

UK collaborates with Mexico to reduce deforestation

Since March 2021, UK PACT has been addressing the deforestation that takes place in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas by supporting eco-friendly, sustainable economic activities.

Deforestation in Chiapas is a significant problem. According to Global Forest Watch, the state lost 574 thousand hectares of rainforest between the years 2001 and 2018, representing an average of 32 thousand hectares cleared every year. The main causes that drive deforestation are cattle ranching and farming, which local populations need to subsist. This is the reason why it is important to promote non-timber activities in the state, especially in protected areas.

Resin is the natural liquid produced by some tree species such as the ocote pine, endemic to Chiapas. It is used in the production of a variety of natural chemical products like varnish, adhesive and cleaning agents. Sustainable harvesting of resin helps preserve the rainforest in two ways. First, it recognises the long-term value of this tree species and, second, communities act together to protect these trees and their habitat.

UK PACT is supporting four municipalities in Chiapas to harvest sustainably the resin while substantially increasing the output and raising annual incomes. Currently, 200 local producers are participating in trainings to improve their technical skills in resin tapping, collection and storage, tool conservation and maintenance, and management of resin production areas. They also receive financial education to improve their business skills. In addition, resin producers from the state of Michoacán provide workshops to share their expertise and experience on forest care and resin harvesting.

A key market barrier in the resin value chain is the requirement to produce a minimum of ten tonnes. The capital outlay for this quantity is very high and was discouraging individuals and communities alike from participating in resin production. In response, UK PACT set up a credit facility called the "Resin Producers Fund" to cover up to 90% of their production expenses. Upon payment from the buyer, the producers return the loan plus a small amount to cover costs. Rising demand, including from Guatemala, has made the new system so cost-effective that it is attracting neighbouring communities to enter the resin business.

Alonso B, a resin producer from the 'Corazón del Valle' community, explains:

I have been producing resin for three years. At the beginning, I had enough production to fill four buckets. Now, thanks to the training I have received, I am producing 14 of them." In 2019, the communities of California and Nuevo Vicente Guerrero abandoned resin harvesting, as it was no longer profitable. With UK PACT

support, the situation has changed with resin production reaching an estimated ten tonnes.

For the next year, this project will continue to strengthen the business and technical skills of the resin producing communities in Chiapas. This partnership between the UK and Mexico will continue to improve the livelihoods and incomes of resin harvesters while reducing deforestation in the south of the country.

Producers participate in trainings to improve their technical skills in resin tapping, collection and storage.

RSH quarterly survey published for Q2 (July to September) 2022 to 2023

The Regulator of Social Housing has today (24 November 2022) published the results of its latest quarterly survey of private registered providers' financial health.

The report covers the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2022. It shows that the sector continues to have enough liquidity to cover forecast spend on interest costs, loan repayments and investment in new homes over the next 12 months. However, it is clear that significant wider economic challenges were starting to have an impact on providers' finances before the end of September.

Providers expect to see an average operating interest cover, excluding sales, of 92% over the next 12 months. This compares to 111% in the previous year. Although both the forecast and outturn averages exclude surpluses from sales activity, they are still among the lowest levels on record. Providers report this to be a result of higher spend on repairs and capital investment, as well as rising interest payments.

The sector continues to secure new capital, with total agreed borrowing facilities reaching £119.7 billion at the end of September – up £0.4 billion in the quarter. New finance of £1.4 billion was agreed in the quarter, with 58% of new facilities from capital markets.

Providers invested £1.6 billion in repairs and maintenance over the quarter. This was 12% higher than the previous quarter but lower than forecast. Providers reported that material and labour shortages continue to cause delays to repair programmes.

Providers invested £3 billion in new homes between July and September; higher

than the previous quarter but 15% below forecast for contractually committed schemes. Total spend on new homes is expected to reach £17.3bn over the next 12 months, a 38% increase compared to the previous year, as earlier underspends are reprofiled.

Will Perry, Director of Strategy at RSH, said:

While registered providers continue to maintain sufficient liquidity, we are starting to see the impact of very challenging economic conditions on providers' finances, particularly forecast interest cover.

Boards will need to take a strategic approach to monitoring economic risks as they focus on their key objectives of investing in new and existing homes, and providing quality services to their tenants.

The [quarterly surveys](#) are available on the RSH website.

Notes to editors

1. The quarterly survey provides a regular source of information regarding the financial health of private registered providers, in particular with regard to their liquidity position.
2. The quarterly survey returns summarised in the report cover the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2022. The [latest report](#) is based on regulatory returns from 205 PRPs and PRP groups which own or manage more than 1,000 homes.
3. Additional disclosures have been added to the quarterly survey return from April 2022: new lines have been added to the cashflow statement to provide an enhanced breakdown of sales receipts and repairs costs, and narrative questions regarding delays or changes to repairs and maintenance programmes have been introduced.
4. For press office contact details, see our [media enquiries page](#). For general queries, please email enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or call 0300 124 5225.
5. The Regulator of Social Housing promotes a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. It does this by undertaking robust economic regulation focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer. It also sets consumer standards and may take action if these standards are breached and there is a significant risk of serious detriment to tenants or

potential tenants.

[The Environmental Protection \(England\) Coal Fired Power Station Direction 2022](#)

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Last updated 24 November 2022 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 24 November 2022

Changes made to clarify that the requirement to operate will not be based on the Electricity Supply Emergency Code 2019 being invoked. It will follow a requirement from the ESO for the permit holder to operate during, or in anticipation of, an electricity shortage or a gas shortage.

2. 29 July 2022

First published.

[Up to £100 million boost to improve HGV roadside facilities](#)

- lorry drivers to benefit from better roadside facilities, backed by up to £100 million investment from industry and government
- operators of truck-stops and roadside services can now bid for a portion of £52.5 million in government investment to match-fund improvements to driver facilities
- investment is part of the government's 33 actions to improve HGV parking and boost drivers' welfare – helping to support recruitment and tackle the HGV driver shortage

Lorry drivers will benefit from improved and safer rest areas and roadside facilities thanks to up to £100 million investment from industry and government, the Roads Minister Richard Holden has announced today (24 November 2022).

From today, [truck-stop and road service operators can bid for a share of the £32.5 million match-funding pot from the government](#). This is in addition to the £20 million match-funding launched earlier this year from National Highways to improve roadside facilities and security for lorry drivers.

Minister Holden will launch the funding at the Red Lion Truckstop in Northamptonshire today which aims to improve security measures for drivers, boost welfare facilities like showers, rest areas and restaurants, and increase HGV parking capacity where possible.

The move is part of the government's comprehensive [33 actions to address the shortage of HGV drivers and boost recruitment and retention](#).

Roads Minister Richard Holden said:

Hauliers and drivers are critical to keep our economy motoring. But for decades, our truckers have had a raw deal when it comes to decent roadside facilities.

This is why I'm so proud that our government is going to provide match funding support to the industry to boost drivers' welfare, safeguard road safety and make sure driving an HGV is a really attractive career option by providing the facilities and respect our lorry drivers deserve.

The funding scheme draws on '[The National Survey on Lorry Parking: Part One](#)' which provides important evidence as to what improvements are needed and where to boost the nation's roadside infrastructure.

The industry is responsible for providing roadside parking and welfare facilities for hauliers, and the department is committed to help the sector achieve the government's long-term objectives of improving driver welfare, boosting drivers' security, and safeguarding road safety.

With hauliers required to take mandatory breaks and rest periods, building better roadside facilities will improve the quality of HGV drivers' rest and recovery, ensuring everyone can feel safe on our roads.

The government's 33 actions to support Britain's haulage sector include making 11,000 HGV driver training places available through Skills Bootcamps, boosting the number of HGV driver tests, and launching our Future of Freight plan to encourage millions of people to kickstart an exciting career in logistics.

As a result, new HGV drivers are taking and passing their driving test in record numbers. Between March 2022 and May 2022, the Driver and Vehicle

Standards Agency (DVSA) carried out 29,384 HGV tests – 54% more than the corresponding period in 2019 before the pandemic.

National Highways Customer Experience Director, Pete Martin, said:

We continue to work closely with operators of roadside facilities to help improve the standard of parking and other amenities they provide on motorways and major A-roads and are excited to see the results of this investment.

We want all road users to reach their destination safely and encourage everyone, from those who drive as a profession through to people travelling on holiday or for leisure purposes, to plan ahead before setting off and to take regular breaks.

Director of Policy at Logistics UK, Kate Jennings , said:

Logistics UK's members and their employees deserve access to hygiene and rest facilities enjoyed by workers in other parts of the economy, and it is good news that funding is becoming available to help improve the quality and safety of amenities already in place – a swift resolution will now be needed to ensure that the shortfall of lorry parking and necessary facilities can be constructed and opened to support our key workers in the course of their daily travels.

A spokesperson from SNAP, who run a smart payment system for Drivers and Fleet Operators, said:

Enhancing driver welfare and ensuring that hauliers have somewhere clean and secure to park their vehicles is a leading priority of our business – and the £52.5m government funding is a vital step in giving drivers the facilities they deserve.

DfT has SNAP's ongoing support on their mission to improve driver facilities – with SNAP Access & Security aiming to assist by securing HGV locations through industry-leading security packages.

Government to block failing social

housing providers from new housing funding

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) will not receive its expected £1m funding from the Affordable Homes Programme (AHP 2021-26) or receive any new AHP contracts for new homes, until the Regulator of Social Housing has concluded its investigation and it can prove it is a responsible landlord. The Government will also continue to monitor housing standards of RBH tenancies closely, working with the Regulator and Ombudsman, to ensure that tenants have appropriate housing.

As part of a wider crackdown on poor standards, the Housing Secretary will also block any housing provider that breaches the Regulator's consumer standards from new AHP funding until they make improvements. Michael Gove will also consider stripping providers of existing AHP funding, unless construction has already started on site.

The move comes after Michael Gove wrote to all councils and housing associations this weekend, saying they must raise the bar dramatically on standards and demanding urgent action where people complain about damp and mould.

Holding failing landlords to account for poor safety and quality is not just an issue in social housing.

That is why the Government has today awarded a share of £14m for seven areas with high numbers of poor privately rented homes to crack down on rogue landlords and test new approaches to driving up standards. Projects include:

- £2.3m for Greater Manchester – including Rochdale and surrounding councils – to increase the use of fines where a landlord is found to have committed an offence
- £678k for Leeds to use behavioural science to change culture among landlords, improving knowledge and skills
- £1.14m for Cornwall to create a database of private rented accommodation in the area and record standards to target better enforcement action.

Housing Secretary Michael Gove said:

RBH failed its tenants so it will not receive a penny of additional taxpayers' money for new housing until it gets its act together and does right by tenants.

Let this be a warning to other housing providers who are ignoring complaints and failing in their obligations to tenants. We will not hesitate to act.

Everyone deserves the right to live in safe, decent home and this Government will always act to protect tenants.

[The Regulator of Social Housing has demanded evidence](#) from all housing association and local authority landlords this week, showing they are identifying and dealing with damp and mould issues in their homes. The Regulator will take action where standards are not being met.

[The Social Housing Regulation Bill, currently making its way through Parliament](#), will also ensure tenants' complaints are listened to and dealt with quickly and fairly, with new powers for the Housing Ombudsman to take action on complaints.

A stronger Regulator will have powers to enter properties with only 48 hours' notice and make emergency repairs where there is a serious risk to tenants and the landlord has failed to act, with landlords footing the bill.

To make sure tenants know their rights and can hold housing providers to account, the Government is also launching a £1 million public information campaign early next year.