

Press release: Plans to improve journeys for road users into Southampton go on show today

The plans will increase capacity at junction 8 of the M27 and Windhover roundabout, as well as upgrades to 25 junctions along the A3024. Improved safety, upgrades to two railway bridges and better facilities for pedestrians and cyclists are also part of the proposals.

An outline of Highways England's plans for improvements for the eastern access corridor.

A consultation on the proposals starts today and runs until the end of October. Drivers, local people and people who rely on the route for business are all encouraged to get involved and have their say.

Highways England Project Manager Joe Clark said:

These are an ambitious set of improvements, and are the result of Highways England and local authorities working together to develop a joined up set of improvements that will deliver real benefits to drivers and people living and working in Southampton and Hampshire.

This proposed scheme will not only improve safety and improve congestion, but also help to boost the economy and support the potential development of homes and jobs in the local area, as well as future growth at Southampton Port. We want people to get involved and I urge anyone interested in the scheme to come along to one of our exhibitions or send us their feedback by picking up a leaflet or visiting the project website.

Hampshire County Council's Executive Member for Environment and Transport, Councillor Rob Humby, said:

The County Council very much welcomes the proposed investment by Highways England to M27 Junction 8 and Windhover roundabout designed to improve the flow of traffic and address congestion and safety issues.

This is a busy motorway junction which is in need of improvement and the project demonstrates what can be achieved by effective collaboration between the County Council, Highways England and Southampton City Council for the benefit of Hampshire residents. I would encourage people to take part in the consultation, so that local views can be heard in finalising the details of the scheme.

Councillor Jacqui Rayment, Southampton City Council Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport said:

The M27 Southampton Junctions scheme will look to improve the route into the east of Southampton from the M27 via junction 8, Windhover Roundabout and the A3024 corridor, consisting of Northam Road, Bitterne Road West and Bursledon Road, through to the Six Dials junction in the city centre.

This is a great opportunity to improve the wider transport infrastructure on the main routes in and out of Southampton for residents, commuters and visitors. The scheme will aim to reduce congestion, improve journey times and traffic flow, improve road safety, maximise opportunities for sustainable travel and support long-term sustainable economic growth.

This has the potential to be hugely beneficial for the city and I would urge people to take a few minutes to have their say in the consultation before it finishes on 31 October 2017.

The plans include:

- M27 junction 8 and Windhover roundabout: All approaches to the junctions will be widened, with improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists
- A3024 corridor: Improvements at 25 junctions along this four and a half mile stretch, including to the cycling and walking facilities along the corridor and for crossings and junction widening at key junctions. This will also help buses run more reliably and efficiently
- Northam Road rail bridge: Replacement of this single carriageway bridge that crosses the main South Western railway lines near to St Marys Stadium. The new bridge will include two lanes in each direction with improvements to pedestrian and cycle facilities
- Bitterne rail bridge: This bridge, a wide single carriageway bridge on the A3024 Bitterne Road West at Bitterne train station will be upgraded to include new separated adjacent pedestrian and cycle facilities with wider footpaths

Highways England is holding eight information exhibitions at venues across Southampton so that people can examine the proposals and put any questions directly to the project team.

A visualisation of the new Northam Road Rail Bridge on the A3024 in Southampton

Funding for the scheme comes from the Government's £15bn Roads Investment Strategy, announced in 2014, which is providing people with better journeys, cutting congestion and improving the economy.

All responses to the consultation will be carefully considered before an announcement is made on a preferred route this winter. Subject to a successful outcome, construction could start as early as 2020 and is expected

to take two years.

Details on the proposals and feedback forms [will be available online](#) from today until 11:45pm on 31 October 2017.

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: Fuel for thought as Highways England launches motorcycle response vehicles on M5](#)

It is the first time fuel bikes have been used by Highways England while a major repair scheme is underway in England.

Since the 1 August this year, there have already been 17 fuel related incidents recorded.

Highways England is working closely with recovery service firm Egertons Recovery to manage the service.

Fuel bike and traffic officer

Highways England project manager, Alastair Warnes, said:

Since the contraflow came into effect, we've already seen a number of fuel-related breakdowns in the roadworks section. In fact, on the very first day of the contraflow coming into effect, the first breakdown was caused by someone that had run out of fuel.

This type of situation can cause delays for fellow motorists. Safety is our top imperative and we're calling on motorists to do their bit and ensure they have plenty of fuel for the journey before setting off.

We're always there to help motorists who need it in an emergency and by offering this type of assistance we're able to minimise disruption to others driving through the roadworks.

The major repair scheme, valued at more than £100 million, includes concrete repairs and waterproofing on the ageing M5 Oldbury Viaduct in the West Midlands.

To keep the motorway open, a contraflow system is in place with traffic currently using the northbound carriageway and two lanes operating in each direction, along with a 30mph speed limit. This means that motorcycles can reach motorists quicker with fuel to reduce delays and traffic flowing.

Motorists are also being reminded to consider using alternative routes while the vital work takes place. At the link between the M6 and the M5 southbound, one lane leads onto the M5, with three lanes continuing onto the M6, to encourage drivers to take the alternative route around Birmingham.

On the M5 northbound at junction 4a one lane continues onto the M5 through the junction while still providing two lanes to the M42.

The dynamic hard shoulder sections on either side of the M42 and on the M6 are currently being opened much earlier than usual and left on later to see if this helps traffic. The dynamic hard shoulder is used by traffic when the motorway is at its busiest.

Slip roads at junctions 1 and 2 on the M5 are being kept open, to ease effects on the local network, but drivers are advised to expect delays.

The work continues until autumn 2018, with some minor work continuing into spring 2019.

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[News story: Civil news: tender process for 2018 contracts opens](#)

We are opening the tender process for 2018 civil contracts in 3 areas of work:

1. face to face contracts – starts 19 September
2. specialist CLA telephone advice – late September

3. Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme (HPCDS) – starts October

Further announcements will be made shortly with more information about the CLA and HPDCS processes.

When will the new contracts begin?

Services under new face to face and CLA contracts will begin on 1 September 2018. HPCDS contracts will follow on 1 October 2018.

If you wish to work in these areas from these dates then you will need to take part in the tender process.

How long will the contracts last?

Each 2018 Civil Contract will initially run until 31 August 2021, with an option for LAA to extend for up to a further 2 years.

Current contract extensions

Existing contracts to deliver these services are being extended as follows:

- relevant face to face and telephone advice contracts – extended to 31 August 2018
- HPCDS schedules – extended to 30 September 2018

Where can I find out more about the tender process?

Our tender pages provide detailed information, including:

- categories of law covered by the tenders
- tender timetable
- entry requirements
- management of the tenders
- submitting your tender bid

Deadline for tender submissions

All bids must be submitted through the LAA's eTendering system by 5pm on 10 November 2017.

Further information

[Legal aid civil tender 2018](#) – information for potential applicants

[e-Tendering system](#) – for submitting bids and using the message boards for questions about the process

Email help@bravosolution.co.uk or telephone 0800 0698630 for technical questions about using the eTendering system

Speech: Sajid Javid's speech to the National Housing Federation conference 2017

Thank you, David [Orr, Chief Executive, National Housing Federation], and good morning everyone.

It's great to be here in Birmingham and a real honour to be opening your conference this year.

And it's good to see so many of you here at what is a particularly important and, as we've just heard, particularly challenging time for this country's housing associations.

I know, of course, you've got a lot on your minds.

I've certainly got a lot on mine and I'm looking forward to sharing that with you.

But before all that, as an almost-local Member of Parliament I have to give you a quick West Midlands history lesson!

Here at the ICC we're literally just over the road from the site of the first major Cadbury factory, which opened its doors in 1847.

It's not there anymore, sadly.

But if you pop out at lunchtime you can still see the little canal spur that served the rapidly growing business.

It's right there behind the giant hotel and the Australian theme pub!

I'm fairly sure neither of them were there at that time!

And that wasn't the only difference.

Back in the 1800s, the area wasn't the clean, fresh, welcoming place that you all saw this morning.

Quite the opposite.

And that's why after nearly 30 years here on Bridge Street, the Cadbury brothers upped sticks and they moved operations 5 miles south to what was then a bucolic rural idyll that sat just outside the city.

They moved there because, yes, they needed a bigger, more appropriate site.

But they also wanted a better place for their workers and their families to make their homes.

As George Cadbury said at the time “No man ought to be condemned to live in a place where a rose cannot grow”.

The Cadburys recognised that our homes aren’t just places where we sleep and eat.

They aren’t just machines for living in.

Machines don’t have souls and hearts, but homes do.

They shape who we are.

They reflect our lives, our choices, our personalities.

And our homes can limit us too.

Living in the wrong kind of house or the wrong kind of place can close off avenues and opportunities, and of course can affect your life chances.

A child who can’t find a quiet place to study may struggle to make progress at school.

An adult who is unable to relocate may miss out on a life-changing promotion at work.

And, of course, you’re also judged on where you live.

On what kind of house you live in.

Which side of the tracks you came from.

I grew up on Stapleton Road in Bristol – also known as “Britain’s most dangerous street” or a “moral cesspit”, depending on your tabloid of choice.

And I remember my school careers adviser telling me that there was no point in aiming high because kids from my neck of the woods simply didn’t take A-levels or go to university.

Society had low expectations of us, and we were expected to live down to them.

It was the same years later, when I was applying for jobs with merchant banks in London.

I got the sense that the interview panels had never before met someone who lived in the overcrowded flat above the family shop.

That’s just my experience. It’s just one person’s story.

But if the Grenfell tragedy showed us anything, it was the extent to which these attitudes have spread and become deeply ingrained in the way this

country thinks and it acts.

While I don't want to pre-judge the findings of the public or police inquiries, it's clear that in the months and the years before the fire the residents of Grenfell Tower were not listened to.

That their concerns were ignored or dismissed.

That too many people in positions of power saw tenants less as people with families and more as problems that needed to be managed.

A lot has been written and said about the social and political context of Grenfell.

Much of it accurate, some of it less so.

There's certainly been some unfair criticism of social landlords generally.

Unfair because I know that everyone in this room is passionate about what they do.

Passionate about getting safe, secure, affordable roofs over the heads of families.

I know that and you know that.

And I want to thank you all, and everyone that you employ, for all the good that you do. Thank you very much.

But the question I keep coming back to is very simple.

In one of the richest, most privileged corners of the UK – the world, even – would a fire like this have happened in a privately owned block of luxury flats?

If you believe that the answer is no, even if you think it was simply less likely, then it's clear that we need a fundamental rethink of social housing in this country.

Because whether they're owned by a council or by a housing association, whether they're managed by a TMO or a local authority, we're not just talking about bricks and mortar.

We're not just talking about assets on your balance sheet.

We're talking about peoples' homes.

About people's lives.

Over the past few weeks the Housing Minister, Alok Sharma, has been meeting with social housing tenants right across the country.

And from those conversations it's already clear that they want us to look again at the quality and safety of what's on offer.

To look again at the way tenants are listened to and their concerns acted on.

To look again at the number of homes being built, at community cohesion and more besides.

And that's exactly what this government is going to do.

Today I can announce that we will be bringing forward a green paper on social housing in England.

A wide-ranging, top-to-bottom review of the issues facing the sector, the green paper will be the most substantial report of its kind for a generation.

It will kick off a nationwide conversation on social housing.

What works and what doesn't work.

What has gone right and what has gone wrong,

Why things have gone wrong and – most importantly – how to fix them.

And the results will help everyone involved in the whole world of social housing: local and central government, housing associations, TMOs, and of course the tenants themselves, to make this country's social housing provision something the whole nation can be proud of.

Of course, in the wake of Grenfell, the green paper will look at safety issues.

But it will need to go much further.

It will look at the overall quality of social homes, many of which are now beginning to show their age.

It will cover service management, the way social homes and their tenants are taken care of.

It will look at the rights of tenants and show how their voices can be better heard.

And it will cover what can be done to ensure their complaints are taken seriously and dealt with properly, and make sure tenants have clear, timely avenues to seek redress when things do go wrong.

If a resident reports a crack in the wall that you can fit your hand in, big enough to use as a book shelf, it shouldn't just be patched up and ignored.

The reason it's there and the impact it could have need to be properly investigated.

Problems shouldn't just be fixed, they should be learned from.

These are the kind of issues the green paper will explore.

But that's not all. It will also look at wider issues of place, community, and the local economy.

How can social landlords help to create places that people really want to live in, places where roses can grow?

What role can social housing policy play in building safe and integrated communities, where people from different backgrounds get along no matter what type of housing they live in?

How do we maximise the benefits for social housing for the local, regional and national economy as part of our Industrial Strategy?

What more can we do to help tackle homelessness?

What support is needed for leaseholders who have a social landlord?

What can be done to tackle illegal sub-letting, not just chasing down offenders but dealing with the cause of the problem in the first place?

And, at the heart of it all, how can you, me, local government and others work together to get more of the right homes built in the right places?

As you can tell – I hope! – I'm talking about a substantial body of work.

It's a green paper that will inform both government policy and the wider debate for many years to come.

And I want to make sure that we hear from everyone with something to say.

Not just the usual suspects – those working in the sector or the think-tanks and lobbyists.

But the people who matter most, the people living in or clamouring for social housing.

So it's not something we're going to rush.

Yes, I do want to see it published as soon as possible.

But what matters most is getting it right.

There's simply too much at stake to do otherwise.

Whatever comes about as a result of the green paper, much of the delivery is going to be down to the people in this room, the housing associations.

You own homes, you manage homes and of course you build homes.

Tens of thousands of them every year.

The housing market in this country has been crippled by a long-term failure to match supply and demand.

But I'm under no illusion that, without your contribution, the situation would have been far, far worse.

By next year you're set to reach 65,000 new homes a year, an incredible achievement and one that makes a real difference to the lives of countless people. So thank you again.

The associations you represent are charities, trusts, co-operatives, societies and so on.

But you don't get build-out numbers like that, numbers that rival the likes of Barratt and Bellway, without running your organisations as serious businesses.

And for all your passion and your social mission, you're exactly that – serious businesses.

The people in this room today represent a sector with £140 billion of assets and some £70 billion of debt.

Before I came into politics, a huge part of my job was all about helping companies secure the capital that they needed in order to grow.

Some of it through debt, some of it through investment.

So I know first-hand that a business can't attract funding without certainty about its future prospects.

Businesses need to know that economic regulations aren't going to dramatically change without warning.

They need a stable, predictable base on which to build – literally, in your case!

And of course lenders need to know that a company is a reliable investment prospect before they'll put up any money.

Our [housing white paper](#), which was published earlier this year, gave you all a detailed insight into our long-term plans for fixing the broken housing market, and the vital role that housing associations will have in that.

Thanks to the white paper, you already know that we're doing all we can to free up sites, to reform the planning process, to invest in infrastructure and so on.

That we're working with you to help you build faster and better, raising both the quality and quantity of our housing stock.

But of course you need much more than that.

Right now, you're trying to make long-term investment decisions without knowing what your rental return is going to be after 2020.

It's not ideal, of course I get that.

You need certainty and you need clarity and you need them sooner rather than later.

That's why I've been pushing right across government, as hard as I can, to confirm the future formula for social housing rents.

I would have liked to stand here today and tell you exactly what it is going to be.

Unfortunately, I have to tell you, the t's are still being crossed and the i's dotted.

But I can promise you this: an announcement will be made very, very soon.

I'm doing everything I can, pushing as hard I can.

And you're not going to have to wait much longer for the detail you need and deserve.

The same is true of Right To Buy.

It's a policy that has always been popular with tenants.

I know the same is not necessarily true of all the delegates here today.

I think it's a great scheme.

It helps people get on the housing ladder and, by releasing funds, it helps deliver the next generation of homes for affordable rent.

There are issues that need looking at, I accept that.

I thank the National Housing Federation and all of you for your open, honest and constructive feedback on Right to Buy.

We'll be making a decision on the way forward just as soon as we possibly can.

As many of you will have seen, at DCLG's main office there's a wall with official portraits of everyone who has led the department or its predecessors.

They go all the way back to Hugh Dalton, in 1950.

Some of the pictures are more flattering than others.

Richard Crossman, he looks like he's appearing in an Alfred Hitchcock film.

Chris Patten seems to have been surprised by a photographer while relaxing in his local library.

And John Prescott's eyes... they kind of follow you wherever you walk...

I know some civil servants find that a little bit creepy when they're alone

in the office late at night!

But the one that always catches my eye is Harold Macmillan.

When Winston Churchill appointed Macmillan as Housing Minister in 1951, he gave him one very simple instruction: "build houses for the people".

And the presence of his photograph on the wall at DCLG is a daily reminder of the spectacular fashion in which he did just that.

I'm proud of my government's record on council housing.

[Political content removed]

But Macmillan was on a whole other level.

While he was housing minister, Britain built 300,000 houses a year, the vast majority what today we would call social homes.

Cramped, dense, inner-city slums were replaced with spacious, high-quality homes in the suburbs.

Millions of people were given their first experience of indoor plumbing, of front and rear gardens.

Never mind living somewhere a rose could grow – the planners behind new towns boasted of homes where a tree could be seen from every window.

Supermac built houses for the people and the people loved them.

Living in social housing carried no stigma, no shame.

Quite the opposite, in fact.

For many, it was seen the gold standard for accommodation.

Not a final safety net for the desperate and destitute but something you could genuinely aspire to, housing you would actively choose to live in.

As a country we were all rightly proud of it.

But over time, that all changed.

Social housing stock became increasingly neglected, as did the people who lived in it.

The Establishment became detached, aloof, focussed its attentions elsewhere.

And the tragic events of 14 June showed exactly where that attitude can lead.

That's why, when I say we must do everything possible to prevent a repeat of Grenfell, I'm not just talking about the cladding or the stairways or the sprinklers.

We need to shift the whole conversation about social housing, reframe the whole debate.

We need to challenge outdated, unfair attitudes.

We need to return to the time, not so very long ago, when social housing was valued.

It was treasured.

Something we could all be proud of whether we lived in it or not.

I know that's exactly what many of you in the sector have been trying to achieve for many, many years.

Well, I'm proud to stand here today and say that you have a Secretary of State who's totally committed to the cause.

I'm delighted to say you have a Prime Minister who is too.

Because we both recognise that if we're going to make this a country that works for everyone, we need housing that works for everyone.

And that's true regardless of whether you're an owner-occupier, a private rental tenant, or living in social housing.

After any disaster we search for lessons, for a legacy, for some light to come out of the darkness.

The legacy of Grenfell, the lessons that we learn, the changes that we make – none of that should be confined to fire safety.

The legacy of Grenfell can and must be a whole new approach to the way this country thinks about social housing.

Achieving this will not be simple or straightforward.

We – all of us – must be committed to bringing about this change.

It demands nothing less.

Thank you.

[Press release: Government pledges £500,000 for new action group to grow](#)

future of public parks

Parks and Green Spaces Minister Marcus Jones today (19 September 2017) launched a new Parks Action Group to help England's public parks and green spaces meet the needs of communities now and in the future.

The new Parks Action Group will include experts from the world of horticulture, leisure, heritage and tourism, and will be tasked with bringing forward proposals to address some of the issues faced by public parks and other green spaces across England. To support them, government is providing £500,000 funding to kick start their work.

The action group will propose what steps can be taken in line with the government response to the recent House of Common's Communities and Local Government Select Committee report into the future of parks and green spaces.

Parks and Green Spaces Minister Marcus Jones said:

We recognise the value of parks and green spaces to local communities – including reducing loneliness, increasing wellbeing, and revitalising town and city centres.

But we need to do more to make sure future generations are continuing to enjoy their benefits. That is why we have announced a new expert-led Parks Action Group to work closely with the sector to find the right solutions.

This latest development builds on action the government has taken to date to encourage more people to make better use of parks including:

- In December 2015, the government published the "[Sporting future: a new strategy for an active nation](#)" which set out the importance of sport and physical activity. The [first annual report](#) on the implementation of "sporting future" was published with a specific focus on the themes of central government, local government and outdoor recreation.
- In [February 2016](#) the government awarded over £1 million to improve 87 small pockets of unloved, undeveloped or derelict land to transform them into 87 green spaces that the whole community can enjoy.
- The government has [announced](#) that is to continue the Green Flag Awards license for making sure that Britain's best parks and green spaces will continue to be recognised for another 5 years. For 20 years, the [Green Flag Awards](#) have been recognising the best of green outdoor spaces in the UK, for people to enjoy and setting standards for park managers across the country to try to emulate. Many parks have won the award, but

winners also include more unusual spaces such as social housing developments, cemeteries, canals, and shopping centres.

Parks research

Research published today from the charity Fields in Trust shows that living close to and visiting parks and green spaces can increase people's wellbeing and improve their health. The research also highlights the importance of parks as spaces for neighbours to socialise away, helping to reduce the risk of loneliness.

Fields in Trust's report, among others, will be fundamental to the Parks Action Group's work moving forward.

Helen Griffiths, chief executive Fields in Trust said:

I welcome the ministers response to the CLG Parliamentary Committee and Fields in Trust's appointment to the newly established Parks Action Group at this pivotal moment for the future of parks and green spaces.

Our ongoing research recognises how these spaces help to address significant public policy issues including health and wellbeing and community integration.

We are looking forward to furthering our work with colleagues across the sector to ensure that we value parks and green spaces and take account of the vital contribution they make to local communities.

Graham Duxbury, chief executive of Groundwork said:

Making sure that all communities and all sections of society are able to enjoy the benefits of good green spaces is vital. Joining a local group can help young people develop their skills and older people overcome loneliness.

Well managed green spaces can also help whole neighbourhoods cope with the costly impacts of climate change. We look forward to helping the action group unlock more practical support so that local communities and local authorities can maximise these social and economic benefits.

Matthew Bradbury, Parks Alliance's chief executive said:

Having been involved in lobbying for an inquiry, The Parks Alliance wholeheartedly welcomes the publication of the minister's response

to the Local Government Select Committee inquiry into the Future of Public Parks and particularly the creation of a cross governmental and sector supported, Parks Action Group.

The Parks Alliance is very much looking forward to working with the minister, government and the wider sector to secure the future of public parks for the communities that they serve.

Further information

The House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee report: “the future of public parks” published in February 2017, made 17 recommendations that are addressed in full in the [government’s response](#) published today (19 September 2017).

The direction of the Parks Action Group will be determined by park sector experts in co-operation with officials from a number of government departments. The Action Group will consider the recommendations from the government’s response to the report and propose new projects and actions that will help our parks and green spaces thrive.

Members of the Parks Action Group

Parks and Green Spaces Minister Marcus Jones will chair the inaugural meeting.

The members of the Parks Action Group are:

- Drew Bennellick, Head of Landscape & Natural Heritage UK, Heritage Lottery Fund
- Matthew Bradbury, CEO, Parks Alliance
- Graham Duxbury, CEO, Groundwork
- Helen Griffiths, CEO, Fields In Trust
- Ian Leete, Senior Advisor on Culture, Tourism and Sport, Local Government Association
- Dave Morris, Chair, National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces
- Paul O’Brien, CEO, Association of Public Service Excellence
- Ellie Robinson, Assistant Director, National Trust
- Dave Solly, Natural England

The government has taken steps to encourage more people to make better use of parks. In December 2015, the government published the “[sporting future: a new strategy for an active nation](#)” which set out the importance of sport and physical activity. The first annual report on the implementation of “sporting future” was published with a specific focus on the themes of central government, local government and outdoor recreation.

87 Pocket Parks were awarded £1.05 million in 2016.

The government has supported the Green Flag Awards for 20 years and has recently announced that it is to extend the licence for another 5 years.

The Parks Action Group's recommendations will be implemented through a cross-government group bringing together the relevant government departments including:

- Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
- Department of Health (DH)
- Department for Education (DfE)
- Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)
- Home Office (HO)
- Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS)
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

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