the distinct needs of Scotland's economy by clearly setting out how any bids to establish Green Freeports in Scotland must help deliver net zero ambitions and embed fair work practices.

Earlier this month I published a new national strategy to help transform the economy. This included clear commitments that will help create good quality green jobs, deliver fairer working conditions, secure our just transition to net zero and grow international markets that bring new supply chain benefits to all of Scotland. Green Freeports will be an important vehicle to help

deliver these ambitions.

Teesside Freeport, which has recently begun operations, is estimated to create more than 18,000 new highly skilled jobs and generate £3.2 billion for the local community over 5 years. It is anticipated that the new Green Freeports will create similar benefits across Scotland.

It is expected that the successful Green Freeport locations will be announced in early autumn 2022, beginning operations in spring 2023.

Secretary of State for Scotland, Alister Jack said:

The UK government is investing £52 million to bring two Green Freeports to Scotland, working jointly with the Scottish Government. UK Freeports are a key part of the UK government's Levelling Up Strategy – they will bring inward investment, jobs, prosperity and regeneration.

It's great news that the prospectus has now been published and bids are now being welcomed. I know there is a huge amount of interest from Scottish operators, and I look forward to a really strong and creative field.

- Read the [bidding prospectus for Green Freeports in Scotland](#).
- Applicants and multi-applicant partnerships must submit their proposals to the Department for Levelling Up and Communities by 10.00 on 20 June 2022, 12 weeks from the date of publication of this prospectus. Proposals should be submitted via the [Green Freeports application portal](#)
- Freeports are special areas within the UK's borders where different economic regulations apply. Freeports are centred around one or more air, rail, or seaport, but can extend up to 45km beyond the port(s).

Read [more information on the ground-breaking deal to establish two new Green Freeports in Scotland](#).