

# Octopus Real Estate and Homes England Launch £175m Greener Homes Alliance

Octopus Real Estate, part of Octopus Group and a leading United Kingdom specialist real estate lender and investor, has partnered with Homes England, the Government's housing delivery agency, to create the Greener Homes Alliance.

The new Alliance will commit £175 million, providing both loan finance and expert support to SME housebuilders, enabling them to build more high quality, energy efficient homes throughout England.

As part of its broader efforts to expand the supply of finance available to SMEs, Homes England will provide £46 million of the £175 million.

The Alliance will provide loans of between £1 million and £20 million to finance new SME development projects. Homes funded must achieve a minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of B, and will benefit from increasing interest rate margin discounts as the energy efficiency of the homes increases above this (as measured using the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP)). Homes achieving an EPC rating of A will benefit from interest rate margin discounts of 2%.

Before starting their developments, SMEs will also benefit from free of charge, expert advice from sustainability consultants McBains and Octopus Energy – the United Kingdom's leading 100% renewable energy supplier and part of the Octopus Group.

McBains will provide design guidance and practical steps to achieve an improved EPC.

Octopus Real Estate offers flexibility and efficiency in its funding to developers, and this will remain a key element of the Greener Homes Alliance. Loans will be up to a maximum of 85% LTC or 70% LTGDV, to maximum loan sizes of £20 million.

The Alliance will support the construction of up to 750 new homes whilst also equipping SME housebuilders with knowledge and expertise around low carbon construction, allowing them to build to higher environmental standards, now and in the future.

Housing Minister RT Hon Christopher Pincher MP said: "We are determined to ensure that our homes are fit for the future and improving energy efficiency is a key part of our ambitions to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

"Our Future Homes Standard will ensure that from 2025 new homes produce at least 75% lower CO2 emissions and be future-proofed with low carbon heating.

"This partnership will help reach our targets for cleaner, greener homes for future generations."

Peter Denton, Chief Executive at Homes England said: “This new partnership, the latest in a series of impactful lending alliances, will give smaller housebuilders both the funding and the knowledge needed to build more sustainable homes.

“The Greener Homes Alliance brings developers and lenders closer together, providing affordable finance, improving knowledge sharing and creating new paths to net zero.”

Benjamin Davis, CEO of Octopus Real Estate, commented: “Creating more energy efficient homes across the United Kingdom is vital if we’re to make progress towards net zero. Our joint venture with Homes England will help meet this increasingly urgent need to develop more sustainable homes.

“The Alliance will provide access to funding and expertise to help developers ‘go green’ when making decisions for their developments. Given the public are more in tune than ever before about how energy efficient their homes are, and in turn their own impact on the environment – the opportunity for developers building greener homes is huge.

“As a B Corp, Octopus Real Estate is committed to our impact goals and the opportunity to work with the real estate sector, alongside institutional investors, to create choice for developers to future proof developments and drive the green acceleration of the property market.”

Andy Scott, Head of Residential Development at Octopus Real Estate, commented: “Although green credentials may be an aspiration for most developers, sometimes access to funding, costs and education can stand in the way of these aspirations.

“The Alliance will offer tangible discounts which can help fund the costs to support the delivery of green developments, plus access to advice and education, which will enable SME housebuilders to deliver future proof, energy efficient homes to be enjoyed for generations to come.

“On top of this, with the current news surrounding rising energy prices, building more energy efficient homes, with lower running costs, will pass on savings over the long term to consumers. The property market has an opportunity to play a meaningful role in tackling climate change, but we need to act now.

“We’re excited that we have the opportunity to start making an impact alongside Homes England and to think differently about how we build homes for future generations.”

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# New Trade and Agriculture Commission launched with measures to boost farming exports

International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan has launched a new strengthened Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC), as part of the [Government's response to the previous Commission's recommendations](#).

Chaired by Lorand Bartels, Professor of International Law, the new TAC will provide expert scrutiny of new trade deals once they reach the signature stage, helping ensure world-leading British agricultural standards are upheld.

The Government is also setting out more detail on measures being introduced to support farmers, in response to recommendations in the original TAC report. They include a new cohort of international 'agri-food attachés' who will work around the world to promote export opportunities for UK farmers and producers, providing market intelligence and technical expertise.

There will also be a new Food and Drink Export Council to work in collaboration with industry and governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to promote exports from all parts of the UK, helping to level up the country.

The response reconfirms that maintaining the UK's high standards will be a red line in all our trade negotiations, with no compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare or food standards. Any deal we sign with other countries will include protections for the agriculture industry, and we have a range of tools to defend British farming against any unfair trading practices.

## **International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:**

I'm delighted to welcome Professor Lorand Bartels as Chair of the new Trade and Agriculture Commission. A trade lawyer and academic, he brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the role and I look forward to working together.

I'm grateful to all the members of the original Trade and Agriculture Commission for their thorough and wide-reaching report. I want our farmers and food producers to be positive about the export opportunities that exist and take advantage of booming demand for British exports.

## **Trade and Agriculture Commission Chair Professor Lorand Bartels said:**

I am looking forward to getting started in the role and working with my new colleagues, who bring a wide range of expertise from different fields that will be of great benefit to the Commission.

The Commission has an important role to play in the scrutiny of new Free Trade Agreements and it's exciting to be involved as the UK forges new trading relationships all around the world.

**Environment Secretary George Eustice said:**

We welcome the contribution that the TAC report has made as we consider future trade policy and the approach that we will take to ensure that our high standards of food safety are maintained.

The new Commission will have a formal role to inform Parliamentarians and the public about how new Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are consistent with UK laws on animal welfare, animal and plant health, and the environment. Its members have expertise across the agricultural, food production, veterinary, animal welfare, environment and international trade policy sectors, among others.

The TAC's advice will inform a government report which will be laid before Parliament ahead of the ratification of any new FTA and following the signature stage.

Other commitments in the Government's response to the original TAC include going further than ever before to work with trading partners on animal welfare and tackling antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in our trade agreements, and using our influence in multilateral organisations to push for improved environmental and animal welfare standards in food production.

The Government's response builds on the steps already taken to deliver for UK farmers:

- Earlier this year, the highly successful Open Doors campaign was launched to help the industry seize new opportunities through trade agreements with priority markets
- Government is targeting opportunities in lucrative high-growth markets where demand for British exports is growing, including countries in the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) which are projected to account for 21% of global import demand for meat by 2030
- The UK recently secured better access to lucrative markets such as Japan for UK poultry and Mexico for UK pork, and made progress removing trade barriers which hold back our farmers, such as the US ban on British beef

**Further information**

Members of the new Trade and Agriculture Commission:

- Robert Anderson

- Professor Lorand Bartels (Chair)
  - Gracia Marin Duran
  - Catherine McBride
  - Jim Moseley
  - Cedric Porter
  - Meurig Raymond
  - Kate Rowell
  - Shanker Singham
  - Sir Lockwood Smith
  - Andrew Swift
  - Nick Von Westenholz
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## [AAIB Report, Tekever AR5 Evolution Mk 2, double engine shut down, Kent](#)

News story

In preparation for landing, both engines of a Tekever AR5 Evolution Mk 2 (G-TEKV) shut down unexpectedly. The External Pilot took control and landed it without further incident, 29 December 2020.



While orbiting south of the runway in preparation for landing at Lydd airport, both engines of the Tekever AR5 Evolution Mk 2 unmanned aircraft (G-TEKV) shut down unexpectedly. The External Pilot on the ground, who was visual with the aircraft, took control and landed it without further incident.

The dual engine shutdown was likely to have been caused by an on-aircraft data error.

Various safety actions, including improvements to the aircraft's hardware and software, and the Ground Control Station software, have been taken to reduce the risk of a reoccurrence.

[Read the report.](#)

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## [New “Nightingale” court opens in Warwick](#)

Press release

A fifth Nightingale court will open its doors in the Midlands as the push to speed up justice in the region gathers pace.



- Boost for justice in the Midlands as the region opens its fifth “Nightingale” court
- £14 million invested into Nightingale courts across the country so far
- Warwick site will begin hearing cases this month

A hotel in Warwick – conveniently located just off the M40 – joins other temporary courts located in Birmingham, Nottingham, Telford and Wolverhampton in efforts to increase capacity and tackle the impact of COVID-19 on the criminal justice system. Together they’ve delivered hundreds of sitting days during the pandemic, helping to minimise delays for victims, witnesses and defendants.

The hotel’s conference room usually hosts weddings and receptions but will provide two Crown courtrooms for jury trials involving burglary and drug offences.

The court comes equipped with the latest technology rolled out at speed by HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) during the pandemic. This means parties in the case can appear remotely by video where appropriate, to avoid any

delays to proceedings.

Courts Minister, James Cartlidge MP, said:

The new Warwick Nightingale court will provide vital additional courtrooms to give people in the Midlands faster access to justice.

We have already pumped £14 million into temporary courts across the country to increase capacity and will continue to help the criminal justice system recover from the pandemic, deliver swifter justice and support victims.

Today's announcement forms part of the significant action taken since the start of the pandemic to ensure the courts can recover from the pandemic and tackle delays. This includes:

- investing a quarter of a billion pounds to support recovery in the courts in the last financial year – including over £50 million for victims and support services
- ensuring there is no limit on the number of sitting days the Crown Court can sit this year
- working to reopen existing Crown courtrooms following the lifting of most restrictions in England and Wales (36 have reopened so far with more to follow soon)
- setting up Nightingale courtrooms across the country to increase capacity and ensure more trials can be heard – with a commitment to extend 32 Crown courtrooms that deal with criminal trials until March 2022
- hosting more than 20,000 hearings using remote technology each week (across all jurisdictions) – a huge rise from a standing start in March 2020

The impact of these measures is already being seen. England and Wales were among the first major jurisdictions in the world to resume jury trials; the number of outstanding cases has dropped by around 80,000 in the magistrates' courts since its peak in July 2020 while the caseload in Crown Court is beginning to stabilise.

## **Notes to editors**

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# Thames Barrier closed for 200th time

The Thames Barrier is being closed for the 200th time today (Thursday 21 October) to help protect London from potential flooding.

The Environment Agency is closing the barrier to protect London from a high tide as a result of low pressure and northerly winds coinciding with spring tides. Closure of the barrier will reduce the risk of flooding for up to 640,000 properties in London and along the Thames.

The barrier's 10 steel gates will begin to move at around 10:45, taking around 90 minutes to close, ahead of the high tide at around 14:30. The barrier will then reopen at approximately 18:00 this evening.

The Thames Barrier is the second largest moveable flood barrier in the world, protecting 125 square kilometres of central London, encompassing 1.4 million people, 400 schools, 16 hospitals, and 86 train and tube stations. It forms part of the Thames Tidal Defences, which also includes the Barking and Dartford Creek Barriers.

Andy Batchelor, Operations Manager for the Thames Tidal Defences, said:

Since becoming operational in 1982, the Thames Barrier has offered our capital world class flood protection. Without it, the centre of London would have potentially been inundated on multiple occasions and millions of people would have been at risk from the misery of flooding.

The Barrier will continue to provide that protection until at least 2070, but as we see the effect of the climate emergency with rising sea levels we're investing a further £54m in London, providing funding to more than 50 schemes to tackle all sources of flooding.

The closure comes as the Environment Agency warns of increasing sea levels along the Thames Estuary, as a result of climate change. We continue to work with our partners to deliver a long-term plan, known as [Thames Estuary 2100](#), to protect London from tidal flooding through the next century, and sets out a series of recommendations for how the Environment Agency and partners can work together to manage these rising sea levels – including a potential new barrier.

Charlotte Wood, the Environment Agency's London Area Director, said:

The Thames Estuary 2100 Plan is internationally recognised as a leading example of climate change adaptation and the 200th closure of the Thames Barrier marks another significant milestone as we continue to adapt to a changing climate.



Our collaboration with councils, communities, businesses and NGOs is vital as we continue to better protect people and properties from flooding, as well as providing the opportunity to reshape our riversides and adapt to climate change.

The Thames Barrier is made up of 10 steel gates spanning 520 metres (1,706 feet) across the River Thames near Woolwich. Until today and since it became operational in 1982, it has closed on 199 occasions, 110 times to protect against tidal flooding and 89 times to protect against combined sea and river flooding. Each gate takes 10 to 15 minutes to close (one-and-a-half hours for total closure of the barrier), and the control room is manned 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

The defences were constructed following the 1953 floods that swept down the east coast and killed over 300 people. While it is designed to provide protection for London until at least 2070, work is already underway on the Thames Estuary 2100 project, which includes a number of measures that will make the capital resilient until at least the end of the century.

While the barrier will help to protect London from tidal flooding, there are also risks from coastal flooding along the east coast on Thursday and Friday. Heavy rain also means that there is a separate but concurrent risk of river flooding across the south of England.

As of 07:45 on Thursday, there are 53 Flood Warnings and 108 Flood Alerts in force, with Environment Agency teams out on the ground clearing waste grilles and screens and standing ready to support local authorities in their response to surface water flooding.

People should stay alert and check their flood risk by [signing up for free flood warnings](#) on the Gov.uk website and via @EnvAgency on Twitter, which offer the latest updates.

## Further information

- Since 1982 the Thames Barrier has been closed 200 times for flood defence purposes.
- The Thames Barrier is one of the largest moveable flood barriers in the world, protecting 125 square km of central London – encompassing 1.25 million people and the infrastructure on which London is dependent.
- During the winter of 2013/14 the Thames Barrier closed 50 times, its busiest flood season ever.
- Each gate takes 10 to 15 minutes to close (1½ hours for total Barrier closure).
- The 61 metre gates have up to 200 tonnes of paint on them.
- The deepest foundation is 17 metres (56ft) below the sea bed which is equivalent to four double-decker buses stacked on top of each other.
- Around 90 people work at the Barrier site and the control room is manned 24 hours a day, every day of the year.
- Costs to complete the tidal defences were estimated at £535 million in 1982 (valued at approximately £1,400 million at 2009 prices). The

Barrier took eight years to build using 99% UK components.

- It costs around £8 million a year to maintain and operate. In addition we also spend approximately £10 million on capital improvements to the defences.
- The Thames Barrier consists of 10 gates, six of which are rising sector gates that, when lowered, lie flat against the river bed allowing river users (ships, boats etc) to pass but, when raised, prevent levels rising on the upstream side of the Barrier.
- For further information please visit Thames Barrier webpage: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-thames-barrier>.
- With more extreme weather expected, including summer temperatures up to 7.4°C hotter and 59% more rainfall by 2050, the Environment Agency's [Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy](#) sets out how we will build up the resilience of millions more homes and businesses as part of the EA's green recovery plan into the next decade.