

37th Universal Periodic Review: UK statement on Australia



Thank you.

The United Kingdom welcomes Australia's long-standing commitment to promoting and protecting human rights. The UK welcomes the positive steps taken by the Australian Government to tackle modern slavery, and we commend Australia's progress on human rights issues since its last review and for its ongoing consultation with civil society in this process.

We recommend Australia:

Thank you.

Published 20 January 2021

Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Austria and UK Permanent Representative to the UN in Vienna: Lindsay Skoll

Press release

Lindsay Skoll CMG has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to Austria and UK Permanent Representative to the UN in Vienna in succession to Mr Leigh Turner.



Ms Lindsay Skoll CMG has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of Austria and United Kingdom Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Vienna in succession to Mr Leigh Turner CMG who will be retiring from the Diplomatic Service. Ms Skoll will take up her appointment during September 2021.

Full name: Lindsay Samantha Skoll

Married to: Richard Skoll

Children: three

Dates	Role
2021	Full-time Language Training (German)
2018 to 2020	Moscow, Minister and Deputy Head of Mission
2017	Full-time Language Training (Russian)
2016	FCO, Head, Zika Virus Crisis Response
2012 to 2015	Victoria, British High Commissioner
2010 to 2012	FCO, Head of Climate, and Deputy Head Climate Change and Energy Department
2010	FCO, Senior Policy Secretary to the Gulf and UAE Initiatives, Middle East North Africa Directorate
2007 to 2009	Maternity Leave and Special Unpaid Leave

Dates	Role
2006 to 2007	Cabinet Office, Head, North East Asia Policy
2004 to 2006	Pyongyang, Deputy Head of Mission and later Chargé d’Affaires a.i.
2003 to 2004	Cabinet Office, Joint Assessments Staff
2002	Full-time Language Training (Japanese)
2001 to 2002	FCO, Head – Korea and Mongolia Section, North East Asia Pacific Department
1999 to 2001	FCO, Head – VIP and State Visits Section, Conference and Visits Group, Protocol Directorate
1997 to 1998	FCO, Media Services Officer for Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), EU Presidency and G8
1996 to 1997	FCO, Information and Visits Officer, Information Department

Published 20 January 2021

Overspeed through emergency speed restriction near Beattock

News story

Overspeed through emergency speed restriction near Beattock, Dumfries and Galloway, 20 December 2020.



CCTV image from the train showing the start of the emergency speed restriction (courtesy of Avanti West Coast)

At around 12:25 hrs on 20 December 2020, a passenger train travelling between Glasgow Central and London Euston entered a 5 mph (8 km/h) emergency speed restriction, near Beattock, at about 45 mph (72 km/h). The speed restriction was in place because of the earlier failure of an embankment. There were no adverse consequences as a result of the overspeed.

We have undertaken a [preliminary examination](#) into the circumstances surrounding this incident. Having assessed the evidence which has been gathered to date, we have decided to publish a [safety digest](#).

The safety digest will be made available on our website in the next few weeks.

Published 20 January 2021

BN(0) Visa Route – response to misleading claims

This is the second article produced by the British Embassy that refutes inaccurate public statements on Hong Kong-related topics. Please see the first article [here](#).

On 22 July 2020, the Home Secretary announced a bespoke immigration route for eligible BN(0)s from Hong Kong. The Hong Kong BN(0) Visa will allow BN(0)s and their dependants to stay in the UK for up to five years, with the right to work and study. In UK immigration jargon, this is known as ‘leave to remain’, the scheme will open to applicants on 31 January, 2021.

The UK Government’s decision to introduce the Hong Kong BN(0) Visa follows the imposition of the National Security Law (NSL) on Hong Kong by the Chinese Government in June 2020, in a clear breach of the Joint Declaration. Both the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary made it clear on numerous occasions that if China breached Hong Kong’s high degree of autonomy the UK would respond by putting in place new visa arrangements.

Claim – The Joint Declaration provides no right or entitlement for the UK to interfere in Hong Kong beyond handover in 1997.

The Joint Declaration contains not a single word or article that confers any responsibility on the UK over Hong Kong after 1997. The UK has no sovereignty, jurisdiction or right of supervision over Hong Kong. So there is no “commitment to the people of Hong Kong” on the UK side.

23 October 2020 <http://www.fmco-prc.gov.hk/eng/gsxw/t1826190.htm>

Response

The UK accepts without equivocation Chinese sovereignty of Hong Kong and does not support or encourage independence. However, the Joint Declaration remains a legally binding international agreement.

In 1984 China made a legally binding commitment to the UK to ensure the rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong, maintain Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy, and leave its lifestyle, social and economic systems unchanged for 50 years from 1997. The UK has the right under the Joint Declaration to hold China to this commitment.

Claim – The UK's Hong Kong BN(0) Visa scheme is a breach of the Joint Declaration

The UK is “openly breaching its commitments and international law”. 23 July, 2020 [MFA spokesperson Wang Wenbin](#)

“The British side broke its commitments first”. 23 October, 2020 [MFA spokesperson Zhao Lijian](#)

Response

The UK has consistently fulfilled all of its obligations under the Joint Declaration. The Joint Declaration makes no mention of BN(0)s. The UK memorandum connected to the Joint Declaration is clear that BN(0) status does not confer the right of abode in the UK – that remains the case.

Claim – The Chinese may withdraw recognition of BN(0) passports

As the British side broke its commitment first, the Chinese side will consider withdrawing recognition of the BN(0) passport as valid travel documents. 23 October, 2020 [MFA spokesperson Zhao Lijian](#)

Response

The Chinese and British Governments exchanged memoranda of understanding attached to the Joint Declaration in 1984. The Chinese Government committed to “permit Chinese nationals in Hong Kong who were previously called ‘British Dependent Territories Citizens’ to use travel documents issued by the Government of the United Kingdom for the purpose of travelling to other states and regions”. Withdrawing recognition of BN(0) passports would be in direct contravention of this commitment by the Chinese Government.

Claim – The UK is manipulating international law

The UK has manipulated the rights and status of BN(0) passport holders, openly breaching its commitments and international law. 23 July, [2020 MFA spokesperson Wang Wenbin](#)

Response

The UK has amended its own immigration rules to grant Hong Kong BN(0) Visa holders limited leave to remain in the UK. Hong Kong BN(0) status holders remain subject to immigration controls, and as such do not have the right of abode.

The limited leave to remain provides the right to work or study in the UK for

those in Hong Kong who choose to retain their historic ties to the UK by taking up their BN(0) entitlement. Other than these changes, the UK has in no way altered, amended, enhanced or diminished the rights or status of BN(0) passport holders.

- A BN(0) passport does not automatically allow the holder to permanently reside in the UK;
- A BN(0) passport does not confer UK citizenship;
- A BN(0) passport holder has no recourse to public funds or government benefits;
- A BN(0) passport cannot be passed on to family members or children;
- The BN(0) scheme remains closed to new applicants since 1997.

These facts remain unchanged. The UK is acting entirely in accordance with international law.

Claim – The UK is offering residency to Hong Kong citizens

“The UK has now, in total disregard of the strong opposition of the Chinese side, offered a route for BNO passport holders to the right of abode” 23 July, 2020 [Chinese Embassy in UK](#)

Response

The UK’s immigration policy is transparent and consistent. There has been no change in the right of abode conferred on BN(0) passport holders. The new route for BN(0)soffers no automatic right to reside in the UK and holders will be subject to the same application processes for permanent residency which have always applied. The BN(0) Visa offers limited leave to remain in the UK for up to five years. Chinese mainland citizens – or citizens of any other country for that matter – who have spent 5 years continuously resident in the UK are equally entitled to apply for “settled status” after this period.

Claim – The UK is offering citizenship to Hong Kong citizens

“The UK is offering a route to BNO passport holders for citizenship in the UK” 23 July, 2020 [Chinese Embassy in UK](#)

Response

A BN(0) passport does not provide UK citizenship and there has been no change to the status of Hong Kong-based holders of a BNO passport in this regard. The pathway to UK citizenship is a clear and transparent process to which anyone – including Chinese nationals – may apply.

UK House Price Index for November 2020

The November data shows:

- on average, house prices have risen 1.2% since October 2020
- there has been an annual price rise of 7.6% which makes the average property in the UK valued at £249,633

England

In England, the November data shows on average, house prices have risen by 1.2% since October 2020. The annual price rise of 7.6% takes the average property value to £266,742.

The regional data for England indicates that:

- London experienced the greatest monthly price rise, up by 4%
- the East of England saw the lowest monthly price growth, with a fall of -0.3%
- London and Yorkshire and the Humber experienced the greatest annual price rise, up by 9.7%
- the East of England saw the lowest annual price growth, with a rise of 4.8%

Price change by region for England

Region	Average price November 2020	Annual change % since November 2019	Monthly change % since October 2020
East Midlands	£208,662	7.1	0.6
East of England	£302,624	4.8	-0.3
London	£513,997	9.7	4.0
North East	£140,248	8.3	2.6
North West	£180,280	8.5	0.2
South East	£342,271	6.2	1.2
South West	£278,391	8.5	1.1
West Midlands	£213,974	6.9	1.0
Yorkshire and the Humber	£180,856	9.7	1.9

Repossession sales by volume for England

The lowest number of repossession sales in September 2020 was in the East of England.

The highest number of repossession sales in September 2020 was in the North East.

Repossession sales	September 2020
East Midlands	22
East of England	7
London	23
North East	60
North West	66
South East	36
South West	14
West Midlands	20
Yorkshire and the Humber	48
England	296

Average price by property type for England

Property type	November 2020	November 2019	Difference %
Detached	£409,644	£377,293	8.6
Semi-detached	£251,846	£234,008	7.6
Terraced	£217,744	£201,028	8.3
Flat/maisonette	£233,614	£222,243	5.1
All	£266,742	£247,867	7.6

Funding and buyer status for England

Transaction type	Average price November 2020	Annual price change % since November 2019	Monthly price change % since October 2020
Cash	£250,255	7.3	1.1
Mortgage	£274,999	7.8	1.3
First-time buyer	£222,334	7.2	1.2
Former owner occupier	£304,659	8.1	1.2

Building status for England

Building status*	Average price September 2020	Annual price change % since September 2019	Monthly price change % since August 2020
New build	£323,994	4.9	-0.7
Existing resold property	£256,239	4.3	1.3

*Figures for the two most recent months are not being published because there are not enough new build transactions to give a meaningful result.

London

London shows, on average, house prices rose by 4.0% since October 2020. An annual price rise of 9.7% takes the average property value to £513,997.

Average price by property type for London

Property type	November 2020	November 2019	Difference %
Detached	£982,085	£904,492	8.6
Semi-detached	£636,993	£580,116	9.8
Terraced	£548,982	£495,186	10.9
Flat/maisonette	£442,304	£405,653	9.0
All	£513,997	£468,757	9.7

Funding and buyer status for London

Transaction type	Average price November 2020	Annual price change % since November 2019	Monthly price change % since October 2020
Cash	£539,792	10.5	5.4
Mortgage	£506,203	9.4	3.6
First-time buyer	£445,945	9.3	3.8
Former owner occupier	£586,662	10.1	4.2

Building status for London

Building status*	Average price September 2020	Annual price change % since September 2019	Monthly price change % since August 2020
New build	£507,961	2.0	-0.9
Existing resold property	£496,541	4.5	1.4

*Figures for the two most recent months are not being published because there are not enough new build transactions to give a meaningful result.

Wales

Wales shows, on average, house prices have risen 2.0% since October 2020. An annual price rise of 7.0% takes the average property value to £180,229.

There were 36 repossession sales for Wales in September 2020.

Average price by property type for Wales

Property type	November 2020	November 2019	Difference %
Detached	£273,737	£254,121	7.7
Semi-detached	£174,223	£163,573	6.5
Terraced	£140,917	£130,664	7.8
Flat/maisonette	£118,998	£116,734	1.9
All	£180,229	£168,516	7.0

Funding and buyer status for Wales

Transaction type	Average price November 2020	Annual price change % since November 2019	Monthly price change % since October 2020
Cash	£175,123	7.0	2.1
Mortgage	£183,289	7.0	1.9
First-time buyer	£155,270	6.7	2.0
Former owner occupier	£209,468	7.2	1.9

Building status for Wales

Building status*	Average price September 2020	Annual price change % since September 2019	Monthly price change % since August 2020
New build	£227,409	4.7	-3.7
Existing resold property	£167,794	4.0	-1.8

*Figures for the two most recent months are not being published because there are not enough new build transactions to give a meaningful result.

[Access the full UK HPI](#)

Google Chrome is blocking downloads of our UK HPI data files (Chrome 88 onwards). Please use another internet browser while we resolve this issue. We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

The UK HPI is based on completed housing transactions. Typically, a house purchase can take 6 to 8 weeks to reach completion. The price data feeding into the November 2020 UK HPI will mainly reflect those agreements that occurred after the government measures to reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) took hold.

UK house prices

UK house prices increased by 7.6% in the year to November 2020, up from 5.9% in October 2020. On a non-seasonally adjusted basis, average house prices in the UK increased by 1.2% between October and November 2020, compared with a fall of 0.4% during the same period a year earlier (October and November 2019).

The UK Property Transactions Statistics showed that in November 2020, on a seasonally adjusted basis, the estimated number of transactions of residential properties with a value of £40,000 or greater was 115,190. This is 19.3% higher than a year ago. Between October and November 2020, UK transactions increased by 8.6% on a seasonally adjusted basis.

House price growth was strongest in Yorkshire and the Humber and London where

prices increased by 9.7% in the year to November 2020. The lowest annual growth was in the East of England, where prices increased by 4.8% in the year to November 2020, up from 4.3% in the year to October 2020.

See the [economic statement](#).

Background

1. The UK House Price Index (HPI) is published on the second or third Wednesday of each month with Northern Ireland figures updated quarterly. The December 2020 UK HPI will be published at 9.30am on Wednesday 17 February 2021. See [calendar of release dates](#).
2. We have made some changes to improve the accuracy of the UK HPI. We are not publishing average price and percentage change for new builds and existing resold property as done previously because there are not currently enough new build transactions to provide a reliable result. This means that in this month's UK HPI reports, new builds and existing resold property are reported in line with the sales volumes currently available.
3. The UK HPI revision period has been extended to 13 months, following a review of the revision policy (see [calculating the UK HPI](#) section 4.4). This ensures the data used is more comprehensive.
4. Sales volume data is also available by property status (new build and existing property) and funding status (cash and mortgage) in our [downloadable data tables](#). Transactions involving the creation of a new register, such as new builds, are more complex and require more time to process. Read [revisions to the UK HPI data](#).
5. Revision tables have been introduced for England and Wales within the downloadable data. Tables will be available in csv format. See [about the UK HPI](#) for more information.
6. Data for the UK HPI is provided by HM Land Registry, Registers of Scotland, Land & Property Services/Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and the Valuation Office Agency.
7. The UK HPI is calculated by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Land & Property Services/Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. It applies a hedonic regression model that uses the various sources of data on property price, in particular HM Land Registry's Price Paid Dataset, and attributes to produce estimates of the change in house prices each month. Find out more about the methodology used from the [ONS](#) and [Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency](#).

8. The [UK Property Transaction statistics](#) are taken from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) monthly estimates of the number of residential and non-residential property transactions in the UK and its constituent countries. The number of property transactions in the UK is highly seasonal, with more activity in the summer months and less in the winter. This regular annual pattern can sometimes mask the underlying movements and trends in the data series so HMRC also presents the UK aggregate transaction figures on a seasonally adjusted basis. Adjustments are made for both the time of year and the construction of the calendar, including corrections for the position of Easter and the number of trading days in a particular month.
9. UK HPI seasonally adjusted series are calculated at regional and national levels only. See [data tables](#).
10. The first estimate for new build average price (July 2016 report) was based on a small sample which can cause volatility. A three-month moving average has been applied to the latest estimate to remove some of this volatility.
11. The UK HPI reflects the final transaction price for sales of residential property. Using the geometric mean, it covers purchases at market value for owner-occupation and buy-to-let, excluding those purchases not at market value (such as re-mortgages), where the 'price' represents a valuation.
12. Information on residential property transactions for England and Wales, collected as part of the official registration process, is provided by HM Land Registry for properties that are sold for full market value.
13. The HM Land Registry dataset contains the sale price of the property, the date when the sale was completed, full address details, the type of property (detached, semi-detached, terraced or flat), if it is a newly built property or an established residential building and a variable to indicate if the property has been purchased as a financed transaction (using a mortgage) or as a non-financed transaction (cash purchase).
14. Repossession sales data is based on the number of transactions lodged with HM Land Registry by lenders exercising their power of sale.
15. For England, this is shown as volumes of repossession sales recorded by Government Office Region. For Wales, there is a headline figure for the number of repossession sales recorded in Wales.
16. The data can be downloaded as a .csv file. Repossession sales data prior

to July 2016 is not available. Find out more information about [repossession sales](#).

17. Background tables of the raw and cleansed aggregated data, in Excel and CSV formats, are also published monthly although Northern Ireland is on a quarterly basis. They are available for free use and re-use under the Open Government Licence.
18. HM Land Registry's mission is to guarantee and protect property rights in England and Wales.
19. HM Land Registry is a government department created in 1862. Its ambition is to become the world's leading land registry for speed, simplicity and an open approach to data.
20. HM Land Registry safeguards land and property ownership worth in excess of £7 trillion, including over £1 trillion of mortgages. The Land Register contains more than 25 million titles showing evidence of ownership for some 87% of the land mass of England and Wales.
21. For further information about HM Land Registry visit www.gov.uk/land-registry.
22. Follow us on [Twitter](#), our [blog](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).