

Government announces £8 million cash boost for vibrant new communities

Communities across England are set to benefit from thousands of new, better-designed homes thanks to an £8 million cash boost, Housing Minister Rt Hon Esther McVey MP has announced today.

A total of £6 million will be allocated to help new locally-led garden towns and villages progress plans to deliver up to 200,000 new homes.

An additional £1.9 million will be given to councils in England to support new neighbourhood plans, allowing communities to get involved and have their say on the types of homes that are built and where.

Neighbourhood planning has been incredibly popular at the local level since it was introduced in 2011 with nearly a million votes cast for neighbourhood plans and over 2,600 different communities coming forward with proposals.

Today's funding allocation builds on the government's commitment to giving communities a voice on the development in their areas, including prioritising local brownfield land while protecting the green belt.

Housing Minister Rt Hon Esther McVey MP said:

Communities have the local insight to decide what new homes should look like and the kind of infrastructure they need in their area. This is what neighbourhood planning is all about, so I'm pleased this funding will ensure that the right homes are built in the right places.

I am also announcing extra cash to deliver new vibrant garden communities, which will help deliver tens of thousands of well-designed new homes for hardworking families.

Today's funding will support local authorities to deliver neighbourhood plans by:

- Providing advice and expertise to communities that want a neighbourhood plan;
- Organising an independent examination of draft plans;
- Hosting local referendums that give communities a final say on these plans; and
- Supporting communities who want to deliver new neighbourhood plans but have not been able to.

Twenty one garden towns and villages already in the pipeline across England will receive a share of £6 million to progress their proposals towards delivering up to 200,000 new homes.

The cash injection will mean homes get built that otherwise would not. This is because it will be used for preparing environmental assessments and using the latest design techniques to develop areas people will be proud to be a part of.

The latest new garden community to receive backing from the government will be built at Wynyard, which has already received £150,000 and will make it the largest new settlement in the North East, delivering up to 6,800 new homes.

Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen said:

I am delighted that this funding has been approved and it is another example of the government's commitment to projects in the Tees Valley – they are supporting my ambition to make our region a better place to live and work.

The proposed garden community will take more pressure off nearby developments when it comes to excessive building which is changing the character of our villages and towns for the worse and proving to be a real headache for residents. This announcement is more evidence that this government is listening to the concerns of people in this region and acting upon them.

- Neighbourhood plans are led by community volunteers and parish councils, covering individual neighbourhoods and villages, and are supported by their local planning authority.
- A [list of councils](#) receiving funding to support neighbourhood planning can be found below
- See a [list of all the 21 Garden Communities](#) to receive funding in this round

Councils receiving funding to support neighbourhood planning

East of England

Barbegh

Central Bedfordshire

Colchester

East Hertfordshire

Mid-Suffolk

North Hertfordshire

Yorkshire and Humber

Barnsley

Leeds

Wakefield

East Midlands

Bassetlaw

Daventry

Melton

North East Derbyshire

North West Leicestershire

Rutland

South Northamptonshire

Wellingborough

West Lindsey

London

Brent

Greenwich

Lambeth

Westminster

West Midlands

Cannock Chase

Herefordshire

North Warwickshire

Solihull

Stratford-on-Avon

Wychavon

North West

Cheshire East

Cheshire West and Chester

Rochdale

Stockport

West Lancashire

North East

Durham

South West

Cornwall

Dorset

Mendip

North Somerset

South Somerset

Wiltshire

South East

Fareham

Hart

Horsham

Maidstone

Milton Keynes

Rother

Runneymede

South Oxfordshire

Vale of White Horse

West Oxfordshire

Windsor and Maidenhead

Garden communities receiving funding

Place	Capacity award	Homes
Aylesbury	£460,000	16,000
Basingstoke	£200,000	10,000
Bicester	£320,000	13,000
Didcot	£100,000	15,000
Harlow & Gilston	£580,000	24,000
North Essex (Colchester, Tendring & Braintree)	£550,000	43,000
North Northants (Corby, Kettering & Wellingborough)	£600,000	25,000
Otterpool Park, Folkestone	£580,000	10,000
Taunton	£340,000	13,000
St Cuthbert's, Carlisle	£320,000	10,300
Culm, Mid Devon	£150,000	5,000
Dunton Hills	£150,000	4,000
Halsnead	£250,000	1,500
Handforth	£150,000	1,600
Infinity, Derbyshire	£150,000	3,700
Longmarston	£150,000	3,500
Longcross	£150,000	1,700
West Oxfordshire	£150,000	2,200
Tresham	£250,000	1,500
Welbourne	£150,000	6,000
West Carclaze	£250,000	1,500

[A letter from Sajid Javid to Lord Forsyth on the launch date of the upcoming joint consultation on the Retail Prices Index](#)

Today, the Chancellor has written to the chair of the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee announcing that the joint consultation between the Government and UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) on a proposed change to address the shortcomings in the Retail Prices Index (RPI) will now launch at Budget 2020.

The consultation had been scheduled to launch this month. However, following

the general election and the Chancellor's confirmation of the Budget date, the Chancellor has agreed with UKSA that the consultation will now launch at Budget.

The consultation will launch at the Budget on 11 March. It will be open for responses for a period of six weeks, closing on 22 April. The Government and UKSA will respond to the consultation before the Parliamentary summer recess.

Ensuring lasting peace in Colombia

Thank you very much, Mr President. Before I start on Colombia, let me thank you for arranging the two moments of silence and also use this occasion to pay tribute to His late Majesty Sultan Qaboos of Oman.

Turning to Colombia, I'd like to welcome the Foreign Minister. We're very pleased to have you here, ma'am and we wish you all the best in your new role. And thank you to the Special Representative for his report and for the briefing to the Council today. We very much share your analysis of events in Colombia over the past three months. This reflects both the achievements and the challenges of implementation of the peace agreement.

I'd also like, Mr President, to welcome the announcement by President Duque that he'd like the verification mission to stay in Colombia for the duration of his government. This is an important indication of the government's commitment to peace.

Mr President, October saw the first local elections since the accords were reached and the first in which the FARC political party took part. Despite the concerning levels of violence during the campaign, election day showed the strength and inclusivity of Colombian democracy, with more candidates from across the political spectrum competing than ever before and the highest turnout in modern times. We were encouraged, too by the overwhelming commitment of those elected to continue along the path to peace. The newly-elected local authorities have a key role in implementation of the peace agreement, especially through the development programmes with a territorial focus. We welcome the government's support for these programmes, including through expanded financing, and encourage coordination between national, departmental and local authorities to ensure effective implementation.

However, there are some areas in which urgent efforts are necessary to preserve the gains of the past three years. Fortunately, the mechanisms to address these already exist; the challenge is to make more effective use of them.

Firstly, we're deeply concerned about the persistent level of violence and threats towards human rights defenders, community leaders, including women and former FARC-EP combatants. We have highlighted this point on previous

occasions, but we're concerned that the situation isn't improving despite the government's stated commitment to tackling the issue. To this end, we welcome last week's meeting of the National Commission on Security Guarantees, and we encourage full and ongoing use of this mechanism, including engagement with civil society to further implementation.

We encourage prioritisation of the Action Plan of the Intersectoral Commission on Security for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders, which has the potential to transform departmental security conditions for the better. We also welcome recent steps to strengthen protection of former FARC-EP combatants, and note yesterday's announcement of an operation to thwart a plan to attack FARC political party leader Rodrigo Londoño. We encourage the government to ensure the extension of protection measures to territorial areas for training and reintegration and informal settlement of former FARC-EP combatants.

Secondly, we urge the Colombian government to accelerate reintegration programmes. These are crucial to maintain combatants and communities' faith in the process. Efforts should be made to ensure legal accreditation and access to income generating projects for former FARC-EP combatants living both inside and outside the former territorial areas for training and reintegration. More widely, we encourage the government to work with all stakeholders to resolve outstanding questions about the long-term status of these areas, particularly concerning the land on which they are located.

Finally, in his report, Special Representative emphasises the interconnected nature of all elements of the peace process. Implementing individual components of the agreement may produce limited outputs, but the outcome of inclusive, stable and lasting peace in Colombia will not be possible unless all components progress simultaneously and in a coherent fashion. In this regard, we encourage the Colombian government to take advantage of the national dialogue process it's begun following the recent protests, to build consensus with diverse sectors and ensure implementation continues in an effective and comprehensive manner.

Mr President, the United Kingdom recognises the important progress that has been achieved so far in Colombia and we look forward to continuing to support the Colombian government to ensure a lasting peace enjoyed by all.

Thank you.

Foreign Secretary Introduction to Queen's Speech Debate

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

On the 12 December the British people had their say, they delivered a clear majority for this Government, and a mandate to take Britain forward.

That mandate, set out in the Queen's Speech, marks a bold new chapter for our country – ambitious, self-confident and global in its international outlook.

Mr Speaker, we're leaving the EU in 18 days' time, but we vow to be the strongest of European neighbours and allies.

We're taking back control of our laws, but we're also expanding our global horizons to grasp the enormous opportunities of free trade.

And whilst we will always serve the interests of the small businesses and the citizens of this country, we also look to reinforce our national mission as a force for good in the world.

And Mr. Speaker, the UK will leave the EU at the end of this month because the House has passed the EU Withdrawal Bill at 3rd reading with a majority of 99 – which of course is the strongest signal to the EU and the world about our ambition and resolve as we chart the course ahead.

That clarity of purpose now gives us the opportunity to be masters of our own destiny and chart our own course that's independent but working very closely with our international partners.

We will strive with our European friends to secure the best possible arrangements for our future relationship by the end of 2020.

A new relationship that honours the will of the people in the 2016 referendum, but cherishes the trade, security and all other fields of cooperation we have with our European friends.

Mr. Speaker, as we enter this decade of renewal, the Government will engage in a thorough and careful review of the UK's place in the world.

Including through the Integrated Security, Defence and Foreign Policy Review.

It is an opportunity for us to reassess the ways we engage on the global stage, including in defence, diplomacy and our approach to development, to ensure we have a fully integrated strategy.

And, as we conduct that review, our guiding lights will remain the values of free trade, democracy, human rights and the international rule of law.

We will strengthen our historic trading ties, as we leave the EU, whilst boosting UK competitiveness by tapping wider global markets.

We want strong trade with our existing EU partners, they are important and valuable as a market for us – I don't think that anyone doubts that.

And we are making good progress in paving the way for our first round of future free trade agreements with the rest of the world.

When I was out in the US, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told me that the US is poised “at the doorstep, pen in hand”, ready to sign a deal.

A Free Trade Deal with the US would boost businesses, create jobs, reduce the cost of living and expand consumer choice on both sides of the Atlantic. So there is a huge opportunity for a win-win deal.

It is also, at the same time, important we broaden our horizons to embrace the huge opportunities in the rising economies of the future, from Asia to Latin America.

And we set out our stall as global champions of free trade, not just bi-laterally but in the WTO as well.

And Mr. Speaker, a truly Global Britain is about more than just international trade and investment, important as those things are for our prosperity and the quality of life for this country.

But Global Britain is also about continuing to uphold our values of liberal democracy and our heartfelt commitment to the international rule of law – values for which we are respected the world over.

We will continue to be a leading member of NATO, ensuring that the Alliance can rise to new challenges ahead.

We will hold Iran accountable for its destabilising and dangerous actions in the region, but also we will encourage it to de-escalate, and seek a path to an alternative future through diplomatic dialogue.

We will call out those who flout international law.

Like the Russian government, from its illegal annexation in Crimea and its chemical weapons attack in Salisbury, to its cyber-attacks and propensity for spreading fake news. We will call out those who flout international law.

We will live up to our responsibilities to the people of Hong Kong.

That means supporting their right to peaceful protest and encouraging dialogue on all sides, within the ‘one country, two systems’ framework that China has consistently advocated since the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, a treaty which holds international obligations on all sides.

And we will use our moral compass to champion causes that know no borders.

This year, we have the opportunity to host the UN Climate Change Summit – COP26 – in Glasgow, the UK’s chance to demonstrate global leadership on climate change.

Under the Conservatives, we’re the first country to legislate to end our contribution to global warming.

And this Government knows that we must leave the environment in a better state for our children.

We will harness British expertise, technology, innovation, and the entrepreneurialism that this country is so great at, to find creative solutions so that we leave our precious environment in a better state for the next generation.

And Mr. Speaker, this Government is proud to maintain our commitment to spending 0.7% of GNI on international development.

We want to support developing countries to stand on their own two feet.

So we're helping them strengthen their economies, make peace, forge security arrangements that are sustainable, so their people are healthier and have better living standards.

We shouldn't be shy about the work we are doing. We're proud of our role in working to eliminate preventable deaths and overcome diseases like Ebola and malaria.

And we'll be there for those who need our help the most, in their hour of need.

As we demonstrated with our world-leading humanitarian response capability, which was put into action in the Bahamas following Hurricane Dorian.

And being a force for good in the world means championing basic human rights.

We are leading global action to help provide 12 years of quality education for all girls by 2030, so no girl is left behind. And all their potential is tapped and they can realise their ambitions individually and for their countries.

We're proud to continue our work on defending Media Freedom, alongside Canada.

I was in Montreal talking about this last week with my Canadian opposite number.

Led by our two countries, we are working with partners around the world to create legislative protections for journalists, support individual journalists at risk, and increase the accountability for those who threaten those whose work shines a light on the conflicts and tyranny around the world.

We are dedicated to shielding those with the courage to speak truth to power.

On Thursday, in Montreal, the Canadian Foreign Minister Francoise-Philippe Champagne and I announced a new Global Award for Media Freedom.

To recognise those who defend journalists and keep the flame of freedom alive in the darkest corners of the world.

Not just because we want to protect them individually, but because transparency and getting the stories out, and holding those regimes to

account, and often non-government actors to account, can only happen if we get the facts, and the journalists do an incredibly brave job in getting those into the public domain.

And once we've left the EU and regained control of our own sanctions rules, this government will implement the 'Magnitsky' provisions of the UK Sanctions Act.

That will give us a powerful new tool to hold the perpetrators of the worst human rights abuses to account.

Mr. Speaker, from our brave armed forces serving on the front line, to the diplomats nurturing our relations with nations around the world, and the aid workers providing life-saving support to those who need it most, British foreign policy will of course serve the citizens of our country.

We're proud of our ability to make a difference to the poorest, the oppressed, the most vulnerable around the world, and we will continue that effort every day of every week.

Because, that is our calling as a country.

And that is the mission of this Conservative Government.

Further information

[Dr Murrison summons Iran's Ambassador](#)



The Minister for the Middle East, Dr Andrew Murrison summoned Iranian Ambassador Hamid Baeidinejad to the Foreign Office today. The Minister conveyed the UK's strong objections to the arrest of our Ambassador Rob Macaire in Tehran this weekend.

Dr Murrison requested assurances for the safety of British Embassy staff in

Iran and that such a violation of international law will not happen again.

The UK is working very hard to maintain dialogue as the best route to resolve differences between our countries.

Following the meeting Dr Murrison said:

The arrest of our Ambassador to Iran was a flagrant violation of international law and it is important that Iran understands how seriously we take this matter. It must not be allowed to happen again; I made that clear to the Iranian Ambassador this afternoon.

We reiterate the importance of a full and transparent investigation into Ukraine International Airlines flight 752. The loss of life in the crash was a tragedy and we express our condolences to the people of Iran as they grieve those who died.

Published 13 January 2020