

# National survey on issues facing women in Turkmenistan

World news story

British Embassy and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) co-chaired the first meeting of the group focussing on gender issues in Turkmenistan.



On 21 September, UNFPA and British Embassy chaired a meeting for embassies, international organisations and other partners active in Turkmenistan to present the key findings of the first-ever national survey on health and status of a woman in the family conducted by the Government of Turkmenistan working in partnership with UNFPA.

This was the first meeting of the group focussing on gender issues as part of the wider Development Partners Coordination structure in Turkmenistan. Participants will meet regularly to enhance cooperation and to engage with the Government of Turkmenistan to promote gender equality and prevent domestic and gender-based violence in the country, in line with the National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2021-2025.

The British Embassy was pleased to co-fund this important national survey that provides data on crucial issues affecting the lives of women in Turkmenistan. Among many other issues the survey revealed that one in six women, or 16%, had experienced some form of abuse by an intimate partner, and one in eight, or 12%, have been exposed to physical or sexual violence.

John Hamilton, the Charge d’Affaires of the British Embassy said:

Work to support women and girls in Turkmenistan has been a key priority of the Embassy for many years. We were very happy to work closely with UNFPA throughout this time.

Concluding his speech, Mr Hamilton also stressed and said:

If we are to address the issues highlighted in survey successfully we must do so in cooperation with each other and the Government of Turkmenistan.

Published 29 September 2022

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## [Levelling Up Fund to drive growth in Leicester's space sector](#)

- Levelling up fund investment will drive the rapid expansion of technology, innovation and science businesses in the city, creating high quality jobs
- The visit follows the announcement that Leicestershire County Council is one of 38 local and mayoral combined authorities to have expressed an initial interest in setting up Investment Zones to turbocharge economic growth

The Exchequer Secretary visited Leicester today (29 September) to hear how the government's Levelling Up Fund will help drive growth in the city's flourishing space sector, boosting the economy and creating jobs.

Felicity Buchan toured a site at Pioneer Park to hear how nearly £20 million of government investment will deliver high-quality work spaces for advanced manufacturing and R&D linked to the space and satellite technologies, driving forward the rapid expansion of technology, innovation and science businesses in the city.

She heard how the development will complement the nearby University of Leicester's Space Park – officially opened by astronaut Tim Peake earlier this year – and home to a collaborative community of industry, academics and students.

Following a tour of the National Space Centre, the Minister met with companies who have moved into the Space Park to hear how the facility has sparked collaboration between researchers and the private sector, driving innovation and helping to retain the top graduates from the city's two universities.

The visit follows an announcement from the Chancellor on Friday that the government is in early discussion with 38 local and mayoral combined authority areas to set up Investment Zones including Leicestershire County Council.

Businesses will benefit from generous, time-limited tax incentives and further liberalised planning rules to release more land for housing and commercial development, boosting economic growth.

**Following her visit, Exchequer Secretary Felicity Buchan said:**

It's fantastic to see how our investment will turbocharge growth in Leicester's rapidly expanding space sector, encouraging innovative businesses to expand and grow in the city, creating high-skilled jobs.

And we are going further to ignite growth through our brand-new Investment Zones, which will encourage businesses to invest, driving our economy forward and creating opportunity for everyone.

Investment from the Levelling Up Fund will also support a new Dock-style building for high tech industries and nine high-quality manufacturing spaces, alongside the transformation of an old council depot into light industrial spaces to provide much-needed small units.

This is one of 10 places in the East Midlands to receive a share of £203 million from the £1.7 billion first round of the Levelling Up Fund, as announced in October's Budget 2021.

The government will look to announce successful allocations of the second round of the levelling up fund before year end.

The Levelling Up funding builds on previous government investment including £17million through the Local Growth Fund for four projects in Leicester, and £20 million for four infrastructure projects across Leicestershire through the Getting Building Fund including St Margaret's Regeneration Gateway and Charles Street Transport Hub.

**Further information**

- The first round of the Levelling Up fund announced at the Autumn Budget 2021, will invest £1.7 billion in 105 local infrastructure projects across the UK. The full list of successful projects are [here](#).
  - Photos are available on the Treasury's [Flickr page](#).
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# InFocus: News and views from the GPA (September 2022)

## **WELCOME TO INFOCUS, SEPTEMBER 22**

**Yvette Greener, Client Director**

We continue the delivery of our 10-year strategy to transform the way the Government estate supports public service delivery. We are doing this in a number of ways including, improving the experience of the workplace for civil servants, enabling interoperability of the office estate and increased working across departmental boundaries, supporting moves from London to the nations and regions of the UK, taking a locality planning approach to optimise the Government estate, and improving the sustainability and condition of the estate.

To do this and succeed we must commit to the services and solutions we deliver for you our clients so we can work together in a consistent and transparent way. We have now completed our review into clarifying our client services and the service catalogue covering what we offer our clients. The catalogue details the service lines and the SLA's that clients can expect, as well as the partnership approach to ensure delivery is as effective as possible. We are now finalising this ready for distribution.

Our growth and improvement is heavily dependent on the strategic partnerships we build. We have now completed the transition of services from Montagu Evans to BNP Paribas Real Estate (BNPPRE), our new partner for national property and property-related financial services. We are committed to our client-centric approach ensuring our team remains focused on delivering high quality services. Early feedback has been positive but we expect to continually improve this area.

Finally, I would like to say thank you for working with us over the last few weeks following the sad news of the death of Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth II. Within the GPA we worked quickly, whilst remaining agile, to put our plan into place to ensure we could to support you our clients and deliver what was needed across Government. Truly a team effort.

**In this issue:**

### **Operation BRIDGES**

We have been preparing for this time for quite a while and our plan was successfully implemented.

We worked closely with the Op BRIDGE Secretariat, the Metropolitan Police and

the Government Security Group on access to, and security of, government buildings in the ceremonial footprint.

We followed the strict protocol on flag flying for GPA buildings and ensured all of our buildings had access to mourning boxes and condolence books. We also facilitated the transition of the new cabinet into Whitehall buildings at a critical time, including facilitating rapid access to key personnel to London, 1 Horseguards Road and to ensure critical deliveries and collections can still be made within the footprint.

During the final part of the week we worked hard on central planning to ensure our clients could access Government buildings safely and easily as Whitehall got busier.

Following the State Funeral, in GPA managed buildings we ensured all the materials used to support the national mourning period are collated by our reception teams. We have also been collecting the condolence books and holding these whilst we await confirmation of where they are to be forwarded to for safe keeping as a mark of our respect.

We have also helped non GPA managed buildings have access to condolence books.

We would like to thank all our clients who worked closely with us to ensure the work we needed to do at this important time was implemented successfully.

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## **Defining our eight service categories**

We have now completed our discovery work into our client services and have identified a service catalogue covering what we offer our clients. The catalogue details the service lines and the SLA's that clients can expect, as well as the partnership approach to ensure delivery is as effective as possible.

We defined eight service categories we offer:

- Client Management – reporting and meeting arrangements for our clients
- Landlord Services – Property and Asset Management services
- Portfolio Services – property strategies, portfolio planning and future property requirements to support business needs
- Workplace Services – FM and Security services that are provided including the procurement of future contracting arrangements
- Hubs Services – the services that will be received in our Hubs including Workplace Services and ICT Services
- ICT Services – AV equipment, GovWifi, room booking, occupancy measurement and GovPrint
- Property and Project Services – from small scale refurbishments to delivery of major projects

- Consultancy Services – a range of services in our expertise such as Net Zero and Smarter Working

Our next step is to create a digital catalogue which will inform and engage people on our services, and assist and improve our clients in their understanding of the services. We plan to consult on this material later this calendar year.

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## **Our pathway to NetZero**

The UK has an ambitious sustainability target by which it seeks to cut greenhouse gas emissions to Net Zero by 2050. The Government Property Agency (GPA) exists to create a transformed, shared, sustainable and value for money government estate that supports civil servants to work productively in every nation and region of the UK. One of its main objectives is to make estates and assets as sustainable as possible, moving towards the wider Net-Zero goal by 2050.

### **The estate scope**

The government office portfolio is expansive, encompassing a wide range of buildings from newly built modern offices to derelict; or in need of modernisation, as well as listed buildings that need extra care and consideration. This means the portfolio has a vast mix of buildings with different energy efficiency ratings.

The 'Levelling Up' agenda has led the change in where civil servants work, with the target of moving 22,000 Civil Service roles from Westminster and Whitehall to newer, purpose built, energy-efficient buildings across the UK.

The shift to using fewer offices has also been partly driven by COVID-19, with appetite increasing for flexible and smarter ways of working. In addition, the value of offering a choice of different workspaces is much better understood. Designing task-focused zones into workplaces is proven to support greater productivity, such as collaborative working, individual focused work, virtual meeting spaces, private 'do not disturb' areas, and community spaces.

The GPA, as the strategic leader of sustainability across the government office portfolio, is committed to meeting targets ahead of those set nationally, with the aim of achieving a 50% reduction of Direct Scope One emissions by 2027 rather than 2032, and a Stretch Target of 78% reduction by 2035 instead of the national 75% reduction by 2037, something that was set after COP26.

All of this ensures the GPA will be 'Net-Zero ready', and so on target for 2050. There has been a concerted effort towards this readiness and preparedness to help make sure the GPA is ahead of the curve.

## **The key challenges in decarbonisation**

As with any major change project, there are always challenges and below we look at the GPA's approach to dealing with them.

**Training** – a key enabler of the delivery of the GPA's projects is its sustainability capability. This results in the use of a common language, so that every involved group or individual has a universal understanding of what is happening at all times, which clearly benefits the entire project. It results in joined-up working, simplification and sustainable outcomes. The GPA are corporate members of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA). They have a recently accredited IEMA training centre providing certified training.

**Standards** – the GPA Sustainability Plan identifies the changes needed to sustainably operate the government office portfolio. The Plan includes aspirational targets for their Net Zero Programme, for how Clients use energy and water and manage waste, and for the FM services in GPA managed buildings.

The GPA has published the Workplace Design Guide (WDG) and Net Zero Sustainability Annex (NZ Annex) on GOV.UK that set out the standards new build and refurbished buildings need to meet the government's Net Zero commitment. The GPA also uses the Net Zero Playbook, released by the Office of Government Property, as the basis of a maturity assessment of their projects and trajectory towards achieving Net Zero.

**Governance** – the GPA's governance structure includes a Sustainability Committee (SusCo) to advise its boards. SusCo makes decisions on implementing the GPA's sustainability plan, resources, budgets and escalations.

**Onboarding** – acquiring and refurbishing an existing building is a very different proposition to developing a new-build. Retrospective work on decarbonisation in older facilities means less control and an increased investment both in terms of finance and time in order to gain the same result. A thorough assessment of dilapidations and energy performance establishes the genuine core condition and what is required to become Net-Zero ready, as well as an insight into what the ownership responsibilities will be.

The GPA has issued the Condition Surveying and Life Cycle Asset Replacement Planning Policy and Guidance. This defines the common language approach for 'Condition Surveying' and Lifecycle asset replacement planning. The data is captured, using digital templates and seamlessly transferred into GPA's centralised life cycle asset planning model, which enables the data to be shared with other GPA data systems. Cashable savings come from retrofitting more energy efficient technology that requires less ongoing running costs for example: replacing legacy roof insulation with efficient alternatives can lead to a utility saving of 0.62 kWh/y for every £1 invested and new lift technology can save 0.19 kWh/y for every £1 invested.

Last year GPA completed Project A of the Whitehall Boiler System in time for

the winter heating switch. The works included lagging replacement to 2,000 metres of pipework, securing SR21 funding for Project B resulting in 17.1% tCO<sub>2</sub>e reduction (Baseline 2014). This was delivered ahead of schedule, under budget and during the Covid pandemic.

Whole Life Asset Management – when considering decarbonisation of government buildings it is vital to look at the project from a whole-life asset management perspective and not just the immediate delivery costs. This is not a short-term investment and is part of a circular economy, adding real value across the whole piece based on genuine evidence and data.

Biodiversity – a SusCo Biodiversity subgroup joined by members of the Defra-led Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) met for the first time on 27 July 2022 and agreed to review best practice and author a Biodiversity Annex for the Workplace Design Guide in the Autumn.

Data – decarbonisation is very data driven, and there is even more scope for development in this area in the future. Soon, there will be a greater amount of information available, which will allow the GPA and its clients to see the whole picture, checking that systems are working optimally, at all times. The ultimate aim is to provide performance data of all assets in order to understand the intricate and detailed evidence gained, and demonstrate the benefits and any shortcomings on which to base future forecasting. This will in turn help planning and gain all-round buy-in. In addition, it will mean a high level of self-service so that clients can be in control of their own data needs.

Much headway has been made via effective collaboration with delivery partners and clients on decarbonising government buildings to secure the Net-Zero ambition. A way of working has now been firmly established, meaning improvements are happening at an ever-increasing rate. With targets being constantly reviewed, updates will be shared to show the journey and progress of this important project.

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## **Customer service at the heart of our Business Plan**

We've published our [Business Plan 2022-23](#) which summarises the progress we made throughout last year and articulates our ambition for the year ahead. It sets out clear deliverables for our key programmes across our five key strategic objectives:

- Support growth across the UK
- Transform the Civil Service
- Contribute to Net Zero
- Better value for clients
- Build our capability and capacity

Our Plan is underpinned by our [10-year strategy](#) which has been developed to



transform the way the Government office and warehouse estates support public service delivery.

We are in the second year of delivering our strategy and we have substantially increased the space we own and manage for departments from just over 300,000 square metres in 2020 to over 700,000 square metres at the end of 2021-22.

Using our Civil Service know-how, private sector expertise and commercial acumen, we are creating a transformed, shared, sustainable and value for money government estate. This is enabling a modern Civil Service and improving client performance while supporting greater productivity and wellbeing for civil servants.

This includes supporting departments to implement Smarter Working, making the best use of space, improving customer satisfaction through people-focused workplace services, and delivering economies of scale alongside improved commercial performance.

We are continuing to deliver what is important to our clients, improve our estate, reduce carbon emissions, and deliver significant savings for the Government.

We invite you to read the full [Business Plan 2022-23 here](#).

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## **OneEstate is enabling flexible working across government locations and workspaces**

We continue to progress the development and roll out of the OneEstate interoperability products. OneEstate is making it easier for civil servants to work flexibly across different locations in all regions of the UK.

We are pleased to confirm the completion of a Shared Network partner procurement competition. This partner will help us develop our interoperable shared network service that we install in GPA-managed hubs, and help us further partner with HMRC to develop the shared network standard across both GPA and HMRC hubs. We are also starting to install these shared network products in properties where our clients have requested support with legacy infrastructure.

We are in early discussions with a small group of departmental DDaT teams to see if we can improve the service wrapper for Civil servants in shared buildings.

### **Shared Network**

Our shared network design continues to be deployed into new GPA and HMRC hubs, and we are collaborating with HMRC on how we continually improve the

service to clients in these properties. Our procurement of a strategic partner for the design and delivery of shared networks will help us accelerate this activity.

### **GovWifi**

GovWifi continues to grow as the standard interoperable solution for WiFi access across departments. The focus is currently on enhancing the user experience, addressing end-user difficulties with usernames and passwords, and developing the service to make it easier for department DDaT teams to deploy.

### **GovPrint**

We are entering the next phase of development with the successful award of a new contract for the GovPrint service. This will move us further into the roadmap for GovPrint development and allow us to extend the GovPrint service to more locations and more clients than the previous contract.

We are also working with HMRC to extend the GovPrint service to its regional Hubs. This will benefit clients working in those locations and especially clients who may have a footprint in both the GPA and HMRC-managed Hubs.

### **GovPass**

GovPass is now fully deployed into seven buildings with a further three having been technically upgraded. A further five are close to completion and thirteen are actively being progressed.

We remain near completion of work on the first full end-to-end implementation of an occupancy management API (application programming interface) via GovPass. This will be the first time in government that we have a secure mechanism for automating the collection of occupancy data derived from access control systems. It also sets the standard for future deployments. This data allows us to understand how well buildings are being used in terms of the total number of people in the building, as well as identify opportunities for space optimisation. The API is now in the live GovPass system and a pilot site is being planned.

### **Occupancy**

We continue to develop our occupancy monitoring solutions that meet a number of different business use cases. Our focus remains on deploying exit/entry sensors across a number of properties to collect real-time data, as well as the development of GovPass as an occupancy solution. We have received feedback that departments want more help from us on using access control data and we will be spending some time in the next few weeks assessing how we can best help this requirement via the GovPass API developed between us and GSG.

### **Audio Visual**

We have now entered into a new contract for the delivery of audio visual (AV) systems into the Government estate. We are seeing increased requests from

clients for support with interoperable AV to support our clients. We will also be assessing deployments completed to date to identify how we can improve our solutions going forward. We will use the new contact and our assessment outcomes to provide clients with additional products, advice, guidance and access to our supply chain.

## **Procurement**

We have awarded new contracts for our strategic shared network provider and GovPrint. These complements our recent procurements for Internet Service Providers and Audio Visual Systems. The shared networks contract is a flagship contract that represents a significant investment in our intention to continue to deliver on the shared networks model.

As well as delivery into GPA-managed Hubs, these contracts are available to support our clients when seeking to deploy interoperable products into their wider estate.

## **Service Wrapper**

We have started early discussions with some of our partner departments on how we can improve the IT service wrapper for civil servants in properties where the DDaT services are provided by a host IT team rather than the individual's home department. This will reduce instances where colleagues from other departments are being turned away when they need IT support. We will be collaborating with our partner DDaT teams across government to resolve this issue.

**To find out more about enabling your workspaces to become interoperable, contact our Property Technology team today at [proptech@gpa.gov.uk](mailto:proptech@gpa.gov.uk)**

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## **New strategic partnership for property and property-related financial services completed**

We have now completed the transition of services from Montagu Evans to BNP Paribas Real Estate (BNPPRE), our new partner for national property and property-related financial services.

The successful transition follows our three-month plan that allowed BNPPRE to meet and get to know our and Montagu Evans' teams. This has enabled BNPPRE to understand in detail our existing processes and systems, and how we provide services to our clients.

We are committed to our client-centric approach ensuring our team remains focused on delivering high quality services.

BNPPRE has been identifying areas for improvement in how we use Horizon – the property management and finance system – as well as how we control and

process the data, and our procedures and reporting for finance and property management.

This new partnership is an exciting opportunity for us to improve on the service standards we currently deliver and improve client satisfaction.

Steve Harber, Head of UK Property Management at BNP Paribas Real Estate said: "We are delighted to welcome the new GPA contract team who have transitioned seamlessly into our business and have immediately focused on the delivery of the Government's property strategy and focus on data and accurate financial reporting. We look forward to building on this excellent start and working in partnership with the GPA and their clients to deliver sustainable value creation across all aspects of the contract."

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## **Continuing to build our customer insights**

Understanding how well our workplaces support our customers is vitally important to us. We want to make sure we're doing everything we can to provide expertly-designed and serviced workplaces that best support people to connect and collaborate, to be creative, build communities, care for one another and ultimately be their best. We want our workplaces to be a magnet, not a mandate!

To help us with this, we are continuing to build our database of customer feedback and insights through both our Leesman and our customer satisfaction surveys. To date, over 10,000 civil servants have responded to our Leesman office survey, from across 52 buildings. This is on top of the 26,000 civil servants who took our Leesman working from home survey in 2020. We have also launched our own customer satisfaction surveys in buildings covering to date over 25,000 customers.

The surveys are giving us fantastic insight into how our buildings are supporting workplace experiences as well as things such as preferred ways of working, the work settings that best support certain activities and potential office attendance rates.

If you would like to find out more about these surveys or the insights we're developing, please contact us via: [customerinsights@gpa.gov.uk](mailto:customerinsights@gpa.gov.uk)

## **Exciting news for those clients with teams based at Birmingham, 23 Stephenson Street!**

The hub has now been open for around one year, which means it's a great time for us to gather feedback. Please look out for the Leesman post-occupancy survey which will be launching in November. This survey will give all customers the opportunity to have their say and tell us about their experiences working in the building. It's really important that we get as many responses as possible so we can be sure the action plans for improvement

are appropriate and to ensure we are justified in celebrating successes. Please help us achieve this by encouraging people to complete it. More information will be shared with you in the near future.

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## **GPA's Capital Programme progress continues**

### **London**

The Whitehall Campus Programme continues to support the Government's growth and Levelling Up agenda by consolidating the London estate, contributing to Net Zero and delivering better value for the Government's office portfolio. It is delivering a modern, smarter estate through 17 interoperable buildings as Whitehall Campus.

Work is also continuing across the Campus on 3-8 Whitehall Place, 55 Whitehall, 22-26 Whitehall and 10 South Colonnade to bring together buildings, which will deliver great places for civil servants to work.

### **Darlington**

Feethams House, Darlington Project has delivered the ground to fourth floors and clients are now occupying the building. Feedback from the client users has been extremely positive. The GPA has delivered the building in floor sections to assist the clients in occupying at the earliest opportunity.

The project's timely success is due to the collaboration and strong working relationship formed across the GPA and the Economic Campus clients, making key decisions throughout the design process. The GPA successfully mobilised the main building contractor and within 14 weeks reached practical completion of two floors.

The GPA has been central to determining the location of the campus, the adjacency to the east coast main rail line and the town centre has been deliberately sought, to help increase the pedestrian pound spend in Darlington and to support the local economy.

The landing of HMT in Darlington will now be alongside the Department for Education, helping to strengthen the Civil Service presence in the town, increase departmental collaborative working, and support a stronger regional economy.

Darlington, Feethams House

### **Manchester**

Manchester First Street commenced construction at the end of August 2022. This was following the signing of a Lease Agreement with the developer, Ask

Real Estate, and its JV partner The Richardson Family, who recently secured funding from the Pension Insurance Corporation Plc. Over 2,300 Civil Servants from multiple departments will be moving into Manchester First Street. First Street will house Civil Servants moving from another Manchester office, with a number of new roles in the city deriving from the Levelling up Agenda and Places for Growth.

CGI Image of the new building

## **Croydon**

Croydon, 2 Ruskin Square is currently tracking ahead of schedule thanks to our strong collaboration with Stanhope and Lendlease. We are pleased to award our fit out works to Wates Smartspace who will continue to build on its delivery success at our Darlington Hub.

The Home Office will bring together more than 5,000 employees, currently spread across three offices, to provide a mixture of workplaces to support collaboration through its flexible and hybrid work spaces, into this one highly sustainable building.

Croydon, 2 Ruskin Square

## **Peterborough**

Quay House, sits at the gateway to Fletton Quays and will be a crucial element to the development of the area, contributing to the economic, social and cultural progress of the local community, the city and broader region.

Quay House is in the final stages of Cat B work, being carried out by Overbury and will be handed over to us at the end of October, with clients able to walk through the doors in early 2023. Quay House will be the new home of DEFRA and HM Passport Office in Peterborough.

We are working closely with representatives from both DEFRA and HMPO and are looking forward to a smooth transition into the new building.

Peterborough, Quay House

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## **Our annual performance 2021-22**

We continue to place our clients at the heart of our solutions, and to drive efficiencies and innovation that benefit your people – our customers.

We have grown our property assets to £1.9 billion, which equates to c.700,000 square metres across the UK – the largest manager of offices in Government. This is allowing us to generate significant savings in property costs as well as to reduce carbon emissions. We are also shaping hybrid working as we support more departments with their Smarter Working transformation and their post-Covid return to the office.

We continue to take great strides in our OneEstate property technology solutions across GovWifi, GovPass, GovPrint and occupancy monitoring. We have also significantly improved our data capture to help us make earlier and better decisions.

Over the past year, we have invested more in improving the condition of our estate and will continue to invest in Net Zero interventions to deliver against the Government's target of 50% reduction in carbon emissions in its offices by 2032.

We invite you to [read our latest Annual Report and Accounts](#) which provide an overview of the 2021-22 reporting period.

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## **Providing safe, secure and healthy workplaces**

We deliver a comprehensive building-related health and safety service in the offices we manage through our service providers. Statutory health, safety and fire compliance is further assured by our internal team of highly qualified technical specialists.

The provision of this central service is very efficient: for instance removing the need for each department to conduct separate, overlapping, fire risk assessments.

Within buildings managed by departments, they hold overall responsibility for providing a secure, safe and compliant building including all aspects of building maintenance, fire safety and general safety in all common areas.

We are creating buildings that are aligned with the [Government Security Functional Standard](#), and meet or exceed the Physical Security Minimum Standard. Physical Security within our Hubs is built upon a consistent set of design principles that deliver threat-informed, risk-based security. Installed systems and technologies for physical security are aligned to National Technical Authority guidance.

Our client-facing arrangements defined within the Managed Services and Terms of Occupation Agreements provide clarity on the management of critical property related health and safety arrangements. Our Health and Safety Committee engages with Trades Union colleagues to ensure effective consultation takes place to develop best practice in health and safety across our estate.

## **Respiratory Infections, Including COVID-19, in the workplace**

We led the property-related COVID-19 response, and played a leading role in providing civil servants with the management tools to facilitate the almost overnight switch to working from home during the pandemic. As departments continue to increase their return to the office, the building risk assessments carried out – in the buildings we manage and service – use government guidance and best practice to capture and manage the hazards relating to Respiratory Infections. This includes COVID-19, and a particular emphasis on managing ventilation systems.

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## **Innovative solution streamlining the procurement process**

The GPA has been integral to ensuring a number of critical actions were put in place during Op BRIDGES. We operated in a fast paced and agile way working closely with the Op BRIDGE Secretariat, the Metropolitan Police and the Government Security Group on access to, and security of, government buildings in the ceremonial footprint.

Earlier this year, our Capital Projects Commercial team was tasked with implementing a category solution for purchasing office furniture. This would include both furniture for new Government Hubs as well as smaller workplace services and client funded projects.

The commercial team designed a competition to appoint three suppliers who would form a multi-supplier agreement. Individual project task orders could then be called down from the agreement. Task orders would be allocated to suppliers on a rotational basis, by order of installation date, similar to the operation of a taxi rank. The competition was run through the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) framework RM6119, Lot 8 – Hubs furniture. This approach ensures that all furniture requirements can be met as they begin to increase in value and frequency, and that our procurement team is not overburdened.

The suggested commercial model tested well with the suppliers on Lot 8, and the procurement was conducted with the help of CCS over approximately 10 weeks. Senator Group, Wagstaff Bros and Southern's Broadstock Office Furniture have been appointed on this forward-thinking multi-supplier agreement and have begun engaging with project teams.

The design of this agreement removes the need for suppliers to put together a new bid for each individual requirement – a time-consuming and costly process. The suppliers are also appreciating the opportunity to build a longer term strategic partnership with us over multiple projects.

Our teams are now able to call-down furniture orders from their allocated



supplier. This uses the overarching agreement and prices submitted during the original tender, rather than running a new tender for every project. This solution has streamlined the procurement process and greatly reduced workloads. It also provides good cost certainty for the next 12 months, allowing our cost teams to better plan for spend approvals and allocation of budgets.

We anticipate that having our furniture suppliers appointed at the outset of a project will reduce project timelines by four to eight weeks, improve the planning and design process and allow for smoother installation, ultimately securing better outcomes for our clients and reducing government spend.

Senator quote – “ The Senator Group is delighted to have been awarded a place on the contract. The use of the ‘taxi rank’ system is forward-thinking, enabling both the GPA and its successful suppliers to plan effectively for each project, improving value for money and enabling us to work more closely with the GPA. This will enable us to better support the government’s innovative, regional Hubs programme.”

Southerns Broadstock quote – “ With the GPA adopting a taxi rank system for sharing its significant pipeline of work, it was an ideal opportunity for Southern Broadstock to win a place on the framework and continue to build a strong relationship with the various stakeholders.

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Find out more about the [Government Property Agency here](#)

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## [Norfolk town plagued by abattoir stench](#)

A Norfolk community largely prevented from leaving their homes in the first coronavirus lockdown in 2020 had to endure the stench from decaying poultry at an abattoir.

Residents described the putrid smell as like ‘rotting bodies and flesh’. Another was physically sick.

A court heard the Environment Agency received nearly 350 complaints from local people and businesses in the area surrounding the site in Attleborough between 2019 and 2021.

Animal blood was allowed to flood the slaughterhouse floor

Owner Banham Poultry (2018) Ltd has been fined £300,000 for failing to stop odour pollution from the slaughterhouse affecting the lives of people living and working in the market town.

Dirty water from where chickens were washed sat unhygienically on the floor of the Banham Poultry abattoir

District judge Andrew King heard the abattoir had broken or damaged doors and walls, a roof so weak it collapsed, and another part of the site unsafe for Environment Agency staff to enter. He acknowledged practices at Banham Poultry had a 'significant effect on quality of life' in the town.

Odours from the abattoir were allowed to escape into the community through damaged walls like this one

People couldn't enjoy their gardens, and nauseating smells entering their homes were difficult to remove.

Poultry was brought into the abattoir alive and prepared to be later sold in shops and restaurants.

Banham, now under new management from the time of the offending, had a permit from the Environment Agency to slaughter up to 67 million birds a year, more than a million every week.

Streets and houses were overpowered by a constant whiff from the abattoir as the stay-at-home pandemic laws had unintended consequences. But the repulsive smells around Attleborough began more than a year before lockdown.

The Environment Agency warned the company to act after 9 complaints about the slaughterhouse were made early in 2019, coinciding with waste blood kept on site too long.

Believing the company had breached its permit for managing smells, investigators gave Banham Poultry an enforcement notice to limit or prevent odours leaving the boundary of the abattoir.

Sophie Cousins, who led the investigation into the abattoir for the Environment Agency, said:

Banham Poultry failed to invest in odour-prevention. People living and working nearby were badly affected over a long period of time.

The Environment Agency decided on prosecution after Banham missed many chances to comply with the law. We gave them time and assistance to put matters right, but the problems just mounted up.

The site's odour management plan, meant to control the effect of work on the

community, was 'ripped up', according to one employee. Another member of staff wrote in an e-mail in 2019 they were 'embarrassed...' and couldn't defend the company's poor management of the site, adding 'we stink'.

The Environment Agency consistently told Banham the plan either didn't contain the necessary measures to prevent odour pollution, or procedures weren't being followed. Banham either responded to the warnings very late or simply ignored them.

District judge King also said in court:

The Environment Agency was seeking to work with Banham Poultry... far and beyond what was required of them as a regulator. Investigators sought to solve problems, providing training to various levels of management, seemingly to no avail.

Investigators went out of their way to make sure Banham followed the right procedures, for example, creating a spreadsheet detailing what needed to be done, but when the complaints kept coming in, legal action was the only outcome.

The court heard foul-smelling air escaped through damaged and open doors. Watery blood from poultry collected on the abattoir floor, prevented from draining away because of blocked drains.

Other parts of the building were badly corroded and beyond repair. Part of the site collapsed in May 2020 when the roof caved in. Structural weaknesses saw another roof blow off in a storm. Repairs that were done were said to be 'shabby'.

Finding decaying animal parts, investigators were also concerned at poor housekeeping, and no contingency plan when animal blood and waste was on site too long.

The shortcomings were made worse by carcasses stored outside in the hot summer of 2020. Dead animals were kept in a trailer in sweltering conditions with no refrigeration.

Staff lacked the relevant training in environmental issues, so were unable to deal with the abattoir's many problems, described by the agency as 'chronic'.

The Environment Agency recorded odours 86 times outside the abattoir from the start of 2019 to September last year, ranging from faint to very strong – all of which came from the abattoir.

People living in Station Road, Maurice Gaymer Road and New North Road were particularly worst hit by the stench of animal carcasses, blood and offal, but businesses were affected, too.

Staff and customers at local firms like a food manufacturer and a tyre repair centre had to put up with the consequence of Banham's poor management.

The company pleaded guilty to failing to keep activities free from odour levels likely to cause pollution outside the abattoir between January 2019 and September 2021.

Banham also admitted not complying with an enforcement notice served on it by the Environment Agency that set out steps they should have taken to limit or prevent odours leaving the site.

District judge King ruled the offences as reckless culpability. He fined Banham Poultry (2018) Ltd, of Station Road, Attleborough, £300,000 for breaching regulation 38 (2) of the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016. He imposed no separate penalty for a breach of regulation 38 (3) – not complying with the enforcement notice.

The hearing at Chelmsford magistrates' court on 15 September 2022 also ordered Banham Poultry to pay £67,621.45 in costs and a victim surcharge of £170.

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## [Parents warned about dangers of children missing vaccines](#)

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is urging parents and guardians to ensure their children are up to date with all their routine childhood immunisations including polio and measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccinations. This comes as new data shows vaccination coverage for young children fell last year for virtually all programmes.

Vaccination rates have fallen over several years and additional disruption caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, beginning in March 2020, is likely to have caused some of the decreases in vaccine coverage seen in 2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022 compared to earlier years.

It is important vaccination coverage is recovered as soon as possible to levels recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) of 95% for all childhood immunisation programmes to help prevent the spread of avoidable serious – and sometimes deadly – diseases such as measles and polio.

The latest vaccination statistics from UKHSA and NHS Digital for children up to 5 years of age in the UK (COVER programme) show coverage decreased for 13 out of the 14 routine vaccination programmes measured in 2021 to 2022.

Only 89.2% of children at 24 months had completed their first dose of the MMR vaccine, which is a decrease from 90.3% in the previous year.

Coverage for the second dose of MMR by age 5 years was also down by nearly 1%.

Coverage for the first dose of MMR at 24 months was less than 90% in 61 (out of 149) local authorities.

Coverage also decreased for the 6-in-1 and 5-in-1 vaccine, which protects against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, disease caused by Haemophilus influenzae type b and hepatitis B, among children aged 12 months, 24 months, and 5 years.

Since the introduction of the measles vaccine in 1968 it is estimated that 20 million measles cases and 4,500 deaths have been prevented in the UK.

Measles is highly contagious so even a small decline in MMR uptake can lead to a rise in cases. Since international travel has resumed closer to pre-pandemic levels, it is more likely that measles will be brought in from countries that have higher levels of the disease and cause outbreaks.

Measles can lead to complications such as ear infections, pneumonia, and inflammation of the brain which require hospitalisation and on rare occasions can lead to long term disability or death.

The NHS is running a MMR catch-up campaign so some parents may be contacted directly.

Low polio vaccination rates in parts of London have left communities vulnerable to the spread of poliovirus, which has been detected in parts of North and East London through sewage surveillance. To date, no clinical cases of polio have been identified but health services have been urged to remain vigilant to any cases of paralysis in children.

A polio vaccination campaign, recommended by the expert immunisation committee JCVI, is under way in London for all 1- to 9-year-olds, either as a booster dose or catch-up and it's important all parents take up this offer as soon as possible to help protect their child.

Dr Vanessa Saliba, Consultant epidemiologist at UKHSA, said:

Measles is highly contagious and can be dangerous, and it is extremely worrying that we are seeing levels of uptake of the MMR vaccine falling among young children. It is also vitally important that children get their polio vaccinations to help prevent the risk of paralysis.

I would urge parents to check that all children are up to date with their vaccines, and if not to get them booked in as soon as possible to make sure they have maximum protection against what can be terrible diseases.

Childhood vaccines also boost population immunity levels, helping prevent outbreaks, so by taking up all vaccinations for our children, we play our part in keeping these diseases confined to the past.

Anyone who is unsure if their child is up to date with all their routine vaccinations should check their child's red book (personal child health record) in the first instance. If you are still not sure, or if you need to bring your child up to date with their vaccines, contact your GP practice to check and book an appointment.

To find out more about childhood vaccinations, please visit the [NHS website](#).