

'Right to Regenerate' to turn derelict buildings into homes and community assets

- New Right to Regenerate will enable public to require councils and public sector to sell unused land and assets
- Proposals for public to have first right of refusal to purchase underused land in England
- Land to be sold by default, unless compelling reason not to
- Making it simpler, quicker and easier for public to transform vacant land and derelict buildings into homes, businesses or community spaces

The public will be able to convert vacant plots of land and derelict buildings into new homes or community spaces, under plans announced today (16 January 2021) by the Housing Secretary, Robert Jenrick MP.

The 'Right to Regenerate' proposals would make it easier to challenge councils and other public organisations to release land for redevelopment – helping communities make better use of public land and give a new lease of life to unloved buildings.

Underused public land could be sold to individuals or communities by default, unless there is a compelling reason the owner should hold onto it.

Under the proposals, public bodies would need to have clear plans for land in the near future, even if only a temporary use before later development – if the land is kept for too long without being used, they would be required to sell it.

These measures provide an opportunity for the public and local communities to redevelop and transform eyesores, taking control of unused local land or buildings and transforming them into something they want in their area.

This builds on the government's drive to encourage development on brownfield land and more beautiful buildings that are in line with local preferences.

The strengthened rights would also apply to unused publicly owned social housing and garages providing opportunities to transform the local housing stock.

The latest figures show there were over 25,000 vacant council owned homes and according to recent FOI data over 100,000 empty council-owned garages last year.

The new process will be fast and simple, and the Secretary of State will act as an arbiter to ensure fairness and speedy outcomes in all cases.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Right to Regenerate is the simple way to turn public land into public good, with land sold by default, unless there is a very compelling reason not to do so.

We are cutting through red tape so that communities can make better use of available land and derelict buildings, which means more new homes, businesses and community assets.

Millions of people will now be able to buy that empty property, unused garage or parcel of land and turn it into something good for them and their community.

Tom Chance, Chief Executive of the National Community Land Trust Network, said:

We welcome these plans that could help communities to turn abandoned and neglected land and buildings into fantastic community assets.

There are hundreds of community land trusts across the country wanting to build much needed affordable housing, but getting hold of land at an affordable price is a huge barrier.

The potential for communities to be given first right of refusal could be a gamechanger. We encourage everyone to read through the proposals and respond to the consultation.

Ian Harvey, Executive Director of Civic Voice said:

Across the country, communities see land that remains empty and wonder why. They imagine how it could be used for communities – from green space, to housing, but when they enquire about enhancing the space it's never clear who owns it.

If a community has a viable use for this land, they must be given the opportunity to take these ideas forward.

The 'Right to Regenerate' is a great-step forward to build on previous attempts at doing this and we believe it will increase the chance for communities to come together to bring vacant land into the heart of the community. We look forward to working with communities on this latest community right.

In practice this could mean if a member of the public had an unused plot of land at the back of their house owned by the council, they could use the new Right to Regenerate.

If the land was determined to be underused with no plans to bring it into use, it would be sold and the person making the request could have first

right of refusal to purchase – enabling them to extend their garden, or for the community to come together to use the land in a beneficial way.

In 1980, Michael Heseltine introduced powers that form part of the current 'Right to Contest' – giving the public the power to request the sale of underused land owned by public bodies in England, and these were extended through the Community Right to Reclaim Land, in 2011.

However, since the 2014 creation of the Right to Contest, only 192 requests have been made under this power and only one has been granted, having usually been refused because the owner had future plans for the land, which meant some sites were left unused for years. Today's proposals will revitalise and strengthen the right to encourage more successful requests.

Today's announcement also builds on measures the government is taking to regenerate urban areas across England, including encouraging councils in urban areas to plan for more homes and make the most of brownfield land.

The [consultation](#) opens today and closes on 13 March.

Further proposals in the new Right to Regenerate consultation also include:

- Publishing a definition of unused or underused land, helping to guide and encourage the public to make requests.
- Extending the range of public bodies whose land is covered by the right to include town and parish councils.
- Giving the requester the exclusive right to buy the land at market value for a period of time (a 'right of first refusal'). Under the current Right to Contest, there is no expectation that a requester would have a right of first refusal rather than the land being placed on the open market, giving people less incentive to make a request.
- The consultation on the Right to Regenerate applies to land owned by public bodies in England.
- The Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 empowers the Secretary of State to direct a body within a specific list of bodies, set out in Schedule 16 to that Act, to take steps to dispose of their interest in that land where that land is not being used or not being sufficiently used. This policy has two strands. Strand 1 covers central government bodies on a voluntary, non-statutory basis, and is administered by the Cabinet Office. Strand 2 covers those public bodies set out in Schedule 16 of the 1980 Act and is administered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This consultation relates to Strand 2.
- In addition to making it easier to make a request for land to be sold,

the consultation proposes measures to improve transparency and assisting with record-keeping by requiring councils to follow publicity measures including:

- submitting quarterly reports on the number of preliminary enquiries made
- physical and electronic notices to be displayed where a request has been made to release a site
- all requests, together with their reasoning and outcomes, to be published on councils' websites

Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce meeting, 14 January 2021

News story

Joint statement on progress made by the taskforce at its meeting on 14 January 2021.



The eleventh meeting of the Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce was held yesterday, 14 January 2021.

It was chaired by Transport Minister, Baroness Vere. Attendees included the Project Director Dana Skelley plus representatives from the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, the Greater London Authority, Transport for London (TfL), and the Port of London Authority.

Dana Skelley, speaking on behalf of the Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce, said:

The Taskforce held its first meeting of the New Year yesterday and reiterated its commitment to enabling Londoners to cross the river as soon as safely possible.

We were pleased to hear from the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham that they have commissioned Foster & Partners and COWI to conduct a full feasibility study into their proposal for a temporary bridge as presented at the previous Taskforce meeting; we look forward to receiving the completion of this study in due course.

We look forward to discussions with LBHF's engineers Mott MacDonald and their risk consultants about their detailed analysis of the bridge's north-east pedestal, the condition of which triggered closure of the bridge last year, and about the case for continued safe operation (CCSO). It was noted that the advice given to LBHF did not recommend reopening at this time. It is recognised that the precise condition of the two western pedestals will not be known until the blast cleaning works have been carried out. This is due to be completed by April and will enable us to identify any hidden fractures in the pedestals.

The Taskforce also heard the latest from TfL regarding the procurement for the temporary ferry service, which is well underway. We continue to expect the service to commence in the spring, although the precise operational timings will be dependent on the programme put forward by the winning bidder.

Lastly, we were pleased to hear that river users have been able to schedule and undertake controlled transits under the bridge on Sundays, when engineers are not working on the bridge.

The Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce was set up by the Department for Transport in September 2020 to work towards safely reopening the Hammersmith Bridge. The taskforce is chaired by Baroness Vere and includes representatives from TfL, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Network Rail, the Greater London Authority and the Port of London Authority.

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[All UK travel corridors temporarily](#)

suspended to protect against new international variants

- emergency measures introduced at the border to be in place for at least one month in order to protect the UK against new variants
- all international arrivals to the UK from any country (including British and Irish Nationals) must now take a pre-departure test and self-isolate for 10 days
- passengers must continue to fill in a Passenger Locator Form and have a negative test before travelling to the UK or could face a £500 fine for each

The government has today (15 January 2021) announced emergency border measures to prevent the spread of concerning new variants of coronavirus (COVID-19) into the UK, such as those first identified in Brazil and South America, and to protect us against the risk of as yet unidentified new strains.

From Monday 18 January at 4am, all [travel corridors](#) with the UK will be suspended – meaning that all international arrivals who have departed from or transited through any country outside the Common Travel Area in the previous 10 days will be required to both take a pre-departure test, and self-isolate immediately for 10 days on arrival. This includes British and Irish nationals.

This urgent action is in response to increasing concern over the transmissibility and virulence of new strains evolving internationally. It will also ensure that the government is able to protect the progress being made on the country's vaccination programme.

This move will be supported by increased enforcement, both at the border and across the UK, with Border Force increasing the number of spot checks on passengers that have entered the country.

International travel corridors have been in place since July 2020 for countries and territories where critical analysis suggests the risk of COVID-19 can be mitigated.

However, the level of risk associated with the emergence of new variants globally has now increased, requiring more stringent measures to block all potential avenues through which new strains of the virus could enter the UK while we consider how best to respond.

The new measures will be reviewed on Monday 15 February – while further work takes place to manage the threat posed by coronavirus variants.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

We are operating in a completely new environment in our fight against COVID-19, with several worrying new strains of the virus emerging across the globe.

Now more than ever, as we make strides vaccinating people up and down the country, we need to take advantage of all measures available to us – and these robust emergency precautions will help us protect the nation to ensure we continue to make progress.

As has been the case throughout the pandemic – the government is moving quickly in response to the latest scientific evidence, and we will continue to take swift action in banning travel from countries where new strains are formally identified, as we have done previously.

These measures are the right course of action now, to safeguard public health and prevent new strains of the virus from worsening the existing picture within the UK.

National restrictions for England introduced on 6 January 2021 remain in place, meaning that everyone must stay at home unless travelling for a very limited set of reasons.

The closure of all the UK travel corridors will ensure that for those returning from trips that fall into this limited set of exemptions, and for passengers arriving to the UK from abroad, there is a clear and robust set of measures to prevent cases of coronavirus entering the country.

Those in breach of the lockdown rules face penalties starting at £200, rising to a maximum of £6,400.

A number of exemptions to the travel corridor policy – including the need to travel for business – will be suspended from 4am on Monday 18th January, unless they are vital to maintaining the flow of critical goods, protecting essential services, protecting national security or facilitating government work.

A full list of exemptions will be available on GOV.UK shortly.

The government's [Test to Release scheme](#) will remain in place, giving passengers the option to shorten the mandatory self-isolation period to as little as 5 days.

However, they will still need to adhere to national restrictions in place upon release from self-isolation.

CST response to Scottish Government request for additional funding

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Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 15 January 2021

Good afternoon.

As you know, this country is engaged in the biggest and fastest vaccination programme in our history, and the chances are that you know someone personally who has already received a vaccine.

But it would be fatal if this sense of progress were now to breed any kind of complacency because the pressures on our NHS are extraordinary.

On Tuesday we saw 4,134 new admissions to hospital on a single day, the highest at any point in this pandemic.

There are now more than 37,000 Covid patients in hospital across the UK and, in spite of all the efforts of our doctors and nurses and our medical staff, we are now seeing cancer treatments sadly postponed, ambulances queuing, and intensive care units spilling over into adjacent wards.

And with 55,761 positive cases since yesterday and, very sadly, 1,280 deaths, this is not the time for the slightest relaxation of our national resolve and our individual efforts.

So please stay at home, please protect the NHS and save lives.

And please remember that this disease can be passed on not just by standing too near someone in a supermarket queue, but also by handling something touched by an infected person.

And remember also that 1 in 3 people with Covid have no symptoms, and that is why that original message of hands, face and space, washing your hands, is as important now as it has ever been.

And it is precisely because we have the hope of that vaccine and the risk of new strains coming from overseas that we must take additional steps now to stop those strains from entering the country.

So, yesterday we announced that we are banning flights from South America and Portugal.

And, to protect us against the risk of as yet unidentified new strains, we will also temporarily close all travel corridors from 0400 on Monday.

Following conversations with the devolved administrations, we will act together so that this applies across the whole of UK

This means that if you come to this country, you must have proof of a negative Covid test that you have taken in the 72 hours before leaving and you must have filled in your Passenger Locator Form, and your airline will ask for proof of both before you take off.

You may also be checked when you land and face substantial fines for refusing to comply

And, upon arrival, you must then quarantine for ten days – not leaving your home for any reason at all, or take another test on day 5 and wait for proof of another negative result.

And we will be stepping up our enforcement – both at the border and in-country.

And it is vital to take these extra measures now when day by day, hour by hour, we are making such strides in protecting the population.

We have now vaccinated over 3.2 million people across the UK, doubling the numbers of last week.

That's 2.8 million in England, 225,000 in Scotland, 126,000 in Wales and 115,000 in Northern Ireland.

Yesterday alone, we vaccinated around a quarter of a million people in England, and that is still far more than any other country in Europe.

And with almost 45 per cent of our over 80s now vaccinated and almost 40 per cent of care home residents, we are steadily protecting those most at risk.

And I pay particular tribute to the vaccination efforts going on in Cokermouth, in Cumbria, Yateley and Cheltenham, where they have vaccinated around 90 per cent of their over-80s in their communities. And I'll also pay tribute to North West Lincolnshire, to Sunderland and Morecambe Bay, where vaccination teams have protected over 80 per cent of their care home residents.

And it's thanks to that amazing constellation of the vaccination teams: doctors and nurses

armed forces, local authorities, pharmacies and volunteers that we are steadily building up that immunity, that protection for the vulnerable, for the NHS and for us all.

So, when the call comes, please do get a job and, in the meantime, stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.