

Housing Minister's speech at PlaceShapers annual conference

Good morning. It is a pleasure to address you at the first ever virtual PlaceShapers annual conference.

I would like to begin by thanking the PlaceShapers network for your tireless efforts in supporting the social housing sector, including the two million people who rely on you and the essential services you provide.

I would also like to pay tribute to the many housing associations, housing providers and professional organisations involved in this vital sector for your incredible resilience and forbearance during this challenging time.

Since the onset of COVID-19, you have shown professionalism and commitment in utilising your expertise and providing support to millions of social housing tenants. You should be proud of what you have achieved.

This pandemic has made us rethink, in so many ways, how we live and how we want to live.

It has starkly reminded us of the importance of having a decent, safe and secure home with access to green spaces in which people can exercise, relax and unwind.

That is especially the case for social housing and the millions of people who call it home.

As many of you will know, on Tuesday 17 November 2020, we published our [Social housing white paper: the charter for social housing residents](#).

Developed in consultation with residents across the country, the white paper will deliver a transformational change for social housing, giving tenants a much stronger voice and re-focusing the sector on its founding ideals.

It empowers residents through quicker redress and more meaningful regulation that allows residents to see how their landlord is performing on the measures that matter most, including the length of time to action repairs.

It also mandates regular performance inspections of the country's largest landlords.

But the most profound change will be cultural: in the way landlords listen and respond to residents, ensuring they are treated with dignity and respect, with complaints handled promptly and fairly.

I believe it is this change in particular – making sure that the residents' voice is truly heard – which will strongly resonate across all levels of the sector, from board members and senior officers to all those who have daily contact with tenants.

The government is fulfilling its commitment to improve the quality of social housing, but we are also solving the decades-long problem of housing demand consistently outstripping supply.

Our £12.2 billion of investment in affordable housing represents the highest single funding commitment for the sector in over a decade.

That includes our new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme, which will be delivered over 5 years from 2021.

It will provide a real boost to the national housing stock with up to 180,000 new homes, economic conditions permitting.

10% of delivery will also be used to increase the supply of much needed specialist and supported housing too – helping individuals and families who need this kind of housing the most.

But our ambition is for social housing to not only be a safety net, but a ladder that provides residents with more opportunities to own their home.

Around half of the homes delivered through our new Programme will therefore be available for home ownership, and will make use of our new model of Shared Ownership in which we have greatly reduced the minimum initial share people can buy in their property.

This will also introduce a 10-year period for new shared owners where the landlord will cover the cost of any repairs and maintenance.

These are measures which give a people a much greater stake in their own homes and their own communities while helping them build a more equitable and prosperous future.

We recognise, however, that central government programmes can only go so far in delivering the homes this country needs.

And we acknowledge that during these unprecedented times, there are significant financial pressures on councils, holding them back from realising their own housing ambitions.

Which is why, in response to the impacts of COVID-19, we extended the deadline for councils to spend Right to Buy receipts, to help them catch up with spending plans and deliver replacement social housing.

And it is not just councils who are benefitting from our reforms in this area.

Social landlords will also be better off as a result of our longer-term rent deal for 5 years which came into force in April of this year, providing a more stable investment environment to deliver new homes for the future.

The supply of good quality, affordable housing lies at the very heart of this government's mission to unite and level up the country as we recover from this pandemic.

Together, with your support, your passion and your expertise, we will deliver nothing short of a new deal for social housing, ensuring that every social home in this country is decent, safe and secure.

Tenants expect, and deserve, nothing less.

Thank you and enjoy the conference.

[Govt writes to Brits in Europe before transition period ends](#)

The UK Government has written to 365,000 UK nationals living in Europe with advice on the actions they need to take to prepare for the end of the UK transition period on 31 December.

The letters, sent to UK state pensioners and benefit recipients, give advice on how to register for residency and healthcare, exchange driving licences and check new passport validity rules online. It is one of the largest-ever mail outs by the Government to UK nationals living in the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

Protecting the rights of UK nationals living across Europe is an absolute priority for this Government. That is why we are issuing one of the largest Government mail-outs to ensure people know what actions they need to take wherever they live.

There is further help for those who may have difficulty completing their residency applications from our UK Nationals Support Fund, delivered by charities and community organisations.

Work and Pensions Secretary Thérèse Coffey added:

As we regain our political and economic independence we have been clear we want to protect citizens' existing rights and help people prepare for the changes and opportunities ahead. I'd encourage UK nationals living in the EU to visit GOV.UK and get ready for the end of the transition period.

British Ambassador to Italy, Jill Morris, said:

Since 2017, British embassies across Europe have organised 853 outreach events, with more than 510,000 Brits attending in person or online. We will continue to support them, including through our ongoing public information campaign.

The Foreign Office has been running a public information campaign featuring online, radio and newspaper adverts across 30 countries informing UK Nationals of the actions they need to take. This is in addition to the hundreds of town hall meetings, street surgeries and online Q&As run by the UK's Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates across Europe.

The UK Government has also allocated £3 million for charities and community voluntary organisations across Europe to assist UK nationals that may need additional help to register or apply to protect their residency rights.

This includes potentially at-risk groups, such as pensioners and disabled people and those living in remote areas or who have mobility difficulties. Beneficiaries include SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, the Church of England diocese in France and Age in Spain.

UK nationals can find the most up-to-date information on actions they may need to take in the 'Living in Guide' for their country at:

gov.uk/livinginguides

Foreign Secretary call with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta: November 24

Press release

The Foreign Secretary spoke with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta today



Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab spoke to the President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, today (24 November) with the focus of their discussion on the

ongoing violence in Ethiopia.

The Foreign Secretary expressed concern about the risks to regional stability and security of continued violence.

Both sides agreed on the urgent need for a political solution.

As well as the crisis in Ethiopia, the Foreign Secretary and President discussed the international coronavirus (COVID-19) response and the broad range of UK-Kenyan partnership, including the recently initialled trade agreement.

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[A new approach to information warfare: @HutEighteen](#)

Misinformation, fake news, or information warfare, the concept is not new, but technology and innovation have created an expressway for its dissemination. An information warfare network, known as @HutEighteen, was launched on the 24 November in partnership with the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom for those operating in the field to collaborate and act as a force multiplier.

Information warfare is “controlling one’s own information space, protecting access to one’s own information, while acquiring and using the opponent’s information, destroying their information systems and disrupting the information flow,” as described by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

Information warfare touches so many aspects of our society, @HutEighteen seeks to bring together technical and non-technical practitioners. By harnessing diverse talent and aptitude, @HutEighteen aims to uncover new and innovative ways of conducting hybrid or information warfare.

As a community of interest, @HutEighteen will bring together practitioners, policy makers, and thinkers within the Ministry of Defence, as well as other government departments, academia, industry and the international community. Its mission is to connect, inform, support, collaborate and exploit cyber, information advantage and information outreach through education, events, and experimentation.

Colonel Caroline Woodbridge-Lewin, Head of the Information Warfare Group at the Defence Academy said:

Big data, autonomy, machine learning, social sciences, social media and global connectivity all play an increasingly important role in our lives. And if used against us, form the basis of information warfare.

How well we perform in information warfare is less likely to be related to our specific equipment, but more towards attitude, approach and collaboration. This is exactly what @HutEighteen strives to build: the network and the relationships of those working in the diverse field to counter these disruptive techniques.

Major General Andrew Roe, Chief Executive of the Defence Academy and Commandant Joint Services Command and Staff College said:

Information Warfare is a fast-moving discipline, requiring a constantly innovative and agile approach. In order to continue to outperform our adversaries, professional military education must include the study of information warfare concepts and techniques. By innovating and collaborating across sectors and institutions, @HutEighteen has the potential to drive forward our capabilities in information warfare.

To find out more or to get involved, please contact informationwarfarenetwork@da.mod.uk or comms@da.mod.uk, or on Defence Connect for those in the Ministry of Defence.

Euclid

The Expanding Universe

Until 20-30 years ago, scientists thought that the Universe was composed of ordinary matter: protons, neutrons and electrons. Now we know that this accounts for only 4% of the Universe mass-energy budget. The rest is composed of two mysterious components, dark energy and dark matter, which are causing the expansion of the Universe to accelerate, and which cannot be adequately explained by our current knowledge of fundamental physics.

The UK Space Agency is funding research teams in 7 different institutions across the UK to contribute to the Euclid spacecraft. A team at University College London's Mullard Space Science Laboratory is leading the development of one of the two science instruments on board, the visible imager (VIS), and researchers across the country are working to establish the complex data-processing capability to allow scientists to use the data that will

eventually be sent back to Earth to study dark energy and dark matter.

[Find out more from the ESA Mission Factsheet](#)

What will Euclid do?

Euclid is a medium-class European Space Agency mission due to launch in 2023. Its objective is to better understand the nature of dark matter and dark energy by mapping the 'Dark Universe' and by accurately measuring the acceleration of the expansion of the Universe.

The Euclid spacecraft will have two scientific instruments on board that will use specialist techniques to answer key questions about our Universe.

- What is the distribution of dark matter in the Universe?
- What is the history of expansion of the Universe?
- What does this tell us about the nature of dark energy?
- How do large-scale structures form in the Universe?

What will the instruments be measuring?

The two techniques will be weak gravitational lensing and baryonic acoustic oscillation (BAOs). These will be used to measure galaxy shapes and distortions, telling us about the distribution and evolution of dark energy and dark matter.

Weak lensing will be used to measure distortions of galaxy images due to gravity. BAOs are wiggle patterns imprinted in the clustering of galaxies which act as a standard against which to measure the expansion of the Universe. Weak lensing in particular requires a visible imager which can achieve extremely high image quality – any optical distortion due to the instrument optical systems must be calibrated out so that any distortions which are measured will be due to gravity.

The scientific instruments

To study the nature of dark energy and dark matter, Euclid will carry two science instruments, each built by a consortium of European partners:

The VIS Principal Investigator is Prof Mark Cropper at MSSL. The MSSL team has responsibility for managing the instrument consortium that has designed and built the various subsystems for VIS. MSSL is also directly responsible for the development of the detector chain of the instrument (the readout electronics receiving data from the sensors and their associated power supplies).

The [Charge-coupled device \(CCD\)](#) detectors are provided by [Teledyne e2v](#) in Chelmsford, under contract to ESA. The Flight Instrument was delivered to ESA for integration and testing in 2020 and will then begin being integrated with the spacecraft for the final environmental test campaign to confirm readiness for launch.

How is the UK involved?

During the 6-year mission the spacecraft will be bombarded by radiation in space, damaging the sensitive CCD detectors. To support the development at MSSL, the **Open University** has conducted modelling and simulations to understand how this radiation damage affects instrument performance. This will ensure that the science data can be interpreted accurately.

Euclid will generate an unprecedented volume of science data (850Gbit compressed data per day) and to cope with this, Euclid will employ K-band communications to provide the necessary rapid download rate.

In addition to the lead role on VIS, the UK also has a strong role on the development of the Ground Segment for Euclid. This includes a **Science Data Centre in Edinburgh** and the lead role on shear measurements and analysis, a critical element of Euclid science. Professor Andy Taylor of the **Edinburgh Astronomy Technology Centre** leads the development of the UK ground segment, with contributions from research teams at Oxford University, Cambridge University, University of Portsmouth, University College London, MSSL and Durham University.