

Prime Minister's New Year's message: 31 December 2019

That distinctive sound you may have heard at midnight as the bongos of Big Ben faded away was not the popping of champagne corks or the crackle of fireworks from your neighbour's garden.

Rather it was the starting gun being fired on what promises to be a fantastic year and a remarkable decade for our United Kingdom.

As we say goodbye to 2019 we can also turn the page on the division, rancour and uncertainty which has dominated public life and held us back for far too long. We can start a new chapter in the history of our country, in which we come together and move forward united, unleashing the enormous potential of the British people.

Of course the first item on my agenda is to fulfil the will of the electorate and take us out of the European Union. This should have happened already, but we were thwarted by a Parliament determined to use every trick in the book to stop us leaving the EU.

Now we have a new Parliament, elected by the people to deliver the people's priorities, which will finally respect the referendum and deliver Brexit.

So we'll get Brexit done before the end of this month. That oven-ready deal I talked about so much during the election campaign has already had its plastic covering pierced and been placed in the microwave.

We got down to work immediately after the election. The necessary legislation has already begun its passage through Parliament and, once MPs return to Westminster, we'll waste no time in finishing the job. At long last we will take back control of our laws, borders, money and trade.

Then we can finally spend 2020 getting on with delivering on the people's priorities: boosting the NHS with the biggest cash injection in its history, renewing schools, backing scientists, building better infrastructure, controlling immigration, making our streets safer, cleaning up our environment, and making our Union stronger.

The loudest message I heard during the election campaign is that people expect us – expect me – to protect and improve the NHS. The NHS is a wonderful British invention, there for us and our families when we are ill, whatever our background and regardless of ability to pay.

So the NHS will always be my top priority. One our first actions will be to pass a bill enshrining in law a record funding settlement for the NHS, providing an extra £34 billion a year. We will undertake the largest hospital building programme in living memory, delivering 40 new hospitals and 20 upgrades. We'll ensure there are 50,000 more nurses, 6,000 more GPs, and 50 million more GP surgery appointments.

I also want to make this country the best place on earth when it comes to quality education and cutting-edge science. It's great that we have started to climb back up the international school league tables – now let's make it to the very top. We will support hardworking teachers by boosting per pupil funding in primary and secondary schools and we will transform this country's approach to science and research, making the UK an engine for the ideas of the future.

Our vision is clear: to unite and level up across the whole United Kingdom – spreading opportunity more fairly – with better infrastructure, superb education and high technology.

We will do all of this while keeping your taxes low, freezing rates of income tax, VAT and National Insurance.

It is thanks to you, the people, that we are on the path to a brighter future. It was your decisiveness at the ballot box, your determination to drive an electoral bulldozer through the deadlock and paralysis, that has unblocked parliament and delivered a people's government dedicated to serving you.

I know that many of you do not consider yourself natural Tories and may only have lent me your vote. I am humbled by your support and will work every day to keep it. I am also acutely aware that there are millions of people who did not vote for me and were disappointed by the result.

If you are one of them, I want to reassure you that I will be a Prime Minister for everyone, not just those who voted for me. I know that you love this country no less, simply because you voted for another party or wanted to Remain. More than that, I want to work with you, as friends and equals, as we build the future this United Kingdom deserves.

So let's together make the 2020s a decade of prosperity and opportunity. State of the art healthcare. Great schools in every community. Our cities and towns more connected than ever before – not just in London and the South East but in the Midlands, the North and across the country. New trading relationships with nations around the world, generating jobs and growth. British scientists and engineers transforming the way we live – curing incurable diseases and making transport cleaner, greener and quieter.

It's a fantastically exciting agenda. Let's get to work.

Treasury Solicitor Jonathan Jones QC
awarded KCB

Government Legal Department Permanent Secretary, Treasury Solicitor and HM

Procurator General Jonathan Jones QC was recognised for providing legal services of the 'highest calibre' and the building of a shared legal service across government, as well as his wider contribution to the leadership of the Civil Service and of the legal profession.

This knighthood adds to Jonathan's 2019 honour of becoming honorary Queen's Counsel.

On receiving this honour, Jonathan said:

"I'm extremely honoured by this award. It is a great privilege to lead the Government Legal Department and its dedicated, hard-working people in our work of unique legal and constitutional importance.

I'm also delighted to congratulate the other government lawyers included in the honours list for their distinguished public service."

They include:

- Catherine Adams, DExEU Legal Director, who is made a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG)
- Suzanne Lehrer from Defra Legal Advisers who was awarded an OBE

And in the wider Government Legal Profession:

- Nicola Smith Legal Counsellor at FC0 was awarded an OBE
- John Patrick Banks at HMRC was also awarded an OBE

Since the creation of the Government Legal Department in 2015 our purpose has been to help the government of the day to govern well, within the rule of law.

Our strategy is to deliver high quality trusted legal services for government, on some of the most important issues of the day – from significant constitutional issues including the Withdrawal Agreement that led to the bill for the UK to leave the European Union and the prorogation of Parliament.

We handle wider government legal issues relating to topics that include rail franchising, governance in Northern Ireland, the terrorist attacks at London Bridge and Manchester Arena and the NHS scandal when up to 30,00 people were given contaminated blood.

The Government Legal Department is now supporting the government's legislative agenda as set out in the Queen's speech on 14 October, to deliver a programme of UK domestic reforms, alongside the key priority to secure the UK's departure from the European Union.

November 2019 Price Paid Data



Image credit: Andrew Roland/Shutterstock.com

This month's Price Paid Data includes details of more than 92,000 sales of land and property in England and Wales that HM Land Registry received for registration in November 2019.

In November 2019:

- the most expensive residential property sold was in Kensington and Chelsea for £49,575,718
- the cheapest residential property sold was in Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, Northumberland for £15,000
- the most expensive commercial sale was in Enfield for £48,550,000
- the cheapest commercial sales were in Denbigh and Deal for £100
- there was a 19% fall in newbuilds compared with November 2018

Of the 92,152 sales received for registration 25,786 took place in November 2019, of which:

- 512 were of residential properties in England and Wales for £1 million and over
- 291 were of residential properties in Greater London for £1 million and over
- 6 were of residential properties in West Midlands for more than £1 million
- 1 was of a residential property in Greater Manchester for more than £1 million
- 1 was of a residential property in Wales for more than £1 million

The number of sales received for registration by property type and month

Of the 92,152 sales received for registration in November 2019:

- 70,574 were freehold, an 8.8% decrease on November 2018
- 2,037 were newly built, a 19% decrease on November 2018

Property type	November 2019	October 2019	September 2019
Detached	21,646	22,363	21,576
Semi-detached	24,520	25,443	24,418
Terraced	24,308	25,286	24,385
Flat/maisonette	16,365	16,651	15,975
Other	5,313	5,564	5,105
Total	92,152	95,307	91,459

There is a time difference between the sale of a property and its registration at HM Land Registry.

[Access the full dataset](#)

In the dataset you can find the date of sale for each property, its full address and sale price, its category (residential or commercial) and type (detached, semi-detached, terraced, flat or maisonette and other), whether or not it is new build and whether it is freehold or leasehold.

Background

1. Price Paid Data is published at 11am on the 20th working day of each month. The next dataset will be published on 29 January 2020.
2. [Price Paid Data](#) is property price data for all residential and commercial property sales in England and Wales that are lodged with HM Land Registry for registration in that month, [subject to exclusions](#).
3. The amount of time between the sale of a property and the registration of this information with HM Land Registry varies. It typically ranges between two weeks and two months. Data for the two most recent months is therefore incomplete and does not give an indication of final monthly volumes. Occasionally the interval between sale and registration is longer than two months. The small number of sales affected cannot be updated for publication until the sales are lodged for registration.
4. Price Paid Data categories are either Category A (Standard entries) which includes single residential properties sold for full market value or Category B (Additional entries) for example sales to a company, buy-to-lets where they can be identified by a mortgage and repossessions.
5. HM Land Registry has been collecting information on Category A sales from January 1995 and on Category B sales from October 2013.
6. Price Paid Data can be downloaded in text, CSV format and in a machine readable format as [linked data](#) and is released under [Open Government Licence \(OGL\)](#). Under the OGL, HM Land Registry permits the use of Price Paid Data for commercial or non-commercial purposes. However, the OGL does not cover the use of [third party rights](#), which HM Land Registry is not authorised to license.
7. The [Price Paid Data report builder](#) allows users to build bespoke reports using the data. Reports can be based on location, estate type, price paid or property type over a defined period of time.
8. HM Land Registry's mission is to guarantee and protect property rights in England and Wales.
9. HM Land Registry is a government department created in 1862. It operates

as an executive agency and a trading fund and its running costs are covered by the fees paid by the users of its services. Its ambition is to become the world's leading land registry for speed, simplicity and an open approach to data.

10. HM Land Registry safeguards land and property ownership valued at £7 trillion, enabling more than £1 trillion worth of personal and commercial lending to be secured against property across England and Wales.
11. For further information about HM Land Registry visit www.gov.uk/land-registry.
12. Follow us on [Twitter](#) our [blog](#) [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).

Published 31 December 2019

[Energy users save £1 billion on bills in 2019](#)

- government's energy price cap safeguards 11 million people, often the most vulnerable and elderly, from overpaying on their gas and electricity
- combined saving of as much as £1 billion on energy bills in the first year of the price cap
- new data also shows 4.4 million electricity and 3.6 million gas customers switched supplier in first 9 months of 2019, saving even more

11 million customers have saved as much as £1 billion on their energy bills in 2019, according to new data to mark the first anniversary of the government's energy price cap.

Research has shown that the cap has saved families on default energy tariffs around £75 to £100 on dual fuel bills this year. This comes as the government pledges to build on the success of the price cap and do more to lower energy bills including by investing £9.2 billion in the energy efficiency of homes, schools and hospitals and giving the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) enhanced powers to tackle consumer rip-offs and bad business practices.

However, with around 60 suppliers now competing in the retail energy market, consumers who switch can still make the biggest savings. Around 4.4 million electricity customers switched supplier in the 9 months to September 2019. Around 3.6 million gas customers switched. Typical households would have saved an average of around £290 on their bills if moving to one of the cheapest deals.

In order to shield those least likely to shop around – including the elderly and most vulnerable – from being charged extra on their dual fuel bills the

government introduced the energy price cap on 1 January 2019.

Minister of State for Business, Energy and Clean Growth, Kwasi Kwarteng, said:

Our bold action to ensure all consumers pay a fair price for their energy is making a real difference to the budgets of up to 11 million households and driving increased competition and innovation in the market which will help keep bills down.

Record numbers of customers have also decided to switch suppliers this year saving themselves an average of around £290 on their bills.

Chief Executive of Ofgem Dermot Nolan said:

The price caps give consumers who are on default deals peace of mind that they pay a fair price for their energy. Ofgem set the cap at a level which required suppliers to cut energy bills by around £1 billion.

Consumers can save more money this winter by shopping around for a better deal. While the cap remains in place, Ofgem will continue to work with government and industry to put in place reforms to get the energy market working for more consumers.

Research by the Competition and Markets Authority has shown that consumers had been overpaying the 'Big Six' energy companies some £1.4 billion a year.

The price cap, continuing through 2020, is set by energy watchdog Ofgem, which review it every 6 months to reflect changes in the cost of supplying energy. This ensures those who do not shop around, often elderly and low-income households, are protected from paying over the odds.

The latest ceiling was set by Ofgem at £1,179 per year for a typical dual fuel bill paid by direct debit.

Three works by British modernist artists gifted to the nation

- The works, including a Dame Barbara Hepworth sculpture, will go on display in February 2020
- The donation has been made through the Government's Cultural Gifts

Scheme

A sculpture by Dame Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975), a sculpture by Denis Mitchell (1912-1993) and a painting by William Scott CBE RA (1913-1989) have been acquired for the nation through the Cultural Gifts Scheme, administered by the Arts Council.

The three works were owned by Nancy Balfour (1911-1997) – art collector and a senior editor at The Economist, who was Chairman and President of the Contemporary Art Society – and given to the public by her niece, Kate Ashbrook.

Hepworth's Orpheus (Maquette 1), dated 1956, is a bronze sculpture on a wooden base. One of four 'Orpheus' works, three of which were editions, this sculpture is an early example of Hepworth's move from carving predominantly in stone and wood, to including bronze and brass among her materials of choice. Stringed and shaped like a parabola, Orpheus (Maquette 1) may be an allusion to the lyre of the mythical musician.

Trevarrack by Denis Mitchell is a bronze sculpture dated 1961. Mitchell was Hepworth's assistant from 1949 to 1959, and his work clearly shows her influence. Moving to St Ives at the age of eighteen in 1930, Mitchell became a key figure of the St Ives School.

Small Cornish Landscape by William Scott was painted circa 1953; Scott produced relatively few landscapes in Cornwall like this painting, concentrating mostly on still life. After spending a few months in Cornwall in 1935 and 1936, Scott returned in the early 1950s when the present picture was made. His landscapes from this time show an increased focus on abstraction, with blocks of colour beginning to overcome any sense of figure.

Arts Minister Helen Whately said:

I am delighted that, thanks to the Cultural Gifts Scheme and the generosity of the donor, The Hepworth Wakefield Gallery will benefit from three new brilliant works.

Barbara Hepworth's work will now join one of Britain's major collections of modern art. Together with the Scott painting and Mitchell bronze, it will be enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.

All three works have been allocated to The Hepworth Wakefield gallery in West Yorkshire. Opened in 2011, the art gallery was named after Hepworth who was born and brought up in Wakefield; it houses important works by many major modern British and contemporary artists – including Eileen Agar, Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, Patrick Heron, Henry Moore, Ben Nicholson and Graham Sutherland.

Simon Wallis, Director, the Hepworth Wakefield, said:

We are thrilled that Wakefield's art collection will receive this generous philanthropic gift. These are three major works of art that will find a perfect home for wide public appreciation and benefit at The Hepworth Wakefield.

Following acceptance and allocation of the gift, donor Kate Ashbrook said:

'I am pleased that these striking and important works by British modernist artists have found a permanent home at The Hepworth Wakefield where they will complement the core collection. My aunt, Nancy Balfour – a commanding figure in the modern-art world – could have found no better place for them to live.'

Edward Harley OBE, Chairman, Acceptance in Lieu Panel said:

I am delighted that these three works should be brought into a public collection through the Cultural Gifts Scheme. Hepworth, Mitchell, and Scott were all pre-eminent British modernist artists, and it is fitting that their work should go to The Hepworth Wakefield, one of the foremost museums of modern British art in the UK. I hope that this example will encourage others to use the scheme and continue to support our national collections.

The acceptance of these three works will generate a tax reduction of £124,500.

Object information:

1. Barbara Hepworth

Orpheus (Maquette 1) 1956 brass and strings, mounted on a hardwood base 16½ in. (41.9 cm.) high; 21¼ in. (53.9 cm.) overall Conceived in 1956, in an edition of eight.

2. Denis Mitchell

Trevarrack 1961 signed with initials, inscribed and dated 'TREVARRACK 61 / DAM NO. 2' (on the underside) polished bronze with a light brown patina mounted on a slate base 21¼ in. (53.9 cm.) high overall; 20 in. (50.8 cm.) high excluding base

3. William Scott

Small Cornish Landscape c. 1953 signed 'SCOTT' (lower right), inscribed

'Small Cornish Landscape' (on the stretcher) oil on canvas 7 x 15 in. (17.8 x 38.1 cm.)

The Cultural Gifts Scheme was launched by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport in March 2013 as an important element of its expanding programme to encourage philanthropy for the arts. The Acceptance in Lieu Panel, chaired by Edward Harley OBE, advises Ministers on all objects offered under the Cultural Gifts Scheme. The Scheme is administered by the Arts Council and enables UK taxpayers to donate important objects to the nation during their lifetime. Items accepted under the Scheme are allocated to public collections and are available for all. In return, donors receive a reduction in their income tax, capital gains tax or corporation tax liability, based on a set percentage of the value of the object they are donating: 30 per cent for individuals and 20 per cent for companies.

The Arts Council is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to visual art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2018 and 2022, we invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. www.artscouncil.org.uk