

# Prime Minister appoints new Envoy on Girls' Education: 16 January 2020

- PM appoints Helen Grant MP as the UK's Special Envoy on Girls' Education
- She will lead efforts to improve learning and get 40 million more girls into school around the world by 2025
- Boosting girls' education globally is a key priority for the UK as we take on the G7 presidency

The Prime Minister has appointed Helen Grant MP as his new Special Envoy on Girls' Education, leading the UK's efforts internationally to ensure all girls get 12 years of quality education.

Mrs Grant is the Member of Parliament for Maidstone and the Weald and is a passionate advocate for the rights of women and girls. Before entering Parliament, Helen was a solicitor for 23 years, specialising in protecting women and children from domestic abuse. Since becoming an MP in 2010 she has been a champion of gender equality in Parliament, and has previously served as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice and Women and Equality.

As Special Envoy, she will champion the UK's global expertise on education and secure backing for ambitious initiatives to get 40 million more girls in primary and secondary school in developing countries by 2025 and improve learning levels, so girls can achieve their full potential.

Empowering women and girls through education is a long-standing priority for the Prime Minister, and will be a key focus for the UK's G7 presidency in 2021.

We will also co-host the Global Partnership for Education summit with Kenya in the UK later this year, bringing governments, business and civil society together to channel investment and action into getting children around the world into school and learning.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

It is my fervent belief that educating girls is the simplest and most transformative thing we can do to lift communities out of poverty, end the scourge of gender-based violence and build back better from the pandemic. It can change the fortunes of not just individual women and girls, but communities and nations.

That's why I am delighted to appoint Helen Grant as my Special Envoy on Girls' Education today to drive forward the UK's vital work in this area.

Coronavirus has made the work of the Special Envoy more important than ever, with 1.6 billion children and young people out of education around the world

at the peak of school closures. Unless vulnerable children are supported to continue learning during the pandemic and to return to school once restrictions are lifted, we will set back decades of progress.

The benefits of educating girls are enormous – a child whose mother can read is 50 per cent more likely to live past the age of five and twice as likely to attend school themselves. With just one additional school year, a woman's earnings can increase by up to a fifth.

Special Envoy for Girls' Education, Helen Grant said:

It is an honour to be appointed as the Prime Minister's Envoy on Girls' Education and to have the opportunity to lead the UK's important international outreach on this issue.

Ensuring all girls get 12 years of quality education is rightly a priority for the Government. High quality female education empowers women, reduces poverty and unleashes economic growth.

I will be making it my mission to encourage a more ambitious approach to girls' education from the international community as we seek to build back better from the Covid crisis.

The UK has been playing a leading role in championing every girls' right to 12 years of quality education. Since 2015, we have supported 15.6 million children, including over 8 million girls, to get a decent education.

In Zambia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania, for example, the UK's Girls Education Challenge has helped over 260,000 girls from poor communities to stay in secondary school with learning, mentoring and skills training and financial support to buy uniforms and stationary.

Helen Grant will start in her new role as Girls' Education Envoy with immediate effect. She will continue in her existing role as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Nigeria.

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## ['Right to Regenerate' to turn derelict buildings into homes and community assets](#)

- New Right to Regenerate will enable public to require councils and public sector to sell unused land and assets
- Proposals for public to have first right of refusal to purchase underused land in England

- Land to be sold by default, unless compelling reason not to
- Making it simpler, quicker and easier for public to transform vacant land and derelict buildings into homes, businesses or community spaces

The public will be able to convert vacant plots of land and derelict buildings into new homes or community spaces, under plans announced today (16 January 2021) by the Housing Secretary, Robert Jenrick MP.

The 'Right to Regenerate' proposals would make it easier to challenge councils and other public organisations to release land for redevelopment – helping communities make better use of public land and give a new lease of life to unloved buildings.

Underused public land could be sold to individuals or communities by default, unless there is a compelling reason the owner should hold onto it.

Under the proposals, public bodies would need to have clear plans for land in the near future, even if only a temporary use before later development – if the land is kept for too long without being used, they would be required to sell it.

These measures provide an opportunity for the public and local communities to redevelop and transform eyesores, taking control of unused local land or buildings and transforming them into something they want in their area.

This builds on the government's drive to encourage development on brownfield land and more beautiful buildings that are in line with local preferences.

The strengthened rights would also apply to unused publicly owned social housing and garages providing opportunities to transform the local housing stock.

The latest figures show there were over 25,000 vacant council owned homes and according to recent FOI data over 100,000 empty council-owned garages last year.

The new process will be fast and simple, and the Secretary of State will act as an arbiter to ensure fairness and speedy outcomes in all cases.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Right to Regenerate is the simple way to turn public land into public good, with land sold by default, unless there is a very compelling reason not to do so.

We are cutting through red tape so that communities can make better use of available land and derelict buildings, which means more new homes, businesses and community assets.

Millions of people will now be able to buy that empty property, unused garage or parcel of land and turn it into something good for them and their community.

Tom Chance, Chief Executive of the National Community Land Trust Network, said:

We welcome these plans that could help communities to turn abandoned and neglected land and buildings into fantastic community assets.

There are hundreds of community land trusts across the country wanting to build much needed affordable housing, but getting hold of land at an affordable price is a huge barrier.

The potential for communities to be given first right of refusal could be a gamechanger. We encourage everyone to read through the proposals and respond to the consultation.

Ian Harvey, Executive Director of Civic Voice said:

Across the country, communities see land that remains empty and wonder why. They imagine how it could be used for communities – from green space, to housing, but when they enquire about enhancing the space it's never clear who owns it.

If a community has a viable use for this land, they must be given the opportunity to take these ideas forward.

The 'Right to Regenerate' is a great-step forward to build on previous attempts at doing this and we believe it will increase the chance for communities to come together to bring vacant land into the heart of the community. We look forward to working with communities on this latest community right.

In practice this could mean if a member of the public had an unused plot of land at the back of their house owned by the council, they could use the new Right to Regenerate.

If the land was determined to be underused with no plans to bring it into use, it would be sold and the person making the request could have first right of refusal to purchase – enabling them to extend their garden, or for the community to come together to use the land in a beneficial way.

In 1980, Michael Heseltine introduced powers that form part of the current 'Right to Contest' – giving the public the power to request the sale of underused land owned by public bodies in England, and these were extended through the Community Right to Reclaim Land, in 2011.

However, since the 2014 creation of the Right to Contest, only 192 requests have been made under this power and only one has been granted, having usually been refused because the owner had future plans for the land, which meant some sites were left unused for years. Today's proposals will revitalise and

strengthen the right to encourage more successful requests.

Today's announcement also builds on measures the government is taking to regenerate urban areas across England, including encouraging councils in urban areas to plan for more homes and make the most of brownfield land.

The [consultation](#) opens today and closes on 13 March.

Further proposals in the new Right to Regenerate consultation also include:

- Publishing a definition of unused or underused land, helping to guide and encourage the public to make requests.
- Extending the range of public bodies whose land is covered by the right to include town and parish councils.
- Giving the requester the exclusive right to buy the land at market value for a period of time (a 'right of first refusal'). Under the current Right to Contest, there is no expectation that a requester would have a right of first refusal rather than the land being placed on the open market, giving people less incentive to make a request.
- The consultation on the Right to Regenerate applies to land owned by public bodies in England.
- The Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 empowers the Secretary of State to direct a body within a specific list of bodies, set out in Schedule 16 to that Act, to take steps to dispose of their interest in that land where that land is not being used or not being sufficiently used. This policy has two strands. Strand 1 covers central government bodies on a voluntary, non-statutory basis, and is administered by the Cabinet Office. Strand 2 covers those public bodies set out in Schedule 16 of the 1980 Act and is administered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This consultation relates to Strand 2.
- In addition to making it easier to make a request for land to be sold, the consultation proposes measures to improve transparency and assisting with record-keeping by requiring councils to follow publicity measures including:
  - submitting quarterly reports on the number of preliminary enquiries made
  - physical and electronic notices to be displayed where a request has been made to release a site

- all requests, together with their reasoning and outcomes, to be published on councils' websites

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## [Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce meeting, 14 January 2021](#)

News story

Joint statement on progress made by the taskforce at its meeting on 14 January 2021.



The eleventh meeting of the Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce was held yesterday, 14 January 2021.

It was chaired by Transport Minister, Baroness Vere. Attendees included the Project Director Dana Skelley plus representatives from the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, the Greater London Authority, Transport for London (TfL), and the Port of London Authority.

Dana Skelley, speaking on behalf of the Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce, said:

The Taskforce held its first meeting of the New Year yesterday and reiterated its commitment to enabling Londoners to cross the river as soon as safely possible.

We were pleased to hear from the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham that they have commissioned Foster & Partners and COWI to conduct a full feasibility study into their proposal for a temporary bridge as presented at the previous Taskforce meeting; we look forward to receiving the completion of this study in due course.

We look forward to discussions with LBHF's engineers Mott MacDonald and their risk consultants about their detailed analysis of the bridge's north-east pedestal, the condition of which triggered closure of the bridge last year, and about the case for continued safe operation (CCSO). It was noted that the advice given to LBHF did not recommend reopening at this time. It is recognised that the precise condition of the two western pedestals will not be known until the blast cleaning works have been carried out. This is due to be completed by April and will enable us to identify any hidden fractures in the pedestals.

The Taskforce also heard the latest from TfL regarding the procurement for the temporary ferry service, which is well underway. We continue to expect the service to commence in the spring, although the precise operational timings will be dependent on the programme put forward by the winning bidder.

Lastly, we were pleased to hear that river users have been able to schedule and undertake controlled transits under the bridge on Sundays, when engineers are not working on the bridge.

The Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce was set up by the Department for Transport in September 2020 to work towards safely reopening the Hammersmith Bridge. The taskforce is chaired by Baroness Vere and includes representatives from TfL, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Network Rail, the Greater London Authority and the Port of London Authority.

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## **All UK travel corridors temporarily suspended to protect against new international variants**

- emergency measures introduced at the border to be in place for at least one month in order to protect the UK against new variants
- all international arrivals to the UK from any country (including British and Irish Nationals) must now take a pre-departure test and self-isolate for 10 days
- passengers must continue to fill in a Passenger Locator Form and have a negative test before travelling to the UK or could face a £500 fine for each

The government has today (15 January 2021) announced emergency border measures to prevent the spread of concerning new variants of coronavirus (COVID-19) into the UK, such as those first identified in Brazil and South America, and to protect us against the risk of as yet unidentified new strains.

From Monday 18 January at 4am, all [travel corridors](#) with the UK will be suspended – meaning that all international arrivals who have departed from or transited through any country outside the Common Travel Area in the previous 10 days will be required to both take a pre-departure test, and self-isolate immediately for 10 days on arrival. This includes British and Irish nationals.

This urgent action is in response to increasing concern over the transmissibility and virulence of new strains evolving internationally. It will also ensure that the government is able to protect the progress being made on the country's vaccination programme.

This move will be supported by increased enforcement, both at the border and across the UK, with Border Force increasing the number of spot checks on passengers that have entered the country.

International travel corridors have been in place since July 2020 for countries and territories where critical analysis suggests the risk of COVID-19 can be mitigated.

However, the level of risk associated with the emergence of new variants globally has now increased, requiring more stringent measures to block all potential avenues through which new strains of the virus could enter the UK while we consider how best to respond.

The new measures will be reviewed on Monday 15 February – while further work takes place to manage the threat posed by coronavirus variants.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

We are operating in a completely new environment in our fight against COVID-19, with several worrying new strains of the virus emerging across the globe.

Now more than ever, as we make strides vaccinating people up and down the country, we need to take advantage of all measures available to us – and these robust emergency precautions will help us protect the nation to ensure we continue to make progress.

As has been the case throughout the pandemic – the government is moving quickly in response to the latest scientific evidence, and we will continue to take swift action in banning travel from countries where new strains are formally identified, as we have done previously.

These measures are the right course of action now, to safeguard public health



and prevent new strains of the virus from worsening the existing picture within the UK.

National restrictions for England introduced on 6 January 2021 remain in place, meaning that everyone must stay at home unless travelling for a very limited set of reasons.

The closure of all the UK travel corridors will ensure that for those returning from trips that fall into this limited set of exemptions, and for passengers arriving to the UK from abroad, there is a clear and robust set of measures to prevent cases of coronavirus entering the country.

Those in breach of the lockdown rules face penalties starting at £200, rising to a maximum of £6,400.

A number of exemptions to the travel corridor policy – including the need to travel for business – will be suspended from 4am on Monday 18th January, unless they are vital to maintaining the flow of critical goods, protecting essential services, protecting national security or facilitating government work.

A full list of exemptions will be available on GOV.UK shortly.

The government's [Test to Release scheme](#) will remain in place, giving passengers the option to shorten the mandatory self-isolation period to as little as 5 days.

However, they will still need to adhere to national restrictions in place upon release from self-isolation.

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## [CST response to Scottish Government request for additional funding](#)

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