

[Press release: Preferred candidate for Chair of Office for Students announced](#)

The Department for Education has today (7 February 2017) announced that Sir Michael Barber is the preferred candidate to become Chair of the Office for Students (OfS).

Sir Michael was selected for the role following an open and transparent recruitment process, overseen by the office of [The Commissioner for Public Appointments](#).

The Office for Students is a new public body being established in law by the [Higher Education and Research Bill](#). It will combine the existing regulatory functions of the [Higher Education Funding Council for England](#) (HEFCE) and the [Office for Fair Access](#) (OFFA), and will create and oversee a regulatory environment in higher education which puts the interests of students at the heart of the system, focusing on choice and competition.

Sir Michael Barber is a leading thinker and practitioner on public service delivery and has been at the forefront of global thinking in education for the past 20 years including in higher education, for example as a member of the [Browne Review of higher education funding](#).

Justine Greening, Secretary of State for Education, said:

I am delighted to confirm Sir Michael as the government's preferred candidate for this vital role as Chair of the Office for Students (OfS).

Sir Michael is a globally respected figure both in the sector and in government with an impressive record in leading and supporting public sector delivery.

The OfS will play a vital role in this government's ambitions for higher education by replacing a regulatory system from a bygone era with framework that can truly respond to the challenges of the 21st century. I welcome Sir Michael's commitment to the opportunities for higher education through the creation of this new body.

Minister for Universities Jo Johnson said:

I am delighted Sir Michael is taking up this crucial role. With his deep understanding of education systems, Sir Michael has a world-class background in delivering HE reform and is the right person to lead the creation of the Office for Students.

The OfS will play a pivotal role in reforming one of our nation's

greatest assets – the higher education sector. This new body will drive a focus on choice and competition and rightfully put the interests of students at the heart of regulation.

Sir Michael Barber said:

I am delighted to take on this role and deeply conscious of the degree of responsibility it involves. The higher education sector in England, with its welcome diversity, is a jewel in this country's crown. It has a major role to play in a global Britain and a fairer Britain.

The challenge will be to combine the traditions that make our universities great with the innovation that the decades ahead demand.

Above all the Office for Students will aim to create a framework in which universities are enabled to provide for students both high academic standards and employability for the 21st century.

I look forward to working with everyone to sustain and develop world-leading higher education in this country.

The Rt Hon the Lord Mandelson said:

Michael Barber is an excellent choice. His commitment to education and public service is strong and he knows the importance of university independence.

The Rt Hon Baroness Gillian Shepherd said:

Sir Michael Barber will bring to this post an outstanding intellect, a proven track record in education and business, and a strongly strategic approach.

Professor Sir Steve Smith, Vice Chancellor, University of Exeter said:

Sir Michael Barber is one of the most thoughtful and impressive educationalists I have worked with. His educational expertise has been sought by the Obama administration and the Pakistan government.

In all his work he has consistently put students first, striving to improve their education whatever their background. He is a tireless advocate for adding value educationally and sees education as a continuum from school to university. I can think of no one better

qualified to act in this incredibly important role.

The appointment will be subject to a pre-scrutiny hearing by the [Education Select Committee](#). If appointed, Sir Michael will serve a term of 4 years.

[News story: Freight train derailment, Lewisham](#)

From:

First published:

7 February 2017

Investigation into a freight train derailment, Lewisham, London, 24 January 2017.

At around 05:35 hrs on Tuesday 24 January 2017, two loaded wagons of a westbound freight train derailed as they passed over Courthill Loop South Junction, to the south of Lewisham station, while travelling at around 20 mph (32 km/h).

The accident resulted in major damage to the railway infrastructure. The first of the two derailed wagons overturned and spilt its contents. The train divided in front of the derailed wagons and its brakes automatically applied.

There were no injuries. However, there was major disruption to local train services.

The freight train was the 03:36 hrs service from a loading terminal at Grain, on the Thames Estuary. It comprised a class 66 diesel-electric locomotive and 18 bogie hopper wagons. It was carrying building sand to Neasden, in north-west London. The wagons that derailed were the 16th and 17th from the front. They were both of the JGA type.

The track work at Courthill Loop South Junction was new. It was made up of modular panels of switches and crossings that had been part assembled offsite. They had been delivered and installed as part of engineering work carried out on the weekend of 14 and 15 January 2017. Follow-up engineering work had been carried out at the junction on the weekend before the derailment.

Our investigation will identify the sequence of events that led to the accident and how the wagons derailed. It will also consider:

- the condition of the wagons and how they were maintained
- how the wagons were loaded
- the design of the new track work at the junction and how it was installed
- the condition of the track and its geometry
- any relevant underlying management factors.

Our investigation is independent of any investigation by the railway industry or by the industry's regulator, the [Office of Rail and Road](#).

We will publish our findings, including any recommendations to improve safety, at the conclusion of our investigation. This report will be available on our website.

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[Green Party: Housing Minister's plans a slap in the face for people who can't afford a home](#)



Green Party

7 February 2017

***Jonathan Bartley, co-leader: 'We must end our narrow obsession with home ownership and meet people where they are – by investing in social housing and improving the private rented sector'**

The Green Party has branded the Housing Minister's new housing strategy [1] a "slap in the face" for people struggling to afford the cost of their homes.

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said the Government should instead focus on:

- Setting up a Living Rent Commission to bring down rents
- Introducing a Land Value Tax to reduce property speculation
- Expand the use of community land trusts and co-operative home ownership

- End tax breaks for buy-to-let investors and use the money for social housing

Bartley said:

“The Housing Minister’s plans are a slap in the face for the millions of people in this country desperate for bold plans to reduce rents and make their housing affordable.

“People are living in desperate insecurity and we need to end our narrow obsession with home ownership and meet people where they are – by investing in social housing and improving the private rented sector. Any plan to help renters which doesn’t have at its heart a clear intention to reduce the amount tenants are paying is doomed to failure.

“It is scandalous that many people are paying up to two-thirds of their income on rent, and often living in sub-standard accommodation. The Government should immediately set up a Living Rent Commission to work out what rent is truly affordable and take action to bring down costs for tenants.

“With Britain suffering such an acute housing crisis – and with property developers earning such huge sums for simply holding onto land – it’s also clear that idea such as a Land Value Tax should be explored. Such a tax could reduce property speculation, revitalise inner city areas and raise revenue – there’s no excuse for failing to investigate it as an option.

“We need to start talking seriously about expanding the use of community land trusts and co-operative home ownership. If the Government wants to take the heat out of the housing market it must end tax breaks for buy-to-let investors, and use the money to create a new generation of social housing.

“Housing should not be a speculative commodity and we must move beyond piecemeal tinkering with a broken market to ensure that everyone has a place they can call home.”

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-38884601>

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Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Plan will save lives – Vaughan Gething

The plan will be published this Spring and will ensure that more people have an increased chance of survival and recovery following an out of hospital cardiac arrest.

The Health Secretary said:

“Around 8,000 people in Wales suffer a sudden cardiac arrest every year. We can save many more lives by raising awareness of resuscitation and ensuring cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and early defibrillation are undertaken more often.

“We are also striving to improve the care patients receive from successful resuscitation to rehabilitation. Cardiac care and survival rates continue to improve and I want to thank NHS staff and other stakeholders who have contributed to these improvements.”

[The Heart Conditions Delivery Plan](#), published in January 2017 seeks to deliver fully integrated primary, community, secondary and specialist pathways of care, designed around the needs of the patient. It also gives patients a shared responsibility in managing their condition, including making the right lifestyle choices.

The Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Plan will include actions to improve early recognition of cardiac arrest, immediate and high quality CPR, early defibrillation and effective post resuscitation care. Plans include ensuring that cardiac rehabilitation teams have the right training and to provide consistency of care across Wales.

Cardiac care in Wales is steadily improving with fewer people dying from cardiovascular disease. The British Heart Foundation has described Wales as a world leader in cardiac rehabilitation, as the numbers receiving this following a heart attack have increased.

Review of Community Safety announced

Addressing Assembly Members in the Senedd, the Cabinet Secretary said he intends to establish an Oversight Group to review current community safety arrangements and to develop a shared vision for safer communities in Wales.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“The safety and security of our communities has always been a priority. That is why we are supporting our emergency services and other agencies in building and strengthening their capability to protect us from these risks.

“But the agenda is, by nature, complex. Legislation and policies straddle devolved and non-devolved responsibilities. Seventeen years of devolution have necessarily resulted in differences between our policy approach and that of the UK Government. These changes have brought new opportunities but have not all simplified the context in which we work.

“Late last year, the Auditor General for Wales published a report on Community Safety in Wales. The report reflected the complexities of the agenda, highlighted some of the positive work within Wales but also raised a number of matters. I believe the report provides a valuable opportunity for us all to take stock.

“With the agreement of, and alongside, those key partners who hold the levers for change, I am establishing an Oversight Group to review the current arrangements. It will help to develop a shared vision for safer communities in Wales that builds on the excellent work already done or underway. This review will also take account of the recommendations from the Auditor General for Wales. I want the review to be ambitious in its thinking and develop a clear vision for community safety that is robust, relevant and responsive. A vision for the long term.”