

Press release: New taskforce to support recovery from Grenfell fire disaster

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid today (26 July 2017) announced [details of the independent Grenfell Recovery Taskforce](#) that will support the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) to develop and implement a long term recovery plan following the Grenfell Tower fire.

The Taskforce will provide assurance to the Secretary of State that RBKC has the capacity and capability to deliver an effective long term recovery plan for its residents taking into account their views. The Taskforce members will be:

- Aftab Chughtai, Chair of the West Midlands Police Independent Advisory Group
- Javed Khan, Chief Executive of Barnardo's
- Jane Scott, Leader of Wiltshire council
- Chris Wood, partner at Altair housing consultancy, and former director of housing for 3 London boroughs

The Taskforce members have a wealth of experience in local government, housing and the voluntary sector as well as a track record of effectively engaging local communities in key projects. They will support RBKC in helping them rise to the challenge of delivering their recovery plans, working and re-establishing trust with the local community.

Initially the Taskforce has been asked to:

- look at whether RBKC has the proper arrangements in place to engage with the local community on their long-term recovery plans
- ensure that all the immediate housing needs resulting from the fires are fully and promptly addressed by RBKC
- support the council to significantly improve housing management including addressing weaknesses in the tenant management organisation
- make sure the council develops, in partnership with the local community, a plan for the Grenfell Tower site; and ensure that the right leadership and governance arrangements are in place across the council

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

I am determined that everything possible is done to support the local community following the disaster. This includes ensuring an effective recovery plan is developed that takes into account the views of the local community. The new Taskforce has extensive experience in this area and will provide the council with the expertise needed to deliver this important work.

Over the next few months there needs to be a managed transition from the Grenfell Response Team, also known as Gold Command, who are dealing with the immediate response, to a council we are confident can deliver the longer term recovery for the community.

The government also believes the remit and composition of the Taskforce might need to develop in response to their assurance reports, and the Secretary of State will take advice from the Taskforce on this.

The Taskforce will be based alongside RBKC in the offices in Kensington and supported by a secretariat in DCLG. Over the next few weeks the Taskforce will meet and agree their priorities. The Secretary of State has asked for an initial report by end of October 2017.

The Taskforce will, over the summer scrutinise RBKC plans to make sure that they are robust and that they have the right resources in place to deal with the challenge of recovery.

The Taskforce will be in place for as long as the Secretary of State considers necessary.

Aftab Chughtai

Aftab Chughtai is chair of the West Midlands Police Independent Advisory Group. Aftab also runs a department store in East Birmingham. He received an MBE honours in this year's New Year honours list, awarded in recognition of his services to business and community relations in Birmingham.

Javed Khan

Javed Khan is Chief Executive of Barnardo's which runs 1000 services in local communities and is the fifth largest charity in the UK. As a British Pakistani, he is the first non-white CEO in Barnardo's 150 year history.

Previously he was CEO at Victim Support and before that Executive Director to the London Serious Youth Violence Board in the Government Office for London. In 2007 he was London Borough of Harrow's Director of Community and Cultural Services and Director of Education before that. Previously Javed was Assistant Director of Education in Birmingham. He started his career as a Teacher in the West Midlands, is a member of the Advisory Board for the Children's Commissioner for England and a lay member on a London Clinical Commissioning Group.

Jane Scott OBE

Jane Scott has been Conservative Leader of Wiltshire council since its formation as a unitary council in 2009. As the seventh largest unitary council in the country, Jane has led a major programme of transformation that has focused on building strong communities, protecting those who are most vulnerable and growing the local economy. The council is recognised nationally for its approach to working with communities across Wiltshire; empowering local decision making and service delivery.

Jane is chair of the Wiltshire Health and Wellbeing Board, the Military and Community Integration Programme, the Wiltshire Public Services Board and is a member of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Partnership. Jane was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the 2010 New Year Honours for services to local government. In August 2015, it was announced that Jane was to be created a life peer, giving her a seat in the House of Lords.

Chris Wood

Chris Wood is a partner at Altair housing consultancy. Chris has worked with numerous local authorities and a broad range of public and private sector housing organisations on strategic regeneration planning, asset management and capital programme delivery. Chris has been Director of Housing in 3 London boroughs and CEO of the London Borough of Newham, leading the borough's contribution to the 2012 Olympic Games and the development of Stratford City. He was the architect of London's largest estate-based regeneration scheme at Canning Town.

Government support for survivors

The government is committed to doing everything possible to support survivors and the local community following the disaster. This includes providing an emergency £5 million Discretionary Fund for households that lost their homes and working with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to find permanent homes for all these families.

See [full details of the government and wider support available](#).

[Press release: Pubs Code Adjudicator data reveals significant activity in first year of new law](#)

Paul Newby, the Pubs Code Adjudicator, today marked the Pubs Code's major milestone by releasing first year data.

Mr Newby said the detailed figures revealed significant activity in the first year of new rights and protections for tied pub tenants.

He announced that in the first 12 months since the Pubs Code became law, the PCA has accepted 156 cases for arbitration.

Of the 156 cases, 131 relate to the Market Rent Only (MRO) option, the process by which tied tenants can request an option from their pub-owning business to go free of tie. Other issues covered by the cases include

compliant rent assessment proposals and Independent Assessor determinations of market rent. The Adjudicator has now made awards in 48 cases.

With such significant numbers the PCA is now able to provide further information on the proportion of disputes relating to different pub-owning businesses without the risk of identifying individual cases.

Of the 156 arbitration cases accepted by the PCA, the breakdown is as follows:

Pub-owning business Accepted cases

Admiral Taverns	0
Marston's	1-10
Punch Taverns	11-20
Star Pubs and Bars	11-20
Greene King	21-30
Ei Group	>30

Of the 131 MRO cases the breakdown is:

Pub-owning business MRO cases

Admiral Taverns	0
Marston's	1-10
Star Pubs and Bars	1-10
Punch Taverns	11-20
Greene King	21-30
Ei Group	>30

Mr Newby said: "These figures reveal a very significant level of activity. They demonstrate that tied pub tenants are aware of their rights and are taking up those rights. As might have been expected, they also show that the largest pub-owning businesses are involved in the most cases.

"I have now made awards in 48 cases and this shows that cases are progressing through the arbitration process. I am aware that concerns have been voiced about this progress being slow. However, both tenants and pub-owning businesses are testing the new law robustly.

"Parties in a dispute are entitled to a proper opportunity to put their case and rebut that of the other party. In my role as arbitrator I seek to ensure that this happens, especially where there is an imbalance between the parties. This is one of the reasons why more cases have not yet completed the process.

"But as cases are completed and principles published I fully expect to see progress over the coming year.

"I am also awaiting the results of the fact-finding exercise on access to the Market Rent Only option. This will provide evidence on how the Code is working in practice and how effective it is proving in delivering its core

principles. When I have those results I will decide what action is appropriate.”

Business Minister Margot James said: “The Pubs Code is an important piece of legislation that is helping pub tenants get a fairer deal. It is encouraging to see people are aware of their rights under the Code and are contacting the Enquiry Line for more information.

“I would encourage both tenants and pub-owning companies to continue working with the Pubs Code Adjudicator, to make sure the Code works for the whole industry.”

To mark the first anniversary the PCA is also launching a series of six short videos featuring the Adjudicator on 26 July. These explain key Code processes such as requesting a MRO option or appointing an Independent Assessor. The videos can be accessed via the [PCA website](#)

Mr Newby said: “From day one I have made it a priority to engage with tenants and raise awareness of the new rights under the Code across the community. The PCA Enquiry Line staffed by dedicated caseworkers has received more than 550 enquiries over the past year, and our factsheets and flowcharts guide tenants and pub-owning businesses through the relevant processes.

“I want to ensure that I reach as many tenants as possible to inform them of their rights and these videos are designed to reach a wider audience. I know tenants have very busy working lives but I hope they can spend a few minutes checking how these rights can help them make the best decisions for their businesses.”

For further information contact Sheree Dodd on office@pca.gsi.gov.uk

Press release: The challenges and opportunities for Welsh tourism post EU exit

From dolphin spotting trips along the Ceredigion coastline to adrenaline fuelled mountain bike experiences, UK Government ministers will hear first-hand the crucial contribution the Mid Wales tourism industry brings to the Welsh economy during a visit to Aberystwyth today (26 July).

Supporting Wales’ thriving tourism sector will top the agenda at a roundtable meeting hosted by Wales Office Minister Guto Bebb MP and UK Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism John Glen MP at Aberystwyth University.

This is the latest in a series of meetings hosted by the UK Government in

Wales as Britain prepares to leave the European Union.

The Ministers will gather tourism experts and businesses from across Wales to discuss the opportunities for growing the industry, and to hear their views on ensuring a tourism sector that thrives and develops post Brexit.

Tourism is big business in Wales. In the 12 months ending March 2017, there were 104.6 million day visits to Wales, with an associated spend of £4,346 million.

More than 1 million international visits were made to Wales in 2016 – up 11% on the previous year – which was worth almost £450 million to the economy.

UK Government in Wales Minister Guto Bebb said:

Whilst I already know a lot of the great places to visit in Wales, I always welcome the opportunity to speak to people working in the industry, to hear about the issues they are facing, and opportunities available to them

As we move towards our exit from the European Union, the job of listening and engaging has become even more critical

The UK Government's overriding goal is to make sure that the voices of all sectors from all corners of the UK are heard. That is why we are bringing experts from Wales' tourism sector together for this meeting in Aberystwyth today. We want to give them the platform to discuss the challenges posed by Brexit, but also to hear the great opportunities for growth in business and employment

Wales is regularly highlighted as one of the best places to visit in the world. We are determined not just that it remains so but that we make it even more attractive post EU departure.

Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism John Glen said:

Promoting Wales as a must-visit destination and ensuring that all parts of the UK benefit from international tourism is a key government priority. We want visitors from across the world to experience all Wales has to offer from its rich culture and history to its thriving city centres and breathtaking scenery.

International tourism was worth almost £450 million to Wales last year and I want to help the industry grow this number further. Leaving the EU presents opportunities for the tourism sector, and it has been great to hear directly from Welsh businesses on how we can make the most of them to ensure all parts of the UK benefit.

During the visit to Aberystwyth, both Ministers will also mark the

£10.5million Heritage Lottery Investment in the restoration of Old College and Mr Bebb will also visit Aberystwyth University's Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS)

News story: Round pound left in slow lane as new £1 coin overtakes in circulation

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury is today (26 July 2017) visiting a coin storage facility in Belfast, where more than £350,000 worth of coins are processed and redistributed daily, to banks and businesses across Northern Ireland.

Speaking on reaching the changeover point between the old and new pound coins, the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Andrew Jones MP said:

To have more new coins in circulation than old at this point is great news and I'm pleased to see progress on this in Belfast's Coin Store today.

However, with less than 100 days to go, the clock is ticking. We are urging the public to spend, bank or donate their old pound coins and asking businesses who are yet to do so, to update their systems before the old coin ceases to be legal tender.

CEO and Deputy Master of The Royal Mint, Adam Lawrence, said:

The Royal Mint is very proud to have delivered the new 12-sided £1 pound coin and ensuring a smooth transition is now our top priority. We hope our announcement about the changeover point in July will encourage those businesses who have not yet upgraded their equipment to do so ahead of the October 15 deadline.

The new 12-sided £1 coin was brought in to tackle the rise of counterfeit coins, which cost businesses and the taxpayers across the UK millions of pounds every year. With less than 3 months to go before the round pound loses legal tender status, it is vital that the public continue to return their old pound coins.

Businesses are also being encouraged to get ready. The government is reminding all those who are yet to prepare for the new 12-sided £1 coin to do so now by upgrading equipment and informing customers.

Press release: Government announces additional support for social care providers

The government today (26 July 2017) announced it has temporarily suspended enforcement activity and is waiving historic financial penalties against employers concerning sleep-in shift pay in the social care sector.

Ministers have worked closely with the sector in response to concerns over the combined impact which financial penalties and arrears of wages could have on the stability and long-term viability of providers.

The [exceptional measures](#) announced today are intended to minimise disruption to the sector by recognising these unique pressures, and ensuring that workers receive wages they are owed.

Social care providers play a vital role in supporting some of the most vulnerable people in our society and workers in that sector should be paid fairly for the important work they do. The government remains equally committed to making sure workers in this sector receive the minimum wage they are legally entitled to, including historic arrears.

The long-term stability and success of the social care sector is a priority and the government has already allocated an extra £2 billion of funding to the sector, including an extra £1 billion this year.

The government will continue to look at this issue extremely carefully alongside industry representatives to see whether any further support is needed and ensure that action taken to protect workers is fair and proportionate, while seeing how it might be possible to minimise any impact on social care provision.

The government today announced it will:

- waive historic financial penalties owed by employers who have underpaid their workers for overnight sleep-in shifts before 26 July 2017
- temporarily suspend HMRC enforcement activity concerning payment of sleep-in shifts by social care providers until 2 October 2017

Government reaffirmed its expectation that all employers pay their workers according to the law, including for sleep-in shifts, as set out in guidance entitled '[Calculating the National Minimum Wage](#)'.