

Government appoints new Non-Executive Members to the RSH Board

The Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing, Eddie Hughes MP, has appointed Geoff Smyth, Kalpesh Brahmhatt and Sukhvinder Kaur-Stubbs as new Non-executive Members of the Board of the Regulator of Social Housing.

They have been appointed for three years, commencing on 1 July 2021.

Geoff Smyth has had a thirty-year international career in technology and customer service leadership roles across multiple sectors including telecommunications, automotive and aviation. Geoff has spent time in both Australia and the United States. In the US he led Ford Motor Company's global contact centre organisation and TeleTech's Federal Government customer service subsidiary.

Since his return to the UK in 2011, he held the role of Chief Operating Officer at Talk Talk until 2014 and led the Post Office's telecommunications business until 2017. He currently serves as chair of Origin Broadband and is an independent management consultant. Geoff has had a strong focus in his career on improving the customer experience and has been deeply involved in improving complaints handling in the Telecommunications sector.

Kalpesh Brahmhatt has over twenty years' experience of working for UK regulators in key sectors across the economy. The sectors have ranged from communications, water, railways, energy and financial services. During that time Kalpesh has helped regulators (and ombudsman schemes) develop and implement proactive consumer policies alongside the development of regulatory strategies and change management programmes. More recently he has been working for PwC as a Senior Consultant in their Economics and Policy Consultancy Business.

Sukhvinder Kaur-Stubbs is Board member and Chair of Regeneration for the London Legacy Development Corporation and has served on the Boards of the Home Group and Swan Housing Association. She held senior roles with the West Midlands Regional Development Agency, Black Country Development Corporation and English Partnerships. Sukhvinder brings expertise in consumer regulation from her work with the Cabinet Office Better Regulation Executive and Severn Trent Water. At Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust, she is Vice Chair and leads Workforce and Education for their 7,000 staff. Sukhvinder is an accomplished CEO having led both Barrow Cadbury and Runnymede Trust, through major change programmes and onto success in influencing government policies on inclusion, diversity and community cohesion.

Commenting on the appointments, Simon Dow, Interim Chair of the Board at RSH said:

I am delighted to welcome Geoff, Kalpesh and Sukhvinder to the

Board of the RSH; collectively they bring with them a wide range of skills and experience from a number of different backgrounds.

These appointments will support the RSH in maintaining confidence in the viability and stability of the social housing sector, and provide us with invaluable experience as we develop our proactive consumer regulation role.

Notes to editors

- 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.
- For more information about the Board at RSH please see the [Our governance page](#)
- For press office contact details, see the [Media enquiries page](#). For general queries, please email enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or call 0300 124 5225.

[PM call with President Macron: 7 June 2021](#)

News story

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to French President Emmanuel Macron.



The Prime Minister spoke to French President Emmanuel Macron today, ahead of the G7 Summit.

The leaders discussed their ambitions for the Summit and agreed the meeting would be a crucial moment to make progress on issues like tackling coronavirus, climate change and increasing access to education around the world.

The Prime Minister and President talked about the issue of illegal migration across the English Channel. The Prime Minister noted ongoing cooperation to tackle small boat crossings in the Channel and raised the need for redoubled efforts to deter migrants from attempting this perilous journey following the concerning rise in incidents over recent weeks.

On the Northern Ireland protocol, the Prime Minister stressed that both the UK and the EU have a responsibility to find solutions to address the issues with the Protocol.

On fishing, the Prime Minister and President agreed to work together to avoid any further escalation over the issue of fishing access. The Prime Minister stressed the importance the UK places on having an agreement which respects our new status as an independent coastal state and works for the UK fishing industry.

The leaders looked forward to seeing each other in Cornwall later this week.

Published 8 June 2021

[First seal of success for borehole project](#)

An existing borehole at the Magnox Harwell site, Oxfordshire, was the centre of one of our largest research projects and saw us undertake the first ever full-scale fieldwork demonstration over three months earlier this year.

Our borehole sealing project has involved developing a unique system for permanently sealing deep boreholes, which could be up to 2,000 metres deep.

As the UK's geological disposal programme progresses, it will be necessary to drill boreholes as part of site investigations – these allow detailed analyses of the extracted rock samples to be undertaken, one of the key steps needed to identify whether the geology could be suitable for the underground facility.

An existing borehole at Harwell was used for the trial

Before site investigations can start, we need to demonstrate our ability and know-how to seal any boreholes to regulators at the Environment Agency (EA). The borehole sealing project is part of the wide-ranging research and development (R&D) programme that will support construction of a safe, secure GDF deep underground.

The £5 million project has involved our scientists, engineers and geologists working alongside contractors Jacobs, Marriott Drilling and NeoProducts to develop and test approaches to sealing boreholes. This has involved an extensive programme of work that commenced in 2013, including the design and build of a state-of-the-art 'Downhole Placement System' (DPS) for placing seal material at appropriate depths.

Bentonite clay was used as sealant because of its low permeability and swelling properties. Commonly found world-wide, bentonite will also be packed around some GDF waste packages as part of the engineered barrier system that will isolate and contain disposed waste.

The Downhole Placement System sealed the borehole with bentonite pellets

At the Harwell site, a 25-metre drill rig was used to lower the DPS filled with dry bentonite pellets into the borehole. On reaching the appropriate depth, the DPS was hydraulically activated, deploying the bentonite in the water column. In total, about a tonne of bentonite was deployed at depth, forming a seal as it swelled. Additionally, three other redundant boreholes at the site were also sealed as part of the collaboration between us and Magnox.

The EA observed the Harwell work in progress and will also review the project, together with future work, providing invaluable feedback ahead of any application for an environmental permit which will be required before boreholes can be drilled at any potential GDF site.

Dr Simon Norris, Principal Research Manager at RWM and project technical lead, said:

The demonstration was invaluable in enabling us to thoroughly road-

test our research and engineering works and has highlighted a number of technical insights that we will take into account as we undertake further field trials as part of this important project.

The practical lessons include a greater understanding of the behaviour of clay rock stability when drilled at depth, which will lead to modifications in the planned geological investigations that are to accompany the GDF siting programme in the future. We will share its findings internationally, particularly with its French and Swiss 'sister' organisations who are looking at sites in similar rock types.

Following the Harwell demonstration, the DPS will next demonstrate its capabilities in very deep boreholes in higher-strength rock. Work to seal a borehole in an evaporite salt rock location will follow .

We are responsible for identifying a suitable site for a GDF in England or Wales, a process based on seeking consent from a willing community. Once a potential UK search area has been identified and a Community Partnership has been formed, we will be in a position to begin the formal site investigations.

For more information on our R&D, see [Research at RWM](#).

Twenty-six towns to share over £600 million to help communities build back better

- Investment will boost local economies, create jobs and new homes, and improve skills
- Plans will transform public spaces, deliver green transport links and revamp cultural and tourist attractions
- Part of government's multi-billion levelling up programme

Twenty-six towns in England will share over £610 million to boost their local economies, create jobs and help them build back better from the pandemic.

These new Towns Deals range from seaside towns like Hastings and Hartlepool to the historic market towns of Bedford and Bishop Auckland.

The money will help them to grow their local economies, while also carving out new opportunities to reshape the look and feel of their areas.

The Deals will help breathe new life into neglected areas or unused buildings by creating vibrant spaces for businesses, community events or much needed new homes.

Projects also include renovations to attractions like Hastings Castle helping to boost the cultural and tourism offers of towns.

Sustainability is at the heart of many of the schemes with new greener transport infrastructure including cycle paths and pedestrian walkways that will connect areas in the greenest way possible.

The Deals will also create thousands of jobs, with many towns investing in opportunities to improve skills through new vocational training hubs that will support high skilled and higher paid jobs in the area for local people.

These landmark deals will see hundreds of millions of pounds invested in projects across England including:

- Hereford is set to use its £22.4 million investment to introduce a fleet of electric buses and regenerate the museum, library and art gallery into a unique modern visitor attraction.
- Doncaster will use its £24.8m of investment to upgrade Doncaster Station Gateway and its surroundings by creating greener transport options such as cycle lanes and walking routes. The money will also be used to provide high-quality and attractive commercial space, boosting investment and increasing footfall to the town centre.
- Hastings £24.3m investment includes a new green and Low Carbon Centre of Excellence that will provide new commercial space while also helping the Town seize the opportunities of the emerging green economy. It will also boost the Town's tourism offer through improvements to the Castle and other public spaces.
- Hartlepool will invest part of their £25m deal in a new Health and Care Academy and a Civil Engineering Institute to boost local skills as part of plans to support more higher-skilled, higher-paid jobs in the local area.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

We are levelling up towns and cities across the country by building stronger and more resilient local economies, boosting prosperity and opportunity in our communities, and helping them build back better from the pandemic.

Today I am announcing new town deals in 26 areas, backed by over £610 million investment from the Towns Fund. This will support locally-led projects to transform disused buildings and public spaces, deliver new green transport and create new opportunities for people to develop new skills. This is a boost for communities and businesses across England.

Today's announcement means that 79 Towns Deals have now been agreed – totalling over £2 billion investment in communities across England.

This is part of comprehensive action by the government to level up opportunity and prosperity across all areas of the country, including through

the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund, the £220 million Community Renewal Fund and the £830 million Future High Streets Fund.

Building successful, thriving communities is at the heart of the Government's levelling up agenda. As well as creating town centres that people want to work, rest and play in, the government is delivering the homes that people need where they need them, making home ownership a reality for many young people and key workers in the places they want to live. Last Friday the government announced the First Homes programme which provides a 30% discount to first time buyers.

- On 27 July 2019 the Prime Minister announced that the £3.6 billion Towns Fund would support an initial 101 town deals across England.
- A Town Deal is an agreement in principle between government, the Lead Council and the Town Deal Board. It will set out a vision and strategy for the town, and what each party agrees to do to achieve this vision.
- The offers announced today respond to locally led proposals put forward by the lead council and Town Deal Boards with representation from business, the local community, public sectors and local MPs.
- A summary of all of today's deals is set out below:

Ashfield (joint Kirkby & Sutton)	£62.6m
Bedford	£22.6m
Bishop Auckland	£33.2m
Bridgwater	£22.6m
Brighouse	£19.1m
Cleator Moor	£22.5m
Corby	£19.9m
Dewsbury	£24.8m
Doncaster	£24.8m
Glastonbury	£23.6m
Hartlepool	£25m
Hastings	£24.3m
Hereford	£22.4m
King's Lynn	£25m
Long Eaton	£24.8m
Loughborough	£16.9m
Newcastle-under-Lyme	£23.6m
Oldham	£24.4m
Redcar	£25m
Redditch	£15.6m
Rotherham	£31.6m
Stapleford	£21.1m
Telford	£22.3m
Walsall	£21.3m
Worcester	£19.6m

Government to protect workers' rights and clamp down on workplace abuse with powerful new body

- New workers' watchdog to take over responsibility for tackling modern slavery, enforcing minimum wage, and more
- one-stop shop will improve enforcement and ensure employees and businesses know where to go for help on workers' rights
- Business Minister Paul Scully: We will take action against big brands that turn a blind eye to abuses

A powerful new workers' watchdog will be created to protect the rights of UK workers, the government confirmed today (Tuesday 8 June).

Responsibility for tackling modern slavery, enforcing the minimum wage and protecting agency workers – currently spread across 3 different bodies – will be brought under one roof, creating a comprehensive new authority, which will ensure businesses that break the rules have nowhere to hide.

This 'one-stop shop' approach will help improve enforcement through better co-ordination and pooling intelligence.

The new watchdog will also enhance workers' rights by providing a single, recognisable port of call for workers so they know their rights and can blow the whistle on bad behaviour.

The body will support businesses to do the right thing by their employees by providing guidance on their obligations to staff. Meanwhile, increased enforcement will make sure good businesses aren't undercut by unscrupulous rival employers who aren't paying or treating their workers correctly.

As well as enforcing all existing powers belonging to the 3 agencies, the new body will have a new ability to ensure vulnerable workers get the holiday pay and statutory sick pay they are entitled to – without having to go through a lengthy employment tribunal process.

Business Minister Paul Scully said:

This government has been absolutely clear that we will do whatever we can to protect and enhance workers' rights.

The vast majority of businesses want to do right by their staff, but there are a minority who seem to think the law doesn't apply to them. Exploitative practices like modern slavery have no place in society.

This new workers' watchdog will help us crack down on any abuses of workers' rights and take action against companies that turn a blind eye to abuses in their supply chains, while providing a one-stop shop for employees and businesses wanting to understand their rights and obligations.

The plans, confirmed in a [consultation response](#) to be published today (Tuesday), come as part of the government's wider efforts to protect workers' rights. Since last year alone, the government has boosted the minimum wage for around 2 million employees, protected furloughed workers' parental pay, brought Jack's Law into force to support bereaved parents, and more.

The government's plans will see the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate and HMRC's National Minimum Wage Enforcement combined to create a single enforcement body.

The new body will continue the successful Naming and Shaming scheme, which calls out companies who fail to pay workers what they are owed and can hit rogue employers with fines of up to £20,000 per worker. This enforcement activity will be extended to cover other regulations protecting the pay of workers employed through agencies or by gangmasters in the agricultural sector.

To help businesses understand the rules, the new body will provide guidance on best practice, complementing the work already carried out by existing authorities such as the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas). It will seek to build strong links with community and worker groups to spread awareness and support engagement with at-risk groups, including the low-paid and those in sectors like construction and agriculture that could be at higher risk of abuse.

The government will also explore further measures to target abuses in the garment sector specifically, following reports of serious problems in the industry. Options being examined include creating a Garment Trade Adjudicator to investigate companies' supply chains, or extending the licencing scheme that currently covers employers in the agricultural sector. Under the scheme, businesses who provide workers for agriculture and the fresh produce supply chain must apply for a license to operate in the sectors, and are subject to inspections to ensure they meet employment standards required by law.

If brands' behaviour doesn't improve, the government warned it could introduce harsher measures, including bans on goods made in factories where workers have been underpaid.

The new enforcement body will be established through primary legislation when parliamentary time allows.

The publication of the government's consultation response comes as part of a range of action taken since last year to protect workers' rights, including: