

# Full steam ahead as infrastructure revolution advances

The Housing Secretary has today announced a further five successful Housing Infrastructure Fund projects, as the government's infrastructure revolution to unlock more homes continues.

From Swindon to Cornwall, more than £374 million will be invested in roads, schools, public transport and utilities, ensuring homes can be built in the areas where they are needed the most.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

This government is committed to building the homes this country needs, so that more people can realise the dream of owning their own home.

This £374m funding will ensure that communities have the right infrastructure to enable new homes to be built, such as road and transport improvements.

Minister of State for Housing Rt Hon Esther McVey MP said:

We are investing record amounts in roads, rail, housing and broadband to ensure Britain has the modern infrastructure needed to thrive, and to allow local economies to flourish.

As part of the Government's commitment to levelling up communities so they can take full advantage of economic growth and prosper, the five schemes in Swindon, Wiltshire, Cornwall, North Somerset and Medway are expected to unlock up to 32,000 homes.

Today's news means that since 2018, this government has given over £3 billion of funding to ambitious Housing Infrastructure Fund projects.

---

## Cooperation between the UN and AU

## Leads to peace

Madam President, the United Kingdom attaches great value to the role of the African Union in preventing and mediating and resolving conflicts on the African continent. And this is an important element not only of our collective work of the Security Council, but also of the United Kingdom's own bilateral strategic partnership with the African Union. We are proud to provide national support for African Union priorities in this area, including the Continental Early Warning System, electoral observation missions, peace support doctrine development and pre-deployment training for African troops and police contributing countries. And we very much commend the determination of United Nations Secretary-General and Chairperson of the African Union to reinforce the partnership between the UN and the AU on peace and security. And let me pay tribute, personally and specifically, to the valuable work of the UN office to the AU under the leadership of SRSG Tetteh, and of course, her counterpart here at the United Nations, Permanent Observer Fatima Mohammed, who both, I think, do excellent work for their organisations.

Madam President, the United Nations-African Union Partnership in Peacekeeping and in Peace Support Operations continues to develop. The United Kingdom supports, in principle, access to UN assessed contributions for future AU-led peace support operations on a case by case basis and subject to certain key conditions. A key consideration in any future council decision on this issue is the African Union's own commitment to fund 25 percent of the costs of its own peace support operations. This is an important symbol of African determination to take ownership of African-led solutions to conflict on the continent. Robust financial reporting arrangements, clear joint planning and coordination structures and strong compliance frameworks for human rights compliance, international humanitarian law and conduct and discipline will also be key. And may I at this point express my disappointment to find that posts dealing with just these issues in the UNSOM discussions this year were not supported by members of the Africa group in the Fifth Committee. So we encourage the Secretariat and the African Union Commission to continue their work on these important technical areas.

Madam President, at the Niamey meeting of the 8th of July, Member States agreed that detailed proposals for effective division of labour between the AU and African subregional organisations would be developed. We very much welcome this. An enhanced partnership between the United Nations, the African Union and subregional organisations will be crucial in supporting progress on issues such as continued implementation of the South Sudan Peace Agreement – and let me here echo the words of my colleagues about our visit to Juba this month under the leadership of the South African President of the Council and, of course, our American colleagues. I think we left Juba with a clear agreement that we needed to stick to the 12th of November timeline; that all parties needed to compromise for the good of the people of South Sudan; that the United Nations – and I think the African Union with it – the Security Council expressed their commitment to being part and to monitoring the implementation of any outstanding tasks after a transitional government were

formed; and, of course, our determination to take action against spoilers. Let me also say how important that partnership was in Sudan's transition to civilian governance – and the African Union was strongly supported by this Council through the events of this summer – and, of course, for a sustainable political settlement in Somalia.

On Libya, I would welcome very much an increased African Union role on Libya, as we discussed when we were in Addis. And it's extremely important, as our German colleague has pointed out, that the African Union is fully represented as part of a key part of the Berlin process. But I would also just highlight the key role that other regional organisations play, including, of course, the League of Arab States – and I've no doubt the Kuwaiti ambassador will be mentioning that – and the European Union for that matter.

Madam President, closer coordination between the United Nations, African Union and subregional organisations should also support earlier and more effective action to prevent slow burning political crises developing into conflicts, with each leveraging their comparative advantage. And I think this is entirely consistent with the summit with the African Union's initiative to silence the guns by 2020 and the focus that the Secretary-General and indeed this Council has put on conflict prevention.

We particularly recommend greater collaboration on Cameroon, where inclusive discussion and follow-up on the recommendations the national dialogue are urgently needed to maintain momentum towards peace.

Close coordination between sub-regional actors, the African Union and the United Nations is also vital to resolve the political crisis in Burundi and make progress towards credible and inclusive elections in 2020.

Madam President, we and our colleagues on the African Union Peace and Security Council of course each have our own role to play in strengthening the UN-AU partnership on peace and security under chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. Our recent annual consultations in Addis Ababa but were a reminder of how valuable it is for us to discuss these issues and seek ways to leverage our comparative advantage. And I can only agree with the Ambassador of Germany that it would be great to see even greater frankness, perhaps most importantly where we don't agree, and a greater focus on actions that we can take together. So let me just say that I hope we can keep our channels of dialogue between our two councils open through the coming year, ensure that our consultations foster the development of even deeper and even more meaningful coordination and, of course, do more together to make a reality of peace on the continent of Africa.

I thank you, Madam President.

---

# [The UK puts people at the heart of its Security Council Presidency](#)

The UK will put ordinary citizens at the heart of its Presidency of the Security Council, as it takes over from South Africa as the President of the United Nations Security Council, today (1 November).

Key issues due to be discussed during the UK's Presidency will include chemical weapons, Yemen, Syria, Somalia and Libya, and an open debate on reconciliation, which will include a focus on the role of civil society and religious leaders in reconciliation. In line with its focus on the importance of people, the UK will be inviting a number of members of civil society to brief the UN.

H.E. Karen Pierce DCMG, the Permanent Representative and Ambassador for the UK Mission to the United Nations in New York, said:

“During our Presidency, the UK wants to focus on the effect of problems in international peace and security on ordinary citizens. The issues before the Security Council include the targeting of hospitals, the use of chemical weapons and rape being used as a weapon of war. All too often the perpetrators walk free, and the leaders that let it happen remain in positions of power. We want to use our Presidency to promote practical steps to establish the facts of what is happening on the ground and address impunity, and highlight the costs of impunity, including the impact on millions of people around the world.

“That's why we will be giving a voice to those people affected by conflict, persecution and discrimination through those we invite to brief the Council. We will raise issues around the importance of respect for international law, religious persecution, attacks on media freedom and women, peace and security. We will also be looking at some of the components of sustainable solutions to conflict through our open debate on the role of the reconciliation processes and our support of the Rules Based International System with the UN at its heart.”

---

## [The UK and ASEAN-BAC sign a Letter of Intent](#)



The United Kingdom and ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) signed a Letter of Intent on the ASEAN Regional Digital Trade Transformation under the UK's Global Trade Programme (GTP) today.

H.E. Mr. Brian Davidson, British Ambassador to Thailand, and Mr. Arin Jira Chairman of the ASEAN-BAC signed the Letter of Intent which stated that the GTP, on behalf of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and ASEAN-BAC will carry out an Impact Assessment and Roadmap for ASEAN Regional Digital Trade Transformation.

The ASEAN Regional Digital Trade Transformation (RDTT) project aims to standardise and digitalise business documentation for trade within the ASEAN region. The project is intended to increase the efficiency of trade between ASEAN countries and their key trade partners – cutting waiting times and lowering the associated costs, as well as making it easier for SMEs to trade. The end-to-end digitisation also aims to increase the trustworthiness and reliability for international transactions and minimise the risk of fraud. By providing greater confidence to financial institutions it is hoped that it will also make it easier for SMEs operating international businesses to secure loans.

Following the signing of the letter, the UK will identify an international consultant company to assist the ASEAN-BAC to conduct this key establishing study. The study will provide guidance regarding standardization of regulation and documentation for international trade under the RDTT project, as well as a roadmap for the project.

The results will also serve as a guideline for the private sector to link with the National Single Window and ASEAN Single Window programmes being implemented by the governments. This will be a collaboration between the team set up by ASEAN-BAC, along with ASEAN Secretariat, and experts from the governmental and private sectors in the ASEAN member countries and their key trade partners.

Brian Davidson, the British Ambassador to Thailand, said:

The UK is strongly committed to free trade. As a global leader in enabling technologies, we are pleased to be able to work on trade digitisation with ASEAN BAC through the UK's Global Trade Program. This is just one in a series of similar programmes that the UK is

taking forward in partnership with ASEAN – a partnership which I hope will continue to expand.

Notes for editors:

- The UK's Global Trade Programme is a funded global programme aiming to significantly reduce the costs of trade, increase trade volume, allow more SMEs to participate in cross-border trade and promote development that is more inclusive and sustainable.

Published 1 November 2019

Last updated 1 November 2019 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 1 November 2019 Added translation
2. 1 November 2019 Added translation
3. 1 November 2019 First published.

---

## [Cross-border Western Gateway will form new 'powerhouse' in UK economy](#)

The pooling of cross-border skills and expertise on both sides of the Severn estuary can drive prosperity for the region, Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government Robert Jenrick will say today (1 November) at an event to launch the Western Gateway.

The Western Gateway is a strategic partnership promoting and maximising economic growth across south Wales and the west of England to create jobs, boost prosperity and support the world-renowned universities and businesses of the region.

Linking a number of towns and cities across a wide region either side of the Severn the Western Gateway will mirror the successful, established work of the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine and will seek to ensure that the region is globally competitive.

At the ICC in Newport, Mr Cairns and Mr Jenrick will tell an audience of partners from business, education, cultural and digital sectors that the Western Gateway has the potential to transform the economic prospects of the region, making it easier to do business, to increase inward investment and tourism and create jobs.

Communities and Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick is providing £400,000 from existing budgets for start-up funding to kick-start the partnership.

Katherine Bennett, Senior Vice President of Airbus, will be announced as the first acting chair of the Western Gateway, who will lead and shape the governance, management and initial priorities for the partnership.

**Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns will say:**

The Western Gateway will provide an arena for the joint strengths of two neighbouring areas with distinct identities and traditions to be harnessed.

South Wales and the west of England already form a natural economic region with excellent transport networks in road and rail and well-established links in business, industry and education.

The region can be a true powerhouse of the UK economy if we take this opportunity to galvanise its many strengths to generate ideas, innovation and entrepreneurship in order to stimulate jobs and growth.

It also highlights how our United Kingdom is strengthened by maximising and harnessing in partnership the skills and talents of our nations and regions.

**Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP will say:**

The Western Gateway will draw on the diverse talents of both sides of the Severn to deliver an economic powerhouse that will drive growth throughout the region.

Already a major centre for cyber and tech, research, manufacturing and the creative industries – there's clearly huge potential for them to achieve even greater things together.

As this Government works to level up our regional economies, this initiative will give south west England and south Wales a powerful voice, just as the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine have done for those areas.

**Chancellor of the Exchequer Sajid Javid added:**

Today we are announcing an exciting partnership to turbo charge growth across Wales and the south west of England.

The Western Gateway is full of bustling towns and cities and boasts a rich cultural and industrial history – from the famous cheeses of Cheddar Gorge and iconic Roman Baths of Bath, to the thriving TV industry of Cardiff Bay.

We won't rest until we have unlocked the potential this region has to offer as we level-up opportunities across the UK.

**Katherine Bennett CBE, Western Gateway Chair, will say:**

With a vibrant population of more than four million people, world-class universities, strong transport links, and shared strengths across key sectors – from green energy and engineering, to the arts and digital media – I'm convinced that the west of Britain is a powerhouse waiting to happen.

By working together, across government, academia, and industry, with businesses at the core, we are determined to make this vision a reality.

Following Friday's launch event in Newport, Mr Cairns and Mr Jenrick will visit Bristol enterprise hub the Engine Shed, where they will meet owners and staff of some of the innovative businesses based there.

**ENDS**