

Press release: Safeguarding Summit: Statements by the International Development Secretary and DFID's Permanent Secretary

Penny Mordaunt at the Safeguarding Summit. Picture: Jo Harrison/DFID

At a landmark Safeguarding Summit today (Monday 5 March 2018), co-hosted by the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Charity Commission, Penny Mordaunt challenged UK-based international development charities, regulatory bodies and independent experts to drive up standards and to agree practical tools, processes and protocols to ensure the aid sector protects the people it serves.

As part of this, Ms Mordaunt announced that:

- DFID will put in place new, enhanced and specific safeguarding standards for the organisations the department works with. These standards will include an assessment of codes of conduct, how organisations identify and respond to incidents, and how their risk management places safeguarding and beneficiaries at its very core. New funds to organisations will not be approved unless they pass the new standards.
- All 179 UK-based charities that work overseas and receive UK aid have responded to the letter from the International Development Secretary giving DFID their statement of assurance on four key areas, including their safeguarding environment and policies, their organisational culture, their clarity and transparency, and their handling of allegations and incidents.
- DFID is following up with 37 organisations to gain further clarity on their assurance.
- Of the 179 charities that have provided returns, in response to assurances sought by DFID, 26 have made serious incident reports to the Charity Commission. 19 of those 26 charities have made reports, among others, relating to incidents that occurred in previous financial years, prior to April 2017, and are therefore classed as historic. In total, the 26 charities have reported 80 incidents broadly related to safeguarding issues.

DFID's Permanent Secretary, Matthew Rycroft, also announced the conclusion of DFID's internal review into sexual harassment and misconduct allegations involving DFID staff, which includes the following information.

Based on currently available records since 1995:

- There have been 14 closed cases where claims that DFID staff were responsible for misconduct of a sexual nature have been substantiated.

- The majority of these closed substantiated cases relate to sexual harassment between staff members. Sexual harassment could include a range of actions such as complaints of inappropriate language and threatening behaviour.
- None of these closed substantiated cases include proven allegations of DFID staff paying for sex. There is no information to suggest misconduct of a sexual nature involving DFID staff and under 18 year olds or of sexual exploitation in exchange for aid.
- The 14 closed substantiated cases involve DFID staff in the UK and abroad.
- There were fewer than five closed substantiated cases in 2017.

On the basis of information available to the review:

- Action was taken in each of these 14 cases in line with DFID policies at the time. This includes informal action at the request of the complainant and disciplinary action.
- DFID does not currently hold any information on historic closed substantiated cases that we should have passed on to the prosecuting authorities.

In addition to the 14 closed substantiated cases identified: • There are fewer than five cases that are open or have been newly reported to DFID relating to past events that we are currently investigating.

DFID cannot give any further details on these cases. This is to safeguard individual personal data under data protection legislation.

If any new information comes to light through DFID's continued efforts the department will ensure appropriate action is taken.

The Cabinet Office is assessing DFID's internal review and we are looking at how best to report cases like these in the future.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

Thank you for being here on this important day. Today we will start the vital change this sector needs.

Your task is to start laying the foundations to rebuild the credibility of the aid sector on this issue, both here and overseas.

Today, I want you to come up with the ideas and initiatives we can take forward the practical tools, processes and protocols to ensure we protect the people we are here to serve.

Unless, we do all we can to prevent wrongdoing, and unless we can hold all those who do wrong to account, we will have failed in our duty to protect the most vulnerable.

As you know, I wrote to every UK charity, which receives UK aid directly, asking that they provide me with a statement of assurance on four key areas:

Their safeguarding environment and policies, their organisational culture, their clarity and transparency, and their handling of allegations and incidents.

I also asked them to confirm that they have referred any and all concerns on specific cases and individuals to the relevant authorities, including prosecuting authorities.

All 179 organisations have given me their statement of assurance, and many gave additional details on reporting and allegations.

We are following up with 37 organisations to gain further clarity on their assurance, or reporting, and will issue a summary of all our analysis when this work is complete

But this exercise is not just about receiving assurances. It marks the starting point from which we must now build.

Across the returns, we saw important examples of good practice, but overall, there was too little evidence in the areas of robust risk management, comprehensive reporting, responsibility being taken at the highest level for safeguarding, and of beneficiaries always being put first.

So if we are to meet our duty, then the sector must raise standards.

I am determined that DFID will play its full part in this. So, from today, DFID will put in place new, enhanced and specific safeguarding standards for the organisations we work with.

These standards will include an assessment of codes of conduct, how organisations identify and respond to incidents, and how their risk management places safeguarding and beneficiaries at the very core.

That assessment will set the bar at a level of the very best – a bar that we will continue to push higher – from our work here today and in the time to come.

Our standards will be world-leading. They will be tough and exacting. Organisations should not bid for new funding unless they are prepared to meet these tough new standards.

We will not approve funds to them unless they pass our new standards.

We will also start to apply these new standards to organisations we have ongoing work with.

And will ensure that all those standards can apply to all our partners, big and small.

DFID is holding itself to these high standards we expect of others and today, I can also confirm that DFID's internal review into historic allegations involving DFID staff has concluded.

Our Permanent Secretary Matthew Rycroft will say more on this later, but I think it was vital that we went back through every record we have, since they began, to check action has been taken. And if any new information comes to light through our continued efforts we will ensure appropriate action is taken on this.

The sector must do the same, and pay particular attention to the issue of reviewing and reporting historic cases. We expect all who wish to work with us, and indeed any organisation that works on development, to take this issue as an urgent priority.

Why? Because only by reporting can we identify and bring to justice predatory individuals.

And it is those predatory individuals who concern me most.

My message to those who have sought to exploit this sector and the human tragedy in which it operates, is this – we will all share information we have with law enforcement.

We will find you. We will bring you to justice. Your time is up.

This summit is a critical moment to learn lessons and drive up standards across the entire aid sector.

Now is the time for action and for the British aid sector to take a lead. To set standards, a template and an example, for the rest of the world to follow.

To keep people safe we need to find a way staff can be properly vetted and monitored as they move between organisations and countries.

We need to find a way to hear the voices of the people we serve, so we can respond when they tell us they are being mistreated.

Would the Oxfam case, or the abuse of women in Syria, have persisted if those victims' voices were listened to?

And we must have thorough assurance and auditing of the sector.

We must share our ideas and learn how to keep on improving our safeguarding measures. We need continuous training and professional development.

And we must ensure smaller organisations – who are such an asset to the sector- are supported and able to meet these standards too.

These are the outcomes I want to see. Now begins your task of finding the solutions.

Your plans will be put into action. Our partners will sign up to them. Other nations will follow our lead.

Let us ensure that the world's poorest and most vulnerable people are always

our first priority.

Let us ensure that there is no hiding place for those who wish to exploit the vulnerable in our sector.

Let us ensure that the British public can take pride in everything that is done in their name, in the lives you save, in the hope you bring, and in the immense good you do in this sector.

Let us put this right. Thank you.

Permanent Secretary at the Department for International Development, Matthew Rycroft said:

I have been struck today by the collective will of speakers to ensure that between us we improve safeguarding standards.

Earlier, the Secretary of State Penny Mordaunt offered a clear message – organisations that cannot offer assurances, organisations that cannot demonstrate in practice that they have safeguards in place, and organisations that cannot show that they are effectively managing the risks around safeguarding, will not receive funding from DFID.

That is a new standard we are setting. It is an entirely reasonable standard to set. We have a duty to do no harm as an absolute minimum. Donors expect that, the public demand it, and beneficiaries deserve it.

We are not saying that we don't expect to see safeguarding incidents being reported. In fact, as standards of reporting improve and the cultures of organisations shift, it is inevitable that we will see increases in the number of cases coming to light.

As that happens, we need to turn it into a positive – bringing damaging and abusive behaviour out of the shadows and into the light where it can be addressed.

The focus here today is on UK international development charities. But it is clear that safeguarding is, and should be, on the agenda right across the aid sector both in the UK and abroad.

To ensure that DFID now remains at the forefront of tackling exploitation and abuse, I instructed our new Safeguarding Unit, and DFID's internal HR experts, to review urgently our own existing policy and procedures within the department.

This includes reviewing our approach to the whole employment life cycle: from selection, vetting and induction; to performance management, training and development; right through to departure and references – and beyond.

This work includes reviewing our conduct and discipline policy, and our departmental code of conduct – to ensure all our policies and processes are robust, suitably explicit and clear to all our staff.

DFID is also reviewing our approach to learning and development and induction to ensure that our staff have the training and confidence to identify and report any concerns, and that line managers are equipped to support their teams.

So we are determined to hold ourselves to the high standards we expect of the sector. As part of that determination, we have conducted an internal review into sexual harassment and misconduct allegations involving DFID staff. We have completed the review and I can report the conclusions.

Based on currently available records since 1995, there have been 14 closed cases where claims that DFID staff were responsible for misconduct of a sexual nature have been substantiated.

Most of these relate to sexual harassment. None of these cases include proven allegations of DFID staff paying for sex or of sexual exploitation in exchange for aid.

On the basis of information available to the review, action was taken in each of these 14 cases in line with DFID policies at the time.

Since a number of these cases occurred, some of DFID's procedures have been tightened up and strengthened.

We do not currently hold any information on historic, closed substantiated cases that we should have passed on to the prosecuting authorities.

In addition to those closed cases, there are a number of live cases that relate to past events, on which I am unable to comment.

I continue to encourage all staff to report any concerns historic or present to our confidential whistle blowing hotline.

If any new information comes to light through our continued efforts we will ensure appropriate action is taken.

We can go further. I want us to seize this moment to ensure a shift in culture across our whole sector. That is the way to ensure we bring some lasting good out of this crisis. We all in this room have the opportunity – and the obligation – to raise the bar. By that I mean three things: tougher standards; greater meeting of the standards and stricter consequences when the standards are not met.

So, as I said before, I encourage anyone with concerns – historic or present – to share these. If we all encourage full and frank transparency we can root out exploitation and abuse.

As I said, I think DFID should be holding ourselves to as high a standard as we hold all of you. If any of your organisations are going further, please share your best practice today so we can all set higher benchmarks and learn from each other.

That is what today is all about: us coming together, collectively as a

sector, to agree a way forward. I hope that we can all agree a statement based on five principles.

Firstly, echoing what the Secretary of State has said, we need to put beneficiaries first. But this should also more widely include a duty to our staff, volunteers and the communities in which we work.

Accountability to beneficiaries and survivors, including staff and volunteers, is essential. Prioritising those who have suffered and survived exploitation, abuse and violence should be at the front of our minds.

Secondly, we have to commit to shifting organisational culture to tackle power imbalances. If we can't do this in our own organisations, we can't hope to do it in society more broadly.

As a first step we need to ensure that breaches are challenged and that those who report incidents are taken seriously, treated with care and dignity and given redress.

More widely, and this is especially pertinent given that DFID is launching its gender equality strategy on Wednesday, we need to make sure that we position all our work to "do no harm" within our wider conviction to gender equality.

Third, I think it important that we take a holistic approach ensuring that safeguarding is integrated throughout the employment cycle. We need to make sure that, from recruitment and induction through to dismissal or voluntary exit, strong checks are in place.

Fourth, it is vital that when things do go wrong, we take all the actions at our disposal to ensure that incidents are investigated, and reported to the relevant authorities, and ultimately that perpetrators are held accountable.

We must ensure that there is rigorous reporting and there are complaints mechanisms for any misconduct that occurs under the banner of our organisations. And we must commit to seeing investigations through to their conclusion. This should ensure that we no longer find ourselves in a situation where a minority of individuals are able to move from one organisation to another with impunity.

Finally, we need to take whistleblowing extremely seriously. We need to see those who raise incidents not as trouble makers but as critical friends who are able to identify and weed out problems.

I am sure most already do, but our systems need to reflect this better. That means actively promoting the whistleblowing process, showing that it is anonymous and impartial and providing feedback on the outcome.

All of this will require sustained effort and leadership from all of you and it will require resources. It is legitimate, in fact essential, activity in any partnership with DFID.

Over and above these broad principles, we need to set about defining concrete

actions.

I know you have all already begun work on the task in hand, following the commission sent out from the Secretary of State last month.

There is a great deal of expectation on us outside of this room. After lunch, it will be time to deliver.

Sheila will be explaining your task in more detail but put simply: your job is to set an agenda which moves us away from a narrative of scandal and recrimination, and towards a positive vision for a charity sector that promotes equality and respect.

By the end of today we will have all come together and agreed a set of concrete actions which will enable us to move towards this vision.

It is important that we set ourselves actions which are ambitious. That we commit to meeting minimum standards now and to exploring how we can build on those in the future.

Please come back after lunch ready to roll your sleeves up and get down to work.

Notes to Editors:

[PHOTOS: International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt speaking at the Safeguarding Summit this morning](#)

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt has tasked the delegates at the Safeguarding Summit to come up with a series of actions to address the shortcomings in the aid sector. Some of the ideas to be discussed at the summit include:

- Introducing new standards for vetting and referencing across the sector.
- Ensuring whistle-blowers and survivors of exploitation and abuse get the counselling and support they need.
- Creating an independent body to promote external scrutiny and ensure the highest possible standards across the aid sector.
- Changing organisational culture to tackle power imbalances, encourage reporting, take allegations seriously and hold people to account.

This summit will build upon the action already taken by DFID in response to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector, including:

- Establishing a new Safeguarding Unit in DFID to urgently review safeguarding across all parts of the aid sector and catalyse further action to ensure everything is being done to protect people from harm, including sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Appointing Sheila Drew Smith, a recent member of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, to bring her expertise to support DFID's ambition on safeguarding. She will report to the Secretary of State directly and will Chair the Safeguarding Summit.
- Writing to every UK charity that receives UK aid insisting that they set

out the steps they are taking to ensure their safeguarding policies are fully in place and confirm they have referred all concerns they have about specific cases and individuals to the relevant authorities, including prosecuting authorities. A similar request has been sent to non-UK charities and other DFID suppliers, including those in the private sector.

- Agreeing with Oxfam that they will withdraw from bidding for any new UK Government funding until DFID is satisfied that they can meet the high standards we expect of our partners.
- Continuing to work with UN Secretary-General António Guterres to stop abuses under the UN flag and we have introduced specific clauses in our funding agreements with a number of UN agencies to take every action possible to prevent all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse and take robust and prompt action in response to any allegations.
- Reviewing any allegations of sexual harassment and misconduct involving DFID staff.

News story: UK drives progress on gender equality in the Middle East

Foreign Office Minister of State Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, visited Turkey and Iraq between 1 and 4 March 2018 to mark the recent launch of the UK's [National Action Plan](#) (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security.

Launched in January in London, the plan sets a bold new direction, putting women and girls at the heart of Britain's work to prevent and resolve conflict for the next five years. As part of this, a series of priority countries, including Iraq and Syria, have been identified as places where the UK will focus its efforts.

Lord Ahmad said:

Women and children are often the worst affected in conflict situations, which is why we have put women and girls at the heart of our foreign policy work.

One of my main priorities this year is to ensure that women and girls are able to fully participate in all areas of life, including ensuring all girls receive a quality education.

It is vital that women, in Iraq, Syria and worldwide, see all barriers removed so that they can participate fully in political processes, conflict resolution and mediation, and to secure justice and accountability against perpetrators of sexual violence. That is

the only way we can build a more sustainable, peaceful world.

Whilst in Turkey, the Minister met with female Syrian politicians and activists, to discuss protecting women's rights in conflict. Women and girls in Syria are disproportionately affected by the war, facing sexual and gender-based violence, forced prostitution and early marriage. The UK supports organisations working with survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, providing education to girls and ensuring a stronger role for women in political negotiations. The Minister announced £1.5 million of UK funding to empower women in Syria's political processes.

The Minister also met with female Turkish human rights advocates, politicians and business figures at the NAP launch, expressing the UK's support for women's political participation and empowerment around the world. He also hosted an inter-faith roundtable with Turkish faith leaders.

In Iraq, Lord Ahmad met with faith leaders, including Yezidi and Christian leaders, where he sought their views on challenges following Daesh's defeat and reiterated the UK's commitment to freedom of religion or belief across Iraq.

Lord Ahmad had meetings with parliamentarians, ministers from the Iraqi government, KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, and civil society, with discussions on women's participation in the upcoming Iraqi elections, supporting survivors of sexual violence, and girls' education.

Lord Ahmad visited Mosul, which was devastated during Daesh's time, and a women's centre at a camp for people internally displaced by the years of conflict. UK aid funding through the Iraq Humanitarian Pooled Fund and other projects has helped to provide support against gender based violence, specialist protection and rehabilitation for escapees of Daesh, and counselling. The Minister confirmed nearly \$1 million for the UN Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund to support women's grassroots organisations in Iraq.

Visiting Camp Hasansham, Lord Ahmad said:

This Women's Centre is providing vital support to women and girls, a space where they can meet, learn new skills, and above all be safe.

UK aid has provided desperately needed assistance here. The UK remains committed to supporting the urgent needs of the 2.4 million displaced people in Iraq, whilst also supporting the Government of Iraq's efforts to stabilise the country and help those who have returned to their homes.

Meeting with the Iraqi Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Education and KRG Prime Minister Barzani, the Minister also raised counter-terrorism and counter-violent extremism efforts, exploring how best to defeat Daesh's

ideology in schools, and maintaining momentum on efforts to hold Daesh to account for its crimes.

Further information

Speech: Sajid Javid's speech at the National Planning Policy Framework conference

Everyone remembers their childhood home.

Mine was the flat above the family shop.

With my parents – who had come to Britain from Pakistan with almost nothing – and my 4 brothers.

Nothing fancy, but an important rung on the ladder for our family.

I won't lie.

It was a struggle at times, with the 7 of us sharing 2 bedrooms.

And my mum and dad – like so many immigrants before and since – working all hours to make our money go further.

But it was nonetheless a stable, loving home that gave us all a great start...

...a start that's undoubtedly the reason that I'm standing here today.

And I never forget that.

We didn't have many luxuries, but I could count on having a safe, warm place to play – and fight! – with my brothers.

Do my homework. Enjoy family meals and fun times together.

I know how lucky I am.

And how, today, there are many families and other people who are not so fortunate.

Who are growing up without that strong foundation because, over the years, we've simply failed to build enough homes.

The result – soaring house prices and rents – has effectively locked a generation out of the housing market.

Which is why – as the Prime Minister has just said – this government is taking urgent action on all fronts to turn this situation around.

Work that is starting to pay off.

Since 2010, we have delivered more than a million homes.

And thanks to your efforts, we've seen 217,350 homes added to our housing stock last year.

The highest level of net additions in all but one of the last 30 years.

We've also helped hundreds of thousands of people on to the housing ladder through Help to Buy.

We're cracking down on rogue landlords, abuse of leaseholds, taking steps to make renting fairer and tackle homelessness through earlier intervention.

We're working to encourage landlords to offer longer, family friendly tenancies.

We've launched a new, more assertive national housing agency, Homes England.

And we are putting billions into affordable housing and delivering essential infrastructure through the Housing Infrastructure Fund.

But there's still a long way to go to deliver 300,000 homes a year in England by the middle of the next decade.

Your role as planners and developers is absolutely vital in helping us get there.

I often say that local government is the frontline of our democracy.

If that's true, then you, as planners, are in many ways the frontline of our housing challenge.

Informing crucial decisions that give the go ahead for new homes.

Ensuring that these are supported by the right infrastructure.

Doing the best for your local areas and creating, quite simply, great places to live.

Places that will still be here in a hundred years' time as well-established and much-loved parts of the community.

So the part that you play in helping us turn the consultations we're launching today...

... on the [revised National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) and the [reform of developer contributions](#)...

...into more homes and stronger communities could not be more important.

These measures implement the planning policy reforms in:

And set out a bold, comprehensive approach for building more homes, more quickly, in the places people want to live.

Homes that embody quality and good design.

That people are happy to live in – and happy to live next door to.

Knowing that there's the infrastructure to support them.

As we all know, this point about getting communities on board is vital if we're to deliver homes at the scale and pace that's needed.

So how are the proposed changes going to help us achieve this?

And what are they going to mean for you in practical terms?

I know that many of you have been keenly anticipating the answers to these questions.

And have wanted greater clarity and certainty, so that you can make a real difference in your communities.

And that's exactly what our reforms deliver.

A simpler, more robust system that sets much clearer expectations – for local authorities and developers alike..

...about meeting your commitments – unlocking land, fulfilling planning permissions and providing essential infrastructure.

And a system that, frankly, tolerates fewer excuses for failures to deliver.

Starting first with the revision of the National Planning Policy Framework...

This implements around 80 reforms announced last year.

There's still quite a lot in there that you'll recognize, with a continued emphasis on development that's sustainable and led locally.

But the changes it does propose are significant.

Offering councils flexibility to build more.

But also greater responsibility for really delivering for their communities.

Which means, firstly, working with your communities to get plans in place as quickly as possible...

...so that development is dictated by what local people want and not by speculative applications.

In many ways, these proposals will make this process of putting together a

plan much easier.

For the first time, all local authorities will be expected to assess housing need using the same methodology...

...a big improvement on the current situation where different councils calculate housing need in different ways...

...with expensive, or time wasting consulting and opaque methodology.

I know that this issue – of how we establish what numbers of homes we need and where – has become muddled at times.

Ultimately, we must be guided by where people want to live.

And a standardized approach will help us do this – by establishing a level playing field and giving us a much clearer...

...more transparent understanding of where the need for housing is most acute.

Areas will also be able to agree a 5-year land supply position for a year...

...reducing the need for costly planning appeals involving speculative applications.

But perhaps one of the biggest shifts is a change in culture.

Towards outcomes achieved – the number of homes delivered– rather than on processes like planning permissions

And as it becomes easier to make plans more streamlined and strategic...

...this culture change will also encourage authorities to work together to meet their communities' needs.

I know that many of you will already be doing this – and you are to be commended for it.

It's now time for others to follow your example.

The standardised formula is a guide to planning the minimum number of homes that are needed.

But ambitious councils, who have clear and robust plans for growth, may want to plan for more.

Indeed, this kind of ambition is key to unlocking housing deals that support growth at a strategic level so that they're not just delivering new homes but creating communities.

And it's because we want to champion this ambition that we're going further.

Councils will have much more scope to make the most of existing land, thanks to extra reform beyond those previously consulted on.

These include an even stronger drive for increasing density -particularly in areas where housing need is high...

...and supporting authorities to build upwards.

But not, I must stress, at the expense of quality – with high design standards that communities are happy to embrace remaining a priority.

You only have to look at mews street developments such as The Echoes in Thurrock and Goldsmith Street in Norwich...

...or urban mansion blocks and traditional terraces to see that well-designed homes with high densities come in all shapes and sizes.

These reforms also include more flexibility to develop brownfield land in the Green Belt...

...to meet affordable housing need where there is no substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

Now I know that even the mention of the words “Green Belt” may cause some concern in some quarters.

This is about building homes on sites that have been previously developed – not about, in any way, undermining the Green Belt.

Our green spaces are precious and deserve our protection.

Which is why for example the government is delivering on its manifesto commitment to give stronger protection to ancient woodland.

Safeguarding assets that cannot be replaced for generations to come.

And ensuring that planning policies promote net gains for biodiversity, including strengthening networks of habitats.

So there are unprecedented opportunities here – to not only improve the environment, but to deliver the homes we need.

With ambitious planners and local authorities leading the way.

And with developers also stepping up – to help close the gap between planning permissions granted and homes built.

Knowing what contributions they’re expected to make towards affordable housing and essential infrastructure...

...and, vitally, knowing that local authorities can hold them to account.

Unfortunately, we all know of instances where developers make these promises and later claim they can’t afford them.

This is totally unacceptable.

It cheats communities of much-needed housing and infrastructure and gives new development a bad name.

Which is why we're addressing this issue head on in our consultations, with proposals for reforms to the system.

These include a new approach to developer contributions – so that everyone is clear about what affordable housing and infrastructure will underpin new development.

More standardised viability assessments and greater transparency.

Leaving developers in no doubt of what's expected to them

In no doubt that councils will hold them to their commitments.

And leaving communities in no doubt that that their needs will be met.

We will also be looking at what more we can do to support build out informed by Sir Oliver Letwin's independent review...

...into the gap between planning permissions granted and homes built – which is due to report by this year's Autumn Budget

And there's the potential, over the long term, for more, significant reform of developer contributions.

And there are also other areas in which we're ready to go further to take the delivery of housing up a gear.

Including a new permitted development right for building upwards to provide new homes.

Finding more effective ways of bringing agricultural land forward for housing.

And ensuring that swift and fair decisions are made at appeal.

That's why I will shortly announce an end-to end review of the planning inquiries process.

This review will have one objective: to determine what it would take to halve the time for an inquiry on housing supply to be determined...

...ensuring swift and fair decisions are made

So with a strong focus, throughout, we're leaving no stone unturned to meet everyone's housing needs.

Be that:

- implementing an exception site policy to help more people onto the housing ladder

- promoting Build to Rent
- giving older people a better choice of accommodation
- encouraging local policies for affordable homes catering for essential workers, such as nurses and police

So with all these tools at your disposal, there's no time to lose in getting your plans in place and really delivering for your communities.

You'll have heard me express my frustration about some local planning authorities that are still lagging behind on this score.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: these plans are absolutely key to helping us build the right homes in the right places.

So it's vital that you get them in place quickly and keep them up to date to ensure that permissions turn into homes.

The alternative – speculative development and neighbourhoods that are poorly planned, lacking strong communities – is something that none of us want to see.

The truth is that, for too long, we've failed to plan for the future.

To really get to grips with the number of homes we need.

Whether we're building them in the places where people want to live.

Whether they're of the right type – and serving the families, young people, older generations...

And whether they're of the right quality and in keeping with the local area.

We need to think big about the kind of communities we want to live in, not just now, but for years to come.

That changes today with the reforms we're proposing to the NPPF and developer contributions.

Measures that raise the game in every regard to get Britain building as never before.

Starting this summer, when we'll begin implementing the new Framework.

Help us build a better system.

A system that ensures that everyone – councils, developers, local communities – knows where they stand.

Knows what's expected of them.

And knows what they need to do to deliver the great homes and the stronger communities that the people of this country need and deserve.

Thank you.

Press release: Law change could lead to a smarter generation of motorway users

Highways England is predicting a smarter generation of motorway road users following a law change allowing learner drivers about to take their driving test to get their first taste of motorway driving.

In the past learner drivers' first experience of driving at higher speeds had been limited to using dual carriageways and only when they had passed their driving test could they get their first experiences of driving on a motorway.

For some newly passed and inexperienced drivers this could prove to be a daunting and often frightening experience.

Now under a change to the law from June 2018, learners will be allowed to drive on motorways with an approved driving instructor (ADI) using a dual controlled car displaying L plates.

Highways England, the body responsible for Britain's motorways and strategic A roads, says this law change will help develop a smarter generation of motorway road users.

It will allow approved driving instructors (ADI) to teach learners about the specific set of skills associated with using the motorways safely in a practical situation.

Head of Road Safety at Highways England, Richard Leonard, said:

Safety is our number one priority and we welcome today's change which will help equip learner drivers to drive safely on motorways when they have passed their tests.

We look forward to supporting the motorway drivers of tomorrow as they develop these new driving skills and get invaluable practical knowledge and experience of using motorways.

The changes will allow learner drivers to:

- get broader driving experience before taking their driving test
- get training on how to join and leave the motorway, overtake and use lanes correctly
- practise driving at higher speeds
- put their theoretical knowledge into practice

Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) Chief Executive, Gareth Llewellyn, said:

By allowing learners to have lessons on motorways, we are modernising driver training and making sure learners get the skills and experience they need to drive on fast, busy roads.

The Department for Transport consulted on these changes in December 2016. They received wide support from learner drivers, the driver training industry and road safety organisations and the general public. These changes apply to England, Wales and Scotland only.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Press release: Heritage experts welcomed to Stonehenge World Heritage Site](#)

Highways England has today (5 March 2018) welcomed international heritage experts to show their updated plans to build a road tunnel near Stonehenge developed to minimise the impact on the World Heritage Site.

A delegation from the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) are on a three-day fact-finding mission to see how the designs of the proposed 1.9-mile long road tunnel will bring together the World Heritage Site landscape currently split by the A303 between Amesbury and Berwick Down.

Derek Parody, Highways England Project Director, said:

As well as removing the traffic bottleneck at Stonehenge and addressing the rat-running issue through villages, our proposed scheme will remove the sight and sound of traffic from the iconic monument and reduce intrusion in the wider world heritage site.

We've been working closely with heritage groups to best develop the route to minimise the impact on Stonehenge and the surrounding landscape.

These groups have been key, along with environmental, archaeological and geophysical surveys, to our building our knowledge and understanding of this unique landscape and helped us develop the design of our preferred route.

Since the tunnel route plan was announced in September, Highways England has continued to work with heritage groups including the National Trust, Historic England, English Heritage, and experts in the field, including the Stonehenge Scientific Committee – a body of leading independent archaeologists – to ensure a new route is built sensitively to the World Heritage Site.

The route was carefully chosen to avoid monuments and barrow groups, and Highways England's modified plans also included moving the position of one of the entrances to the tunnel to avoid conflicting with the Winter Solstice alignment.

A public consultation is being held until 6 April and outlines for the first time initial designs for the tunnel.

It will show how the £1.6bn scheme will restore the tranquil environment and setting of the Stonehenge monument and surrounding landscape by removing the sight and sound of the busy road.

This major investment will support economic growth and tourism in an area where congestion and slow journeys have long had a negative impact on the region's economy.

The scheme is part of a £15 billion road investment programme. The Government is committed to upgrading all remaining single carriageway sections of the A303/A358 between the M3 and M5 to dual carriageway standard, starting with three schemes: the A303 at Stonehenge, the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester; and the A358 between the M5 Taunton and the Southfields Roundabout on the A303.

In the meantime, anyone wanting further information on the scheme and the current consultation can visit the [scheme website](#).

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