

Home building stats show sector is bouncing back

Press release

Support for all of those involved in the housing market and construction industry has led to an increase in the number of completed homes.



- Stats released today show the number of new homes developers have started building have more than doubled compared to the previous quarter
- Number of completed homes almost tripled compared to previous quarter
- Decisive government action to support the housing and construction industries to reopen safely leads to housing industry bouncing back

Support for all of those involved in the housing market, from renters and buyers to builders, and measures to help the construction industry to work safely during the pandemic, has led to an increase in the number of completed homes, new housebuilding figures published today (14 January 2021) show.

The [official statistics](#) show 35,710 homes were started in July to September 2020 – a 111% increase when compared to the previous quarter – while, 45,000 homes were completed in the same period, representing a 185% increase on the previous quarter.

Today's figures reflect the housing and construction industry's resilience and measures they have taken to keep building sites open, in line with public health advice.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Today's figures show that the number of new homes developers have started building have more than doubled compared to the previous quarter and the number of completed homes has almost tripled. This reflects the government's commitment throughout the pandemic to support industry to enable construction sites to remain open and operate safely.

We extended planning permission deadlines and flexible working hours on sites so that builders, architects and developers have been able to continue working, while following public health advice. In turn this has protected millions of jobs, from builders, through to estate agents and carpenters.

The housing industry is key to our economic recovery, which is why we're investing £12 billion in affordable housing, providing £400 million to build more homes on brownfield land, and investing £7.1 billion for a new National Home Building Fund over the next 4 years, unlocking up to 860,000 homes.

The [statistics](#) out today show 35,710 dwellings were started in July to September 2020. This is a 111% increase when compared to previous quarter.

45,000 dwellings were completed in July to September 2020. This is a 185% increase when compared to previous quarter.

Recent government support for home building includes:

- Setting out an overhaul of the country's outdated planning system to deliver the high-quality, sustainable homes communities need. The proposed changes will be a boost to SME builders who will be key players in getting the country building on the scale needed to drive our economic recovery, while leading housebuilding that is beautiful and builds on local heritage and character. Recent studies show smaller firms feel the complexities of the planning process and its associated risks, delays and costs are the key challenges they face in homebuilding.
- We have set out an ambitious package of measures to ensure we build the right homes in the right places and level up opportunities across the country. This includes nearly £20 billion of investment in new housing as confirmed in the Spending Review, including over £12 billion of investment in affordable housing and our £7.1 billion National Home Building Fund.
- Our £400 million Brownfield Fund for 7 Mayoral Combined Authorities will deliver much-needed new homes on brownfield land – unlocking 26,000 high-quality homes.
- We have introduced a range of measures, such as allowing builders to seek more flexible construction site working hours with their local councils and extending certain planning permissions that would otherwise lapse, in order to keep the sector moving.
- We are also taking measures to support home buyers – for example we temporarily cut Stamp Duty Land Tax until the end of the financial year.

Published 14 January 2021

Environment Secretary's letter to the food and drink industry

To those who continue to feed the nation,

In light of the ongoing challenges we face as a country with Covid-19, I want to pay tribute, once again, to all of you working within our food and drink supply chains as you continue to feed the nation under such difficult circumstances. The country is grateful for all that you have done and continue to do.

I know it has been a difficult 12 months, and many of you will have had a tough Christmas period, unable to see your family and friends. Some of you tragically may also have lost loved ones or colleagues. For this reason, and at a critical time for our country, it is more important than ever that we all continue to play our part to ensure those working in roles throughout the entire food and drink supply chain, from farm to fork, feel safe.

Whilst the vast majority of the public are protecting our NHS and other key workers by following the guidance on social distancing and face coverings, there are some who are not following the rules in the way that they should be, despite the risk posed by this virus. This is entirely unacceptable and I understand the concerns you will have about this. When you go into the workplace, you have the right to feel safe and I am committed to making sure that you do. Everyone has a role to play to help limit the spread of the virus and protect one another and the Government will continue to make this clear to the public.

Food businesses have gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure workplaces are as Covid secure and as safe as possible, from managing capacity in shops, to encouraging customers to comply with regulations and guidance to keep us all safe. In the last few days, supermarkets have stepped up again, building on previous work, to further tighten their measures.

I am enormously proud of the work that you have done, and I want to thank each and every one of you. You have been, and continue to be, the hidden heroes of this pandemic.

George Eustice

OSCE Chairperson in Office, Minister

for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, H.E.

Ms. Ann Linde: UK response

I would like to warmly welcome Her Excellency Ms. Ann Linde to the Permanent Council and to her new position as OSCE Chairperson in Office. The UK looks forward to working with you and your excellent team here in Vienna and in Stockholm over the course of 2021. I would also like to welcome the new Secretary General and the new heads of the autonomous institutions.

Sweden is assuming this important leadership position at a critical time for Euro-Atlantic security. An ongoing pandemic, significant challenges to human rights and fundamental freedoms, and protracted conflicts form the backdrop to our security landscape. The UK is a firm supporter of the international system – with mounting challenges, we believe steadfastly in multilateralism and the importance of international organisations such as the OSCE. We agree that it is in our collective interest to work together in tackling common challenges. We need to ensure the multilateral system emerges from 2021 and the COVID-19 pandemic stronger. We thank Sweden for taking on this important role at this crucial time.

Your priorities as set out for the OSCE chime with the UK's – focus on defending the European security order, addressing protracted conflicts and enhancing democracy and gender equality. We agree on the importance of supporting the work of the OSCE's autonomous institutions, with their strong mandates and unique strengths, and that involving civil society organisations in our work helps us live up to our OSCE commitments.

And the beating heart of the OSCE is the collection of commitments and values all 57 participating States have freely signed up to, starting from the Helsinki Final Accord in 1975. Non use of force, sovereignty, territorial integrity and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms – these are at the core of these commitment, and are ultimately what this organisation is all about. We need to work together to uphold them. In this regard, the UK will be a firm supporter throughout your Chairpersonship in defending the values and rules that keep us safe.

On human rights, fundamental freedoms and the priority of enhancing democracy – the UK will continue to work to promote those rights and uphold these principles and commitments in the OSCE area. There are a number of places where they are currently denied and where there is significant backsliding. This year is a vital one to remind ourselves of our OSCE human dimension commitments. These include the holding of democratic elections which are periodic, genuine, free and fair. They include upholding the rule of law with independent judiciaries ruling on transparent laws where everyone is treated equally. And also include the full implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms such as the freedom from torture, the right to a fair trial, and the freedom of expression, where media freedom and the safety of journalists are crucial. We need to remind ourselves that the hard-won gains of past decades can never be taken for granted, anywhere. We look forward to

working with you, and the new heads of the autonomous institutions, on upholding these vital commitments.

We share your conviction that we must prioritise conflict resolution and agree with your assessment that the OSCE has many tools at its disposal to support these efforts.

The Trilateral Contact Group, skillfully chaired by Ambassador Grau, and the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission, under the dedicated leadership of Ambassador Cevik, have been vital and we continue to offer them our steadfast support in addressing the impacts of the conflict in and around Ukraine. Let us be clear – this is a conflict that Russia started and continues to fuel as part of their ongoing aggression against Ukraine, which remains one of the most serious security threats to the OSCE region. We will not stop calling on Russia to end its illegal annexation of Crimea and its destabilising activities in eastern Ukraine and return to the respect for OSCE principles and commitments.

Sadly, last year provided many sombre examples of how conflicts in the OSCE region continue to blight the lives of civilians. We were deeply saddened by the tragic loss of life during the escalation of military hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and gravely concerned at the continuing human rights violations and unacceptable restrictions on freedom of movement in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. All these situations make clear the urgent need to ensure respect for OSCE principles and commitments, as well as to further intensify the OSCE's vital conflict resolution work. As Sweden takes on this important task, you can rely on our firm support both for you and for all the OSCE's conflict resolution formats.

As Chair of the Security Committee in 2020, I was pleased that consensus was reached on a declaration underlining the importance of implementing OSCE commitments to tackle transnational organised crime. I and the UK stand ready to continue supporting your efforts to build on this priority topic in 2021, as well as on wider priorities such as cyber security.

We welcome your focus on comprehensive security. As host of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties next November, we recognise the importance of addressing the growing threat of long-term security challenges like climate change.

Your focus on gender equality and its importance is shared by the UK. We should be of no doubt that security – whether we are talking regional security, political security, economic security, environmental security, or human security – is enhanced by gender equality. Last year, 52 out of 57 participating States agreed to fully implement UNSCR 1325 in the OSCE area. This demonstrates the importance attached to the WPS agenda. We must do more to protect women and girls from all forms of violence, including in conflict and crisis situations. Initiatives such as the Protection Framework for women peacebuilders can help support this. And we look forward to working with you to advance this agenda.

Your Excellency – in concluding, we wish you and your team the very best in the important year ahead in the OSCE. Please be assured of the UK's support.

Mark Rouse appointed as Managing Director of Dounreay

Press release

Dounreay Site Restoration Limited (DSRL) has announced the appointment of Mark Rouse as its Managing Director.



Mark Rouse appointed as Managing Director of Dounreay

Mark took up the position of Managing Director in March 2020 but will now move from the current parent body organisation to Dounreay Site Restoration Limited to continue leading the business when it becomes an NDA subsidiary on 1 April 2021.

He is currently in his second spell in charge, having also been at the Caithness site from 2013-2015, before being appointed as President of Cavendish Nuclear Japan.

NDA Chief Executive, David Peattie, said:

I am delighted that Mark has been appointed to the role of Managing Director and will provide consistency and stability as Dounreay becomes an important and integrated part of the NDA family.

Mark is personally driven to ensure the continued safe decommissioning of the site, while working with the local community to create new and sustainable alternative employment beyond the current mission. Working very closely with the NDA team, Mark's focus is now on a safe and smooth transition of DSRL's ownership

from Cavendish Dounreay Partnership to the NDA in March.

Mark added:

It is a privilege to be asked to stay at the site and continue leading such a highly skilled and committed team. We have a number of short-term challenges ahead as we continue to navigate our response to the current pandemic, but there are many exciting opportunities beyond that to deliver a technically challenging decommissioning programme and play an important role as part of the NDA.

Published 14 January 2021

£76m contract boosts F-35 Lightning fleet support

Signed by Lockheed Martin and the F-35 Joint Program Office, the Lightning Air system National Capability Enterprise (LANCE) contract will provide additional expertise on aircraft maintenance, bespoke UK training courses for pilots, groundcrew and engineers, and logistical and technical support for the fleet.

Providing additional experienced technical personnel at existing facilities, the contract will also allow three new capabilities to come into operation. These include an ejection seat maintenance workshop, a 'Pilot fit facility' to fit aircrew equipment, and component spray facility to transfer coatings onto aircraft components.

Giving the UK more freedom to operate its fleet of F-35s, it will also increase the number of flying hours available, alongside delivering important mission planning, training and maintenance capabilities.

Defence Minister Jeremy Quin said:

The Lightning Force forms a key part of the UK's Carrier Strike Group and plays a central role in protecting our interests at home and abroad.

This investment will help ensure that this world-class fleet, and their crew, are ready to deploy wherever and whenever required.

Based at RAF Marham, home of the UK Lightning Force, the investment reflects the increasing size of the UK's F-35 fleet and will create and secure 172 jobs mainly at the Norfolk base.

The contract will provide support for 25 months, with an option for a further three months. The majority of the work will be carried out by subcontractor BAE Systems.

Air Commodore David Arthurton, Combat Air Force Commander, said:

I welcome the opportunity LANCE provides to build upon the Lightning Force Element's already close relationship with our industry partners. The new contract will deliver an enhanced level of performance whilst also providing welcome stability to all involved with the programme.

Furthermore, it will underpin our participation in the United Kingdom's inaugural Carrier Strike deployment later this year, and provide an excellent foundation for future land and maritime operations as Lightning matures towards Full Operating Capability.

The support provided by the contract will be crucial in ensuring the fleet is ready and prepared when they sail with HMS Queen Elizabeth on her maiden Global Carrier Strike Group '21 deployment.

Vice Admiral Rick Thompson, Director General Air for DE&S, said:

I am delighted that we have secured LANCE for the UK's Lightning Force. This is a critical support contract that shows a significant maturity in the platform's capability.

The UK currently has 21 fifth-generation F-35s, having received three new jets on 30 November 2020.