

Press release: Brokenshire hails package to build homes and opportunities in communities

- £100 million to tackle knife crime in the worst affected communities across England and Wales
- £717 million to upgrade roads, drainage and other infrastructure to support up to 37,000 new homes
- Up to £260 million investment to support economic growth in the cross-border region
- New planning measures to help government hit 300,000 homes-a-year target

Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP has hailed millions of pounds in extra funding and new planning measures to build thousands of homes, rejuvenate high streets, create jobs and deliver economic growth.

The measures, unveiled by the Chancellor, are part of our wider strategy to deliver 300,000 a year by the mid-2020s.

The package will unlock large housing sites with targeted £717 million infrastructure funding, reform parts of the planning system and ensure new-builds are more energy efficient, and help the country meet climate change targets.

The government is also investing up to £260 million as part of the Borderlands Growth Deal to support local economic growth across the Northern Powerhouse and the UK.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

We're pulling all the levers available to build homes and opportunities in our communities.

These new measures and funding mark our continued commitment to ensuring the housing market works for everyone and economic growth is shared across the country.

The Chancellor's announcement follows a sustained increase in the number of homes delivered. Last year England delivered over 222,000 new homes, the highest in all but one of the last 31 years.

Measures set out in the Spring Statement include:

Housing Infrastructure Funds

Meeting the needs of existing communities in preparation for delivering new homes is a key part of our strategy to deliver 300,000 new homes a year by

the mid-2020s.

We have awarded the next wave of the £5.5 billion [Housing Infrastructure Fund](#), totalling £717 million to these successful locally-led schemes in key areas across England:

- Old Oak North – £250 million to build nearly 13,000 new homes can be built close to the new HS2 railway station at Old Oak Common, which will become the UK's best-connected station.
- Cheshire East – £21.7 million to help deliver a new 1,675 home garden village through the upgrading and improvement of existing roads, provision of a new village high street and a new footbridge.
- 'Northern Fringe East', Cambridge, – £227 million to deliver up to 8,625 new homes through the relocation of drainage and sewerage facilities, opening up brownfield land for development.
- 'Access to Didcot Garden Town', Oxfordshire, to unlock up to 13,411 new homes with £218 million to upgrade road links, including new bridges over the River Thames and Great Western Railway to alleviate traffic.

A further £320 million will be made separately available to Barnet council to deliver at least 7,500 homes at Brent Cross Cricklewood. The money will be spent on a new train station on the Thameslink route, which is essential for the homes to be built.

[Housing Guarantees](#)

The government will stand behind £3 billion of loans to housing associations, supporting them to build tens of thousands of affordable properties across the country, it has been confirmed.

This will come from the £8 billion of housing guarantees the Chancellor announced in his 2017 Autumn Budget.

The scheme will open for bids from housing associations in due course.

Previous programmes have helped 66 housing associations to build around 35,000 new homes since 2013.

A further £1 billion of the overall £8 billion will be made available to small and medium enterprise housebuilders in the private sector, as announced by the Chancellor in last year's Budget. This scheme, which will be called the ENABLE Build Guarantee Scheme, will open to applications from banks in April.

Oxford-Cambridge Arc

We are also committed to delivering the ambition of up to a million new homes by 2050 across the Oxford-Cambridge Arc to maximise its sustainable economic growth.

To make that vision a reality, £445 million is being provided to the Didcot and Cambridge infrastructure projects.

We have also secured a joint declaration from councils and local enterprise partnerships across the Arc, with leaders signing up to ensuring that we are working together to deliver these desperately needed new homes and fulfil the Arc's economic potential.

We will also appoint a new independent chair to a Cross-Arc Advisory Group.

Letwin Review

New planning guidance will be published for councils, to help them get the right homes finished on large sites more quickly.

Sir Oliver Letwin's review, published at Autumn Budget, concluded that greater diversity of homes on sites with more than 1,500 homes would increase buildout rates.

In response, the government will publish guidance for councils on building diverse range of homes on large sites.

A new 'Accelerated Planning Green Paper' will also be published to accelerate the planning process for new homes – from when ideas are still on the architect's drawing board and well before shovels hit the ground.

Details of the new Green Paper will be published in due course.

Permitted development rights and high streets

New planning rules will be brought in so the owners of high street premises can change the way the buildings are used more easily.

Our high streets are changing, and the government will bring in new rules to enable change of use from most retail uses to offices without planning permission.

For example, shops could be turned into offices and takeaways could be turned into homes under the suite of changes being brought forward.

As a result of the new permitted development rights, high street uses can change more quickly without going through a formal planning application process. By increasing the number of homes in and near town centres, adding footfall, which will help support shops and restaurants as trends in spending change.

In addition, we will take forward a new right to allow buildings to extend

upwards to create new homes, which respect the existing design of communities and the impact on neighbours.

We will also make permanent the time-limited permitted development right to allow for larger rear extensions to homes.

The new permitted development rights will be created as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Low carbon homes

Emissions from heating existing homes is the single largest contributing factor to the UK's carbon footprint.

We recognise that combating climate change requires the construction of new build homes to feature more sustainable and efficient ways of heating, alongside other energy saving measures.

In the [Spring Statement 2019](#), we have committed to adopting the Future Homes Standard by 2025 so new homes built are built with the latest green technology – driving down energy bills and reduce the impact on our precious environment.

The Future Homes Standard will build on the Prime Minister's Clean Growth Grand Challenge mission to at least halve the energy use of new build property by 2030, and halve the cost of renovating existing buildings to a similar standard as new buildings, while increasing quality and safety.

Details of the new standard will be consulted on during 2019.

Borderlands growth deal and Toton

The Borderlands Growth Deal is a unique cross-border collaboration between the local authorities of Carlisle City, Cumbria County, Dumfries and Galloway, Northumberland County and Scottish Borders to drive local growth.

At [Spring Statement](#), we announced UK government investment totalling up to £260m to support economic growth and productivity across the Borderlands.

The funding will present opportunities to explore key local projects such as the regeneration of Carlisle Station and also support the development of Alnwick Gardens, one of the North East's most popular tourist destinations. Both of these projects have the potential to increase tourism, create job opportunities and encourage investment both across the Northern Powerhouse, the Borderlands and beyond.

Today's announcement builds on significant government investment to encourage housing growth and support coastal communities, including £102 million for the Carlisle Southern Link Road to unlock the St Cuthbert's Garden Village.

Further significant investment in region from the [Coastal Communities Fund](#) and [Costal Revival Fund](#) is due to be announced next week.

As part of the next phase the government will now work with local partners and the Scottish Government towards agreeing a Heads of Terms agreement with the Borderlands.

We also announced today that Sir John Peace will oversee the development of proposals for a new delivery vehicle at Toton, which will include considering the case for a Development Corporation.

Funding of schemes under the Borderlands Growth Deal, including Alnwick Gardens and Carlisle Station, are subject to a business case being submitted to the Ministry of Housing.

News story: GC contributes to European standard to combat food fraud

Food fraud is a worldwide problem, with many countries committing considerable resource to combat the issue. The globalisation of the food supply chain has led to the acknowledgement that having agreed definitions for terms commonly associated with food authenticity and food fraud would be of great benefit.

The Norwegian Institute of Food, Fisheries and Aquaculture Research (Nofima), has led a European initiative aimed at making communications regarding food fraud more precise and clear. Food fraud experts from several European countries including the Government Chemist and the Food Authenticity Network in UK, a European standard has been created that defines many of the English terms and concepts used in connection with food fraud. The words are placed in a hierarchical system that makes it easier to understand how they relate to each other.

This standardisation process was coordinated as part of the [EU-funded Authent-Net](#) and [FoodIntegrity](#) projects. It was published in January 2019 by [Standard Norway](#), and it is also being distributed by several other National Standardisation Bodies in Europe; currently Estonia, Netherlands, and the [UK](#).

This standard represents an important first step in the global standardisation of these terms which will help facilitate trade, combat food fraud and better secure our food supply chains.

The Government Chemist team has great expertise in the area of food fraud, having had a role in providing advice in previous cases, such as the horsemeat crisis in 2013 and many others.

For more information on the role of the Government Chemist contact us:

Speech: Launch of the 21st Century Schools project in Montenegro

Minister of Education Šehović, Director of the Education Bureau Sejarić, Cerys: it is wonderful to see you hear today, dear Vanja, dear school principals from across Montenegro, dear friends,

At the [Western Balkans Summit](#) in London in July, British Prime Minister Theresa May announced a package of measures to help build a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic Western Balkans.

One of the most important ways in which the United Kingdom is demonstrating its commitment to the Western Balkans is through today's launch of the British Council's 21st Century Schools programme.

21st Century Schools is a £10 million programme which will bring innovative teaching, focusing on problem solving and critical thinking, while also equipping the students aged 10-15 years with coding skills to every primary schools in Montenegro, indeed to every school in the Western Balkans.

Launch of the 21st Century Schools project in Montenegro

This programme is a clear signal of the UK's continuing commitment to the region. No country has ever made a commitment on this scale to education in the Western Balkans. No country has ever made a commitment on this scale to the future of young people in this region.

It's not often a British Ambassador gets to quote Whitney Houston, but when I was writing today's remarks, her lyrics "I believe the children are our future. Teach them well and let them lead the way ..." kept running through my head. And she was right.

If we keep on teaching children to use the technology we already know how to use, we will never be able to keep up with their creativity, and will be hindering rather than helping them prepare for a future which is increasingly digital.

The United Kingdom is a world leader in using computing in education. And we recognise that given the speed at which technology moves, school systems need to focus on developing the core skills students will need in the future, rather than learning about systems and concepts which may shortly become superannuated.

21st Century Schools will share the UK's experience of developing core skills through the primary school curriculum. The focus on core skills is particularly relevant in the Western Balkans, where countries perform far below the OECD average. For example in the 2015 PISA tests, 52% of students

tested in Montenegro do not possess adequate maths skills, compared with the OECD average of 30%.

And the lack of these core skills is frustrating for those who are seeking employment and businesses seeking employees. Across the Western Balkans, education is still to be fully aligned to labour market needs; meaning jobs lie empty because there are a lack of people with IT and digital skills.

This programme has been designed to work with education authorities and leaders to address these issues. While the British Council will be rolling out this programme to all six Western Balkans countries, it is up to each country to tailor the programme so it meets your needs. And that is why the support of Minister Šehović and Director Sejarić, and the collaboration with the Montenegrin government has been so important.

I want to thank you and your teams for your support as the British Council rolled the programme out to 20 pilot schools over the last 12 months. And I look forward to working with you as 21st Century Schools spreads across the country.

To conclude: this is the largest investment by the UK Government in Education in the Western Balkans, and I'm delighted that the British government is undertaking this programme as the British Council celebrates its 80th anniversary in the region this year, and the 25th anniversary of the opening of the British Council in Montenegro.

Launch of the 21st Century Schools project in Montenegro

80 years ago the British Council began its activities in Serbia and Montenegro with tennis lessons in Serbia and tea dances in Cetinje. And 25 years ago, the British Council began to offer scholarships, examinations and the opportunity to study and research at the British Council library. How the times have changed!

But the Council's commitment to sharing the best of the United Kingdom with the world has not changed, and I hope that this programme will touch every family in Montenegro, as I imagine every family in Montenegro knows either a student or a teacher at a primary school.

And more specifically, as we launch a programme to equip young Montenegrins with some of the skills they need to move through life with success and assurance, we are also celebrating the 30th birthday of the World Wide Web, created by Sir Tim Berners Lee in CERN as a way of improving information flows. His web has already transformed the world in the last 30 years, and who knows how students using micro:bits in Montenegrin schools will transform our digital and physical worlds in the next 30 years. I am looking forward to finding out.

Thank you!

News story: ePassport gates eligibility expansion confirmed for June

Eligible passengers from Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea and the USA will be able to use the ePassport gates at UK airports and Brussels and Paris Eurostar terminals.

The Chancellor also announced that, to coincide with the ePassport gates expansion, the government will begin to abolish landing cards for non-EEA travellers.

Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes said:

The expanded access to ePassport gates and the withdrawal of landing cards is part of our work to transform the UK's border, providing a quicker, seamless experience for passengers that is built around digital systems.

These changes will deliver an improved arrival experience and is further encouragement for people who boost our economy through tourism and business to travel to the UK.

In line with the ePassport gate expansion, citizens of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea and the USA will be exempt from the landing card requirement from June. The government's ambition is to go further and more details will be provided in due course.

All passengers arriving at UK ports and airports will continue to be subject to full identity and security checks.

Speech: Maritime Strategy and its contribution to the Indo-Pacific and Global Commons

Introduction

Thank you, Rahul, for hosting us this evening, thank you for the introduction, it's a very great pleasure to be back here at IISS again and a very great pleasure to have my counterpart and friend Admiral Sunil Lanba here with us this evening.

Thank you [Admiral Lanba] for that very clear exposition of the Indian Navy's perspective and the strategy that underpins the really significant role your navy has delivering maritime security in this vitally important, and in many ways uniquely challenging, region.

I absolutely echo your words about how much I've enjoyed working with you. I regard you as one of the key naval counterparts, it's been my privilege to work alongside people who have shared almost exactly the same time in office as we have, and of course Sunil as you know on that list I include Admiral Jon Richardson from the United States, Admiral Christophe Prazuck from France and Admiral Yutaka Murakawa from the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force. It's been a great crop of Navy Chiefs in the '16 to '19 timeframe, I'm sure you'd agree.

And as you pointed out in your opening remarks, our tenures have mirrored each other, which has allowed the development of that personal bond, which is hugely valuable and important to shaping not only how we work together today but the relationship we shape for our navies going into the future.

And it's particularly pleasing from my perspective to host you here in the UK, to reciprocate the wonderful way you hosted me in Mumbai almost exactly 2 years ago at the decommissioning of INS Viraat, of course the former HMS Hermes.

As most of you know, because of his 2 jobs I have to share Admiral Lanba with my CDS, General Carter, so the formal CDS bit of the programme is tomorrow here in London, and I'm very much looking forward to hosting him as Naval Chiefs down in Portsmouth for the 2 days that follow that.

IISS have done a great job putting together events like this, giving 2 Naval Chiefs the opportunity to speak together and answer questions together on these really important topics for Navies. Having had the privilege of doing similar events here in the last 9 months, both with Admiral Jon Richardson from the United States, and with Vice Admiral Mike Noonan from the Australian Navy it's really clear to me that holding these kind of events enables us to develop that close partnership we have with each other, to set these key navy to navy relationships in perspective and to move the debate forward about some of the significant challenges we face together.

Expanding maritime horizons

Those of you who are veterans of these events and have been to them before will have heard me use the phrase 'expanding maritime horizons', to describe what we've been trying to get the Royal Navy to do over the last couple of

years, as the fleet has begun to reach out to parts of the world from which we had been absent for some time.

This strategy has allowed us to have some real tangible effect with international partners in every ocean of the world, enhancing maritime security and continuing to build that all important consensus on behaviours that, together with the feeling we both have of the regulations enshrined in international law, govern the use of the global commons that is the high seas to mutual supportive effect.

Increasingly our intentions are going to be built around forward deployed presence, as the Royal Navy looks to different operating models and different manning models within our transformation agenda, building from the Modernising Defence Programme of earlier this year. Our fleet's increased global presence I believe is set to stay; I know we have to find different ways of enabling the fleet to deliver on that, but I believe it is hugely welcomed by our partners in those regions where we are now beginning to reassert our presence, and establish it more regularly.

Indian Ocean

But I hope it will have escaped no one's attention that even when, for a host of very good reasons, we elected to temporarily rein in some of our global maritime activity and to confine the fleet's sphere of influence geographically, particularly to enable the presence in the Pacific Ocean for much of 2018, we did not denude our presence in the Indian Ocean. It remains for the Royal Navy an active area of interest, with a correspondingly regular drumbeat of both presence and activity.

And you only need look at the strategic significance of that region to understand why we made that call. Sat at the crossroads of international trade, it's an ocean that provides the vital link between the world's economic powerhouses of the Euro-Atlantic region and the Indo-Pacific region.

The flow of energy resources through its waters are particularly significant. Data from 2017 shows that about 39 million barrels per day pass through the Indian Ocean, equivalent to about 40 per cent of the world's total oil supply travels through the strategic choke points of that ocean, the Straits of Malacca and Hormuz and the Bab-el-Mandeb, that provide access into and out of the Indian Ocean.

Nor should we forget that the Indian Ocean that's more than a transit corridor; its densely populated littoral zones are areas of significant, rapid, economic growth in their own right, growth that is underpinned in part by the rich natural resources that are found in the huge expanse of water that is the Indian Ocean.

Yet it is also a region that has seen more than its fair share of threats to security, notably in recent years through non-state actors engaged in piracy, smuggling and terrorism, all of whom have demanded a response. Meanwhile, the spectre of natural disasters, which have become all too frequent, remain ever present in that region too.

It is these challenges that combine to put the demand signal on the Royal Navy for continued presence in the region, whether that be on national tasking, working on a bilateral basis such as with the Indian Navy or under multilateral frameworks such as the Combined Maritime Forces coalition, or indeed the EU NAVFOR counter-piracy task group.

It's also why you've regularly seen Royal Navy officers providing crucial leadership of those task forces and task groups: permanent deputy command of Combined Maritime Forces in Bahrain, the most numerous individual command tours of the subordinate task groups of CMF, often combining that opportunity with other navies as we are about to do for example with the French in Task Force 150 and the Republic of Korea in Task Force 151; and at the same time continuous operational command of the EU NAVFOR Op Atalanta, countering piracy off Somalia for 10 straight years.

And whilst the escort we currently have on station in that part of the world, the Type 45 destroyer Dragon, and you heard Admiral Lanba mention that ship for its participation in Konkan 18, that ship might have enjoyed particularly conspicuous operational success recently, boasting 6 major drug seizures in the last 4 months, deployments like Dragon's, working to deter and disrupt illegal activity, are nothing new to the Royal Navy.

Nevertheless, our presence there now has a heightened sense of permanence to it through the opening in 2018 of our Naval Support Facility in Bahrain, a permanent footprint in the region re-established as a significant reversal of the withdrawal from East of Suez in the early 70s.

That facility is already home to the mine countermeasures force that we have had forward based in the Gulf, and have had so continuously for over 12 years, but with the imminent arrival and then long-term basing there of the Type 23 frigate Montrose, that is an example I hope of how we are exploiting forward basing with a dedicated ship capable of delivering a broad spectrum of effects at range from the UK.

And hopefully that's yet more proof, if any is needed, of our enduring commitment to maritime security in that region.

UKMTO

Now, of course, as you heard Admiral Lanba say, our contribution isn't just limited to the presence of ships, it's also the way in which we share information. And I'm pleased to say that when it comes to security of shipping transiting through the region, possibly one of the best known agencies coordinating that security effort down the years has been the UK Maritime Trade Office co-located in our embassy in Dubai.

Established in 2001 to provide an operational interface between military and merchant shipping, this small Naval Party supports freedom of navigation by all mariners in the region through the delivery of timely maritime security information and, in the event of an incident, coordination of relief effort.

As trusted agents, the UKMTO has very often acted as the primary point of

contact for merchant vessels of many nationalities involved in maritime incidents or when travelling through high risk areas; even with the once-commonplace threat of piracy around the Horn of Africa now significantly subdued, 80 to 85% of commercial shipping passing through that region still voluntarily report in to UKMTO and subscribe to the security information and advice that they provide in return.

But everyone involved in this security effort absolutely recognises that the most effective liaison comes from information sharing with as wide a body as possible, and the UKMTO is certainly not the only organisation making a valuable contribution in this way.

IFC-IOR

And that's why, catalysed by the signing of our bilateral 'white shipping' Memorandum of Understanding, which you heard Admiral Lanba refer to, our collaborative efforts have gone forward further as we watched to see how the Indian Navy develops its Information Fusion Centre, Indian Ocean Region, the IFC-IOR, based in Gurugram, which opened last year.

We see that as already delivering real value in terms of its output, there is clear and obvious opportunity for significant growth in terms of what this centre can deliver. I absolutely echo Admiral Lanba's points on Royal Navy interaction with this centre, it's certainly something we're taking a very close interest as we go forward, potentially looking to establish a very credible leadership role alongside the Indian Navy in that fusion centre.

Capability development

But the relationship between the Royal Navy and Indian Navy, long-standing as it is and bilateral by design, goes of course far further than information sharing.

And it's only natural that this would be the case given the very obvious similarities between our 2 navies, our shared outlook, common goals, very clear intentions for the future, reflected in ambitious shipbuilding programmes and maritime innovation programmes, which we both have underway.

And given that shared outlook, I think there's a real opportunity for us to provide mutual support in capability development as we go forward, and I'm very pleased to say we are looking to seize that opportunity.

Admiral Lanba has already spoken of his forthcoming visit to our submarine rescue facilities in Faslane Naval Base in Scotland later this week, and that's a great example of this cooperation, and I would also highlight our carrier capability partnership, through which I'm sure we will be able to develop further synergies in our respective future carrier strike capabilities, I'm very much looking forward to taking that partnership further forward this week when I host Admiral Lanba on board HMS Queen Elizabeth down in Portsmouth.

The important thing in all of this is that by developing these capabilities

in tandem, we instinctively build in a level of interoperability that might not otherwise be there.

When you combine that with our regular operational interaction and exercises like the highly valuable bilateral Konkan series, of which you've already heard, all of that helps to align doctrine and tactics, and it means there can be no doubt we will be increasingly well placed to work together across the full spectrum of Naval activity, from disaster relief right through to high end warfighting, as together we pursue our shared aim to defend the global commons, and to embrace whatever security challenges the future might hold.

Conclusion

And so in closing I would observe this. Not only are our 2 countries' histories intertwined across the generations, today our nations have a huge amount in common too.

Britain and India are both in the list of top 10 of world economies, and those powerful economies are built upon a bedrock of global maritime trade. And I know we share a very clear understanding of both the opportunities and the challenges that are present in today's incredibly complex maritime domain.

It is that appreciation of the intensifying and diversifying threats we face, threats that manifest from space to the sea bed, that underlines the value of sea power both in India and here in the UK.

And through that comes the importance to both our nations of having a Navy that can not only defend the sea lines of communication around our immediate coastal waters, and the shipping that flows through it, but also one that can influence the wider global commons upon which our international trade flows, ensuring freedom of navigation for all who wish to use the sea for lawful purposes.

So ours is a challenge that transcends geographical boundaries; it's multi-dimensional and it's constantly evolving. But I know that, just as the Royal Navy is up for the challenge of that, so is the Indian Navy.

And by working together in this endeavour, through capability development, through the alignment of tactics and doctrine, through information sharing, and onwards into the delivery of operational effect, I firmly believe that both our navies, and through them both nations, will be all the stronger for it.

Thank you very much.