

News story: Over 300 new houses unveiled for troops and their families

The homes have been designed with families in mind. The spacious three and four bedroom homes are built around large green spaces and areas for children to play.

Defence Minister Guto Bebb had a chance to speak with families who live on the new estate to hear their experiences of living in these new homes.

Guto Bebb, Minister for Defence Procurement:

The Defence Estate is where our serving personnel live, work and train. It's not just a place to live, but a community and it is essential that our Armed Forces families can feel at home wherever they are posted.

That is why I am proud to support this new development of first class homes for those who sacrifice the most for our nation.

The completion of these homes caps off a successful period for the Army Basing Programme. Alongside this development, over £1 billion has been invested in Salisbury Plain to accommodate the 4,000 troops and their families returning from Germany by 2019. The MOD will provide over 1,300 new homes, 2,600 bed spaces for single soldiers and nearly 250 other buildings such as offices, garages, workshops and mess facilities.

The developments across Salisbury Plain area under the Army Basing Programme will provide an economic boost to the local economy while providing quality facilities for our armed forces to enable military capability.

Maj Gen Richard Wardlaw OBE, Director Basing and Infrastructure said:

This investment shows our commitment in providing modern first class accommodation for our Service personnel and their families. I hope all living on the Ashdown Estate enjoy their new homes and also benefit from the investment 'behind the wire' providing new working and training facilities.

[Press release: £40 million fund to transform UK's coastal communities opens for applications](#)

Multi-million pound funding to transform the UK's coastal communities through investment in jobs, skills and local businesses opened for bids today (26 February 2018) announced Coastal Communities Minister, Jake Berry.

500 new businesses supporting 5,500+ plus jobs have been created thanks to the government's [Coastal Communities Fund](#).

The opening of the next £40 million round of applications was announced by Coastal Communities Minister, Jake Berry, while visiting Barrow-in-Furness to see first hand how the fund has delivered major economic benefits for the Cumbrian town and wider coastal area.

Coastal Communities Minister, Jake Berry, said:

I'm delighted to announce that applications are now open for the next round of the Coastal Communities Fund.

Coastal Communities up and down the country from Barrow-in-Furness to Brighton have been boosted by this funding which has spurred inward investment, sustainable growth, new jobs and exciting economic opportunities for local businesses.

By 2020, we'll have invested nearly a quarter of a billion pounds in our seaside areas, providing thousands of jobs, training places and opportunities along the Great British Coast.

The Coastal Communities Fund (CCF) supports the economic transformation of UK coastal communities by giving funding to create sustainable economic growth and jobs.

Since 2012, the government's CCF has awarded grants to 295 projects across the UK, totalling over £174 million. Analysis shows this has been money well spent, with every £1 invested having the potential to create an up to £8 boost to our coastal economies. Successful projects have included:

- Cornwall council receiving a £1.95 million grant in 2014 to repair and re-launch the Grade II Listed Art Deco 'Jubilee Pool' in Penzance to create an all year round visitor attraction sustaining existing jobs and creating new positions (including much needed apprenticeships in an area with higher than average youth unemployment).

- In January 2015, Blackpool city council received a £2 million CCF grant towards the “Lightpool” project to deliver a radical transformation of the iconic Blackpool Illuminations, creating a compelling new visitor experience and a major boost to the local economy. The project is forecast to have increased visitor numbers by 2.6 million.
- The Tate St Ives was awarded a £3.87 million grant in 2015 to refurbish and extend the Tate Gallery in St Ives. The new facilities include a new apse gallery connecting the existing gallery to the new extension; a new suite of learning and event spaces; increased capacity for visitors in the reception, cloakrooms, café, new exhibition space, staff accommodation and training space.
- Amble – the seafood town – Northumberland. Northumberland county council was awarded a £1.8 million CCF grant in 2014 to improve the economy of Amble through infrastructure works to transform the town into a visitor destination promoting seafood, attracting new visitors and creating jobs. The project has provided two new restaurants, improved facilities incorporating a Harbour Village with retail space, and enhanced access along the shore.

Barrow-in-Furness has also benefitted from multiple rounds of coastal communities funding which has completely revolutionised business support in the coastal area from north of Millom across the Furness peninsula to Grange.

This has included:

- £900,000 in CCF round 1 (2012) being granted to Furness Enterprise Limited to create an innovation network which seamlessly connects local businesses with each other to streamline their supply chains. The funds also supported marketing of key sites, formation of 70 new start-up businesses and help to SMEs in providing training opportunities for unemployed residents to gain the skills they need to find a permanent job.
- £865,000 in CCF round 3 (2015) to Furness Enterprise Limited to accelerate regeneration in Barrow and the surrounding areas by strengthening supply chains and transforming skills as well as attracting inward investment and helping to provide specialist businesses support to local companies to up-skill and grow.
- A pilot scale internship scheme placing young people in high tech firms. This led to the OGDEN Trust agreeing to fund 60 placements from 2018 to 2020.
- Participation in the Manufacturing Forum and revolutionary proposals for a pan-Northern supply chain initiative connecting Northern businesses with manufacturers and service providers
- A new Furness Energy Forum bringing local businesses together to capitalise on energy supplier opportunities
- £444,000 in CCF round 4 (2017) to Barrow and Furness Coastal Communities Team to transform visitor facilities on Walney Island and convert an old,

derelect built into a community run visitor hub.

Prospective applicants for round 5 of the Coastal Communities Fund can access the full guidance to submitting their application on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Funding for round 5 will cover the period 2019-20 to 2020-21 with funds becoming available from April 2019.

We are also looking to fund a small number of revenue projects which are 'ready to go' and can be fast tracked. Successful fast-track projects will be announced in summer 2018 and we will expect them to be able to start quickly.

Press release: Technology is helping to transform the way the UK delivers aid abroad

Entrepreneurs will explore how to use mobile technology, such as smartphones that give access to affordable and safe energy, to help tackle humanitarian challenges around the world, the International Development Secretary announced ahead of Mobile World Congress this week.

DFID is joining forces with leading mobile technology trade body the GSMA to launch Mobile for Humanitarian Innovation, a programme bringing the mobile industry and humanitarian community together to improve how we prepare and respond to emergency situations.

Speaking ahead of the congress in Barcelona, Ms Mordaunt said:

Technology and innovation have a huge role to play in improving the lives of millions of people in the developing world.

I want to harness the UK's renowned entrepreneurial spirit and use new technology to deliver smart solutions around the world on everything from health care to natural disasters. DFID's partnership with the GSMA is an exciting joint push to use mobile technology to boost our global humanitarian efforts.

Access to mobile networks can transform the way humanitarian help is delivered through access to information, services and connection to families. The GSMA have estimated that by 2025 there will be nine billion mobile connections globally, with 75 per cent coming through on smartphones.

Mobile for Humanitarian will find new ways of helping developing countries around the world on areas including mobile money, mobile-enabled energy,

climate resilience and food security.

Director General of the GSMA Mats Granryd said:

The GSMA is pleased to further its partnership with DFID to accelerate the delivery and impact of sustainable digital humanitarian assistance.

The scale and reach of mobile networks make them uniquely placed to help meet the challenges faced by humanitarian responders and affected populations. Together with DFID, we will build bridges between the mobile industry, other private sector partners and the humanitarian community to catalyse innovation and demonstrate the impact of digital humanitarian assistance.

Five ways technology and innovation funded by UK aid are improving people's lives around the world:

1. Rural Connectivity Project in Tanzania

A total of 1.6 billion people globally do not have access to 3G connectivity. The GSMA and DFID have worked with local network operators and government to facilitate a rural roaming agreement in Africa. The pilot in Tanzania explored how to reach unconnected citizens living in rural areas. Due to this partnership, and the new towers that were built, 70,000 people in Tanzania now have access to mobile internet, bringing education, health and financial services to previously unconnected communities.

2. 3D printing emergency supplies in Nepal

With support from DFID, Field Ready, a not-for-profit organisation which uses technology and design to transform the way humanitarian aid is delivered, is trialling 3D printing of life-saving and life-improving medical and other supplies in the field – such as umbilical cord clamps, wrist braces and water pipe components – so that vital equipment can be manufactured on demand, where and when it is needed. DFID funding has allowed them to test this approach in Haiti and Nepal, and they have also expanded their work to Syria and the recent response to Hurricanes Irma and Maria in the Caribbean.

3. Mobile technology helping women access essential maternal healthcare.

Tanzania remains one of the most dangerous places in the world to give birth and to be born, according to the high maternal, infant and childhood death rates. UK aid is funding a programme forging stronger links between the mobile and healthcare industries. Healthy Pregnancy, Healthy Baby is a free text message service in Swahili for pregnant women, mothers with newborns up to 16 weeks old, as well as supporters of pregnant women and new mothers. Subscribers register for the text messaging service by indicating the woman's current week or month of pregnancy, or the age of the newborn baby. The messages cover a broad range of topics from prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV/AIDS, family planning, malaria prevention and postpartum

care. As of November last year, it has reached over 1.8 million users.

4. Mobile phones improving access to clean energy

Mobile-enabled solar technology is helping to keep families safe in Uganda. Many homes use kerosene for lighting, an unsafe and unhealthy way of using energy. The lack of clean affordable power limits development. UK aid has funded the development of a ready-pay power system which can be paid in instalments using mobile phones. The system uses solar power to charge mobile phones and power lights, radio and TV. 95 per cent of those lacking energy in their homes are covered by mobile access which means this solution helps them to unlock energy on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.

5. PayGo energy

Many households in Kenya cannot afford gas to cook because it comes in large, expensive canisters. The alternative, firewood, causes health issues from inhaling smoke. With the support of UK aid, PayGo has developed a meter that goes on top of a gas canister and, using mobile payment technology mPesa, users are supplied with a standard size canister and are able to buy small units of gas as and when they need it. The start-up business is based in Nairobi.

Notes to editors:

The GSMA represents the interests of mobile operators worldwide, uniting nearly 800 operators with more than 300 companies in the broader mobile ecosystem, including handset and device makers, software companies, equipment providers and internet companies, as well as organisations in adjacent industry sectors. The GSMA also produces industry-leading events such as Mobile World Congress, Mobile World Congress Shanghai, Mobile World Congress Americas and the Mobile 360 Series of conferences.

[News story: Education Secretary celebrates students in the North-East](#)

An inspirational pupil from the North-East has been awarded a prize for his success at school and contribution to the wider community by the Education Secretary Damian Hinds today (Monday 26 February).

An outstanding pupil who volunteers at a disability centre and helps pupils who speak English as an additional language has been awarded the Lord Glenamara Memorial Prize by Education Secretary Damian Hinds today (26 February).

Mohammed Dagher, student from Heaton Manor School in Newcastle-upon-Tyne,

received the Lord Glenamara Memorial Prize at a special event in London. He was recognised for his outstanding academic achievements and impressive voluntary work including providing one-to-one support and guidance to younger students who speak English as an additional language, producing an anti-bullying video and volunteering at a disability centre.

The annual prize – which is now in its sixth year – recognises sixth form students from the North-East who have excelled in their studies while making contributions to their school or wider community.

Academic standards are rising in England, with over 48,000 more pupils in the North-East in schools rated good or outstanding than in 2010 and 87 per cent of North-East schools given this rating at their last inspection.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

Congratulations to Mohammed and all this year's nominees. It is fantastic to see so many bright young people celebrated not only for their academic achievements but also for the work they are doing with their local community.

The Lord Glenamara Memorial Prize was created in memory of former MP for Newcastle Central, Ted Short. The winner and nine runners-up had the opportunity to tour the London School of Economics (LSE) campus, and met with the Education Secretary and Permanent Secretary of the Department for Education, Jonathan Slater.

2018 award winner Mohammed Dagher said:

To be even nominated for this highly regarded award was a blessing, but to come out as a winner is something I will be forever grateful for.

I'd like to thank my sixth form tutor and the sixth form team for having the faith in me by nominating me, and also my teachers, family and friends for keeping me motivated in order to aspire to achieve high results.

I hope to inspire younger students to contribute to their society, whilst also maintaining excellent grades. This in itself will be a great achievement for me.

Following the award, Mohammed will be undertaking a two day work experience programme at the Department for Education's offices in London.

The government has made clear its commitment to support schools and pupils in the north through the Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy, a £70 million fund to improve education.

Notes to editors:

The runners-up in alphabetical order:

1. Mohammed Baroudi, John Spence Community High School
2. Emily Brown, Conyers School
3. Kate Cowan, Carmel College
4. Niamh Hughes, St Thomas More Roman Catholic Academy
5. Devika Jayan, St Anthony's Girls' Catholic Academy
6. Sarah Knight, St Anthony's Girls' Catholic Academy
7. Emily McKerill, St Wilfrid's R.C. College
8. Emmet O'Leary, St Robert of Newminster Catholic School and Sixth Form College
9. Ellie Rylance, Grindon Hall Christian School

About the Lord Glenamara Prize

The prize is open to school pupils in years 11 and 12 across the North East of England who have shown:

- strong academic performance across a range of subjects; and
- a civic contribution, particularly volunteering personal time for activities such as:
 - mentoring younger pupils
 - helping with extracurricular events
 - working with a youth group or a charity outside school hours
 - an interest in government, education, history or public service.

[Speech: Matt Hancock's speech at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development Western Balkans Summit](#)

Your speech will follow the President of the EBRD and the Prime Minister of Bulgaria.

Good morning,

I'm delighted to be here with you today, in the heart of the City of London. What better place to talk about the wide ranging benefits of economic development and investment?

The EBRD was founded at the end of the Cold War, a war which for so many decades divided our people and put barriers in the way of economic growth.

The EBRD's mission – to use private investment to support the journey from conflict to peace and prosperity – is as relevant now as it was almost three

decades ago.

You have done vital work in the Western Balkans to develop the private sector, enhance energy security and sustainability, and support connectivity and regional integration. We fully support your work and want to see it continue.

The potential of the Western Balkans

I vividly remember watching scenes of conflict from the region when I was growing up.

And yet since then, the region has made what seemed like unimaginable progress towards a brighter and more peaceful future.

The Western Balkans is a land of real economic potential, with rates of economic growth exceeding that of the EU.

And that potential can be further unlocked through structural reforms, to create an environment where investment and enterprise can flourish.

This means building relationships with the private sector to increase market diversity and also developing the structures that sustain a thriving economy.

But most of all it means co-operation. And that is why we are all here today.

It is fantastic to see every Western Balkans leader here in this room. For it is your political leadership that needs to drive this agenda forward to attract investors like those in the audience today. And we will be with you every step of the way as you do this.

International co-operation

As the Prime Minister said in Munich this month, the UK is unconditionally committed to peace, security and prosperity in Europe after we leave the EU.

And this is just as true in the Western Balkans. We have a longstanding and enduring commitment to the security, stability and prosperity of the region, and this will never change.

We are working with governments from all six Western Balkans countries to improve the rule of law; promote economic governance and address corruption.

And we are matching these bilateral efforts with multilateral efforts alongside our international partners.

Just look at the activity that is planned this year.

There's the European Commission's Western Balkans Strategy, the Sofia summit in May and our own Western Balkans Summit, hosted in London, in July.

We want this to build on the progress forged at previous "Berlin Process" Summits.

It will focus on security cooperation...

On tackling common threats that deter investment, like corruption and organised crime.

And crucially, on supporting economic stability and interconnectivity and taking steps to improve the business environment.

The power of digital

There is one theme that strikes a particular chord with me. Digital is a key part of my portfolio as Secretary of State at DCMS and I am a huge believer in the transformational power of new technology.

So I am thrilled that one of the themes of our Summit will be a focus on young people and especially giving them the digital skills they need to flourish.

The British Council, supported by the UK Government, has already been working with young people across the Western Balkans to make this happen.

The 21st Century Schools programme is helping young people in the region to learn about coding and other digital skills.

Whilst the Digital Cities programme has been connecting cities in the UK and Western Balkans to develop digital policies and strategies.

I welcomed some of the participants to Westminster last month and it was fantastic to see how they were energised by the connections they had made and the ideas they had exchanged.

The digital economy presents huge opportunities for the Western Balkans.

We've already seen the seismic effect it can have in other parts of Europe. Estonia is a country of just over a million people, but through its relentless focus on digital skills and innovation, it is now one of the world's leading tech nations.

Digital transformation, when done correctly, can make societies more open, more prosperous and can foster the development of civil society.

But digital investment will only go where the conditions are right. With your large young population and impressive growth, you have a real opportunity to build something special.

But to seize this opportunity you will need to build confidence; investors will look to you to improve the business environment, boost the private sector and deal with their concerns about corruption and the rule of law.

Digital has incredible potential to support you in your reform efforts in the Western Balkans.

That is why digital will be an important part of July's summit, and I hope it

will provide the foundations for the next phase of progress in the region.

Conclusion

If I leave you with one message today it would be this; we have a shared ambition for a brighter and more prosperous Western Balkans.

To all the investors here today; thank you for your vote of confidence in the region.

And to all the leaders here today; you have a great opportunity ahead to drive lasting change that will shape your nations for decades to come.

And you will have our support as you do so.

Thank you very much and enjoy the rest of the day.