[News story: Robots tackle Sellafield’s notorious radioactive ‘hot spot’]

The radioactive ‘hotspot’, known to those at the site as ‘D-Bay’, is a sub-section of the First Generation Magnox Storage Pond.

The area was used to deposit radioactive sludge which started to accumulate in the plant in the 1970s.

The sludge is now being carefully ‘hoovered up’ using robotic arms, following 10 years of planning with supply chain partners ACKtiv joint venture and Jacobs.

[Robots removing sludge from D Bay]

Head of Legacy Ponds for Sellafield Ltd, Dorothy Gradden, said:

> D-Bay has always been one of our biggest headaches at Sellafield.
>
> It is a concentration of a problem in our most complicated and hazardous legacy facility.
>
> After years of designing, making and installing the necessary equipment, we are now delighted to be safely reducing the hazard day by day.
>
> The dedication and innovative thinking of more than 800 people at Sellafield and in our supply chain that has ensured that we safely arrived at this ‘man on the moon’ moment for this plant.
>
> I’d like to thank and congratulate them all.

D-bay holds the equivalent of 35 concrete mixer trucks full of radioactive sludge, which is a by-product formed from decaying nuclear fuel and other debris.

It has been a no-go area for around 40 years, due to the proximity of the sludge to the surface of the water and the sheer volume of radioactive material.

The work has been done remotely using ‘Brokk’ manipulator robots, operated by people who control them from behind a shielded wall.

The robotic arms are attached to an overhead travelling crane and various tools can be attached to the arm for different tasks.

A suction device is used to ‘hoover’ up the sludge, while other tools allow the arm to pick up larger waste items and chop them into smaller pieces (referred to by operators as ‘giving a haircut’), so that the sludge can be accessed more easily.

The material is being transferred to a state-of-the-art plant for safe storage.

Now 66 years old, the pond was originally used to store, cool and prepare magnox fuel for reprocessing.

It is now one of the 4 legacy ponds and silos at Sellafield that the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority has prioritised for clean-up.

D-Bay is one of the plant's 'wet bays', which were separate areas designed for removing the cladding on nuclear fuel rods.

Work is ongoing to remove waste from the main pond, which is due to be emptied by 2031.

News story: New Chair of Audit Risk at the Coal Authority appointed

This appointment takes effect from from 1 April 2019 and lasts for 3 years.

The Coal Authority works to resolve the impacts of mining.

Jayne is a partner in Scott Ross Partnership. She was appointed a Non-executive Board Member and Chair of Audit Committee of the Marine Management Organisation in 2010. Currently she is a member of the Consumer Challenge Board for Heathrow's Price Review and The Private Healthcare Information Network. Previously she was a Panel Member of Scotland Office and Office of the Advocate General, Ofgem and CMA.

Published 16 January 2019

Speech: Penny Mordaunt launches Companies to Inspire Africa 2019

Well good morning everyone, and can I first start by echoing the sympathies that David gave about those caught up in the very sad events in Nairobi, my thoughts, the thoughts of my departmental colleagues and my parliamentary colleagues, I know Andrew Selous is here to today, are very much with everyone who has been caught up in those tragic events.

After the events of last night in the House of Commons, which were rather depressing, I felt it was very important that I did something this morning that was uplifting, constructive with inspirational people and of which we could be very proud, and represented absolutely Global Britain. So, thank you David and the London Stock Exchange Group for inviting me to launch the Companies to Inspire Africa 2019 report.

I would like to start by congratulating all the companies featured. From 32 countries, with 7 major sectors represented, you have been nominated as Africa’s most inspiring small and medium-sized enterprises. It is you and your successes that will demonstrate globally the opportunities that are increasingly present in Africa.

I am particularly pleased that nearly a quarter of the companies in this year’s report are led by women, almost double that of the report published in 2017.

And we know that globally companies with greater levels of gender equality also do better in terms of income, growth and competitiveness. And today I have had the pleasure of meeting many of the inspirational female business leaders named in the report. Companies like Lioness of Africa, which aims to support 1 million African women entrepreneurs to achieve success. As female leaders you are role models that can make change happen. I applaud and admire you all.

All of us in this room know Africa is a continent alive with opportunity. Five of the world’s fastest-growing economies are African and by 2050, a quarter of the world’s consumers will live there. This opportunity is why we saw Ghana hosting an Investment Summit last year, attended by over 50 British companies. It is why the London Stock Exchange has partnered with African Securities Exchanges like Casablanca and Nairobi. And it is why the Prime Minister recently visited the continent spending her time with business and political leaders, entrepreneurs and young people as well as throwing a few shapes – there’s still time David, there’s still time.

They told her that they wanted a modern partnership with the UK that delivers mutual benefit. By combining African-led ambition with British expertise we can do just that – unlocking high-quality investment that delivers more opportunities, exports and jobs for both Africa and the UK.

Global Britain is committed to this new partnership with Africa. The Prime Minister announced a radical expansion of the UK government's presence, bringing in trade experts and investment specialists to deliver on our shared interests and find solutions to the world's biggest challenges.

And later this year the UK will host the UK-Africa Investment Summit, which will bring together key government and business people from the UK and Africa to strengthen our links and make the most of the fantastic opportunities that are there. We want companies like you to play your part in the Summit to make it a game-changer for investment in Africa.

We want to leverage the UK's reach and unique value of the City of London to make the UK Africa's finance partner of choice.

The London Stock Exchange Group has shown strong partnership and leadership in this area, helping to build Global Britain. Through its Africa Advisory Group, the London Stock Exchange has brought together key business leaders, policymakers and investors from across Africa to take the steps needed to develop Africa's capital markets. We look forward to working closely with the Group this year.

Developing Africa's capital markets is essential for unlocking finance for infrastructure and investment that will support job creation and economic growth in the long term. But these capital markets need to be supported by a well-regulated financial sector.

When I was at the London Stock Exchange during the Commonwealth Summit last April I announced a new DFID partnership with the Bank of England and the central banks of Ghana, South Africa and Sierra Leone to share regulatory expertise and enhance financial stability, helping promote economic growth through increased investor confidence. We will continue to scale up our work with the Bank of England throughout the course of this year.

UK aid is mobilising the private investment needed to deliver the]Global Goals](https://www.globalgoals.org/) and that is why CDC, the UK's Development Finance Institution, has committed up to £3.5 billion of new African investments, and why up to £300 million has been committed from the Private Infrastructure Development Group. These partnerships will lay the foundations for new trading and business opportunities.

And when I was last here I announced the UK's ambition to help African countries raise debt in their local currencies. In November we celebrated the first ever Ghanaian Cedi-denominated bond to list to London, made possible through the DFID-backed Private Infrastructure Development Group.

Investments by the DFID-backed Financial Sector Deepening Africa has supported 38 local currency bond issues by private companies and financial institutions in 16 African countries, in a range of sectors such as agriculture, energy, housing, microfinance and infrastructure. Local currency finance listings such as these are contributing to increased financial stability by ensuring that growth is fuelled by lower-risk finance over the long-term.

And we are committed to supporting innovative African companies to make it easier for finance to flow into and across the continent. It is estimated that US$66 billion in remittances flow into Africa annually, with approximately 10% originating in the UK. The transfer of money by foreign workers to their families in their home countries is a lifeline to many in Africa. But many are losing their hard-earned money to too high remittance fees.

That is why we are announcing £2 million investment for MFS Africa, an innovative mobile money company that makes it easier and cheaper to send remittances to and across Africa. This is a clear example of the UK honouring its commitments to the G20 and Global Goals targets of reducing those costs.

Our investments and partnerships are already bringing benefits for both Africa and the UK. The CDC-backed company, Blue Skies, features in the report and is a leading producer of fresh cut fruits and juices and is the largest private sector company in Ghana. It sells its produce across Africa, and also trades with UK supermarkets. You can find Blue Skies products in Sainsburys, Waitrose and on Amazon Fresh – a clear demonstration that investing in African companies is good for Africa and it is good for Britain too.

The UK values such partnerships. We bring the technical knowledge of our professionals, and we bring the values of a compassionate global nation. Our values sit at the heart of our aid spending.

In October I announced a new campaign to find out the appetite of British people who might want their savings or their pension to be used to support the Global Goals and to potentially deliver better returns for them. Over the coming months we will be speaking to financial institutions, savers, pension holders and the wider British public to help shape new investment products to deliver the Global Goals.

This report demonstrates that great partnerships can lead to great things. Working together, the UK and Africa can generate private sector investment, which in turn is creating business and investment opportunities for both Africa and the UK.

2019 is the year of significant opportunities to take those partnerships further – and I very much look forward to seeing the results. Thank you all very much.

Press release: UK House Price Index

for November 2018

The November data shows:

- on average, house prices have fallen by 0.1% since October 2018
- there has been an annual price rise of 2.8%, which makes the average property in the UK valued at £230,630

England

In England, the November data shows, on average, house prices have fallen by 0.1% since October 2018. The annual price rise of 2.6% takes the average property value to £247,430.

The regional data for England indicates that:

- the North East experienced the greatest monthly price rise, up by 1.2%
- Yorkshire and the Humber saw the most significant monthly price fall, down by 1.3%
- the West Midlands experienced the greatest annual price rise, up by 4.6%
- London saw the largest annual price fall, down by 0.7%

Price change by region for England

Region	Average price November 2018	Monthly change % since October 2018
East Midlands	£192,061	0.3
East of England	£294,530	0.8
London	£472,901	-1.2
North East	£132,257	1.2
North West	£162,717	-0.6
South East	£323,876	-0.1
South West	£260,177	1.1
West Midlands	£197,387	-0.4
Yorkshire and the Humber	£160,155	-1.3

Repossession sales by volume for England

The lowest number of repossession sales in September 2018 was in the East of England.

The highest number of repossession sales in September 2018 was in the North West.

Repossession sales	September 2018
East Midlands	29
East of England	7

Repossession sales	September 2018
London	34
North East	62
North West	98
South East	35
South West	29
West Midlands	51
Yorkshire and the Humber	74
England	419

Average price by property type for England

Property type	November 2018	November 2017	Difference %
Detached	£375,538	£363,065	3.4
Semi-detached	£231,264	£223,741	3.4
Terraced	£201,387	£194,051	3.8
Flat/maisonette	£225,092	£227,222	-0.9
All	£247,430	£241,086	2.6

Funding and buyer status for England

Transaction type	Average price November 2018	Annual price change % since November 2017	Monthly price change % since October 2018
Cash	£232,942	2.4	-0.1
Mortgage	£254,731	2.7	-0.1
First-time buyer	£207,538	2.3	0.0
Former owner occupier	£280,908	2.9	-0.1

Building status for England

Building status	Average price September 2018	Annual price change % since September 2017	Monthly price change % since August 2018
New build	£305,763	3.7	-2.1
Existing resold property	£245,062	2.8	-0.1

*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 have fallen by 1.2% since October 2018. An annual price fall of 0.7% takes the average property value to £472,901.

Average price by property type for London

Property type	November 2018	November 2017	Difference %
Detached	£892,829	£892,900	0.0
Semi-detached	£572,207	£573,421	-0.2
Terraced	£493,579	£488,341	1.1
Flat/maisonette	£414,889	£421,807	-1.6
All	£472,901	£476,290	-0.7

Funding and buyer status for London

Transaction type	Average price November 2018	Annual price change % since November 2017	Monthly price change % since October 2018
Cash	£496,555	-1.3	-0.8
Mortgage	£465,668	-0.5	-1.3
First-time buyer	£413,744	-0.9	-1.1
Former owner occupier	£533,580	-0.5	-1.3

Building status for London

Building status	Average price September 2018	Annual price change % since September 2017	Monthly price change % since August 2018
New build	£488,763	-0.9	-3.9
Existing resold property	£475,739	-1.5	-1.1

*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 by 0.2% since October 2018. An annual price rise of 5.5% takes the average property value to £161,499.

There were 39 repossession sales for Wales in September 2018.

Average price by property type for Wales

Property type	November 2018	November 2017	Difference %
Detached	£243,487	£230,858	5.5
Semi-detached	£155,254	£147,383	5.3
Terraced	£126,244	£118,091	6.9
Flat/maisonette	£112,551	£111,842	0.6
All	£161,499	£153,109	5.5

Funding and buyer status for Wales

Transaction type	Average price November 2018	Annual price change % since November 2017	Monthly price change % since October 2018
Cash	£156,897	4.9	0.2
Mortgage	£164,230	5.8	0.3
First-time buyer	£139,568	5.4	0.4
Former owner occupier	£187,043	5.6	0.1

Building status for Wales

Building status	Average price September 2018	Annual price change % since September 2017	Monthly price change % since August 2018
New build	£213,625	7.5	-1.7
Existing resold property	£157,800	4.9	-0.2

*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

UK house prices rose by 2.8% in the year to November 2018, up slightly from 2.7% in the year to October 2018.

The UK Property Transaction Statistics for November 2018 showed that on a seasonally adjusted basis, the number of transactions on residential properties with a value of £40,000 or greater was 100,930. This is 0.5% lower compared with a year ago. Between October and November 2018, transactions increased by 0.1%.

House prices grew fastest in the West Midlands region, increasing by 4.6% in the year to November 2018. House prices in London fell by 0.7% in the year to November 2018. London house prices have been falling over the year since July 2018.

See the economic statement.

Notes to editors

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 2018 UK HPI will be published at 9.30am on Wednesday 13 February 2019. 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 (April 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. Work has been taking place since 2014 to develop a single, official HPI that reflects the final transaction price for sales of residential property in the UK. 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 April 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. It operates as an executive agency and a trading fund and its running costs are covered by the fees paid by the users of its services. 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 £4 trillion, including around £1 trillion of mortgages. The Land Register contains more than 25 million titles showing evidence of ownership for some 86% 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]()

Press release: Ofsted launches a consultation on proposals for changes to the education inspection framework

Summary:

- revised framework to focus inspection on what children learn through the curriculum, rather than over-reliance on performance data
- proposals will call time on the culture of ‘teaching to the test’ and off-rolling
- new separate behaviour judgement to give parents reassurance that behaviour is good
- most evidence-based, research-informed and tested framework in Ofsted’s 26-year history

The new framework proposes a shift that will rebalance inspection to make sure that young people are being taught the best of what has been thought and said. Instead of taking exam results and test data at face value, Ofsted will look at how a nursery, school, college or other provider’s results have been achieved – whether they are the result of broad and rich learning, or gaming and cramming.

Ofsted’s research has found that some children are having their teaching narrowed in schools in order to boost performance table points:

- in many primary schools, rather than reading a wide range of books, some children are instead spending their time repeating reading comprehension tests

- in certain secondary schools pupils are being forced to pick exam subjects a year or more early, meaning many lose out on the arts, languages and music
- at GCSE level, pupils are being pushed away from studying EBacc subjects such as history, geography, French and German, and towards qualifications deemed to be ‘easier’

Similar practices exist in the further education and skills sector, such as:

- some colleges offering ‘popular’ courses designed to attract maximum student numbers, rather than those which will lead to a job
- useful maths and English not being taught to support students’ vocational training
- apprenticeship providers focusing on quantity rather than quality, meaning young people don’t get the training they need

And in early years, instead of feeling able to spend time reading to children, or playing with them, nursery staff feel pressured into completing endless documentation to demonstrate each stage of a child’s development.

The new framework will seek to tackle these practices, looking instead at every stage of education from nursery to college, whether young people are being offered a rich curriculum which is taught well and leads to them achieving their all.

- a new ‘quality of education’ judgement, with the curriculum at its heart
- looking at outcomes in context and whether they are the result of a coherently planned curriculum, delivered well
- no longer using schools’ internal performance data as inspection evidence, to ensure inspection does not create unnecessary work for teachers
- separate judgements about learners’ ‘personal development’ and ‘behaviour and attitudes’
- extending on-site time for short inspections of good schools to 2 days, to ensure inspectors have sufficient opportunity to gather evidence that a school remains good

The ‘leadership and management’ judgement will remain, and will include looking at how leaders develop teachers and staff, while taking their workload and wellbeing into account. Inspectors will continue to make an overall effectiveness judgement about a provider. All judgements will still be awarded under the current 4-point grading scale. Parents will still get the information they value and understand.

The new framework builds on our existing expertise but marks a change in emphasis towards the substance of education. The proposed changes to the framework will make it easier to recognise and reward good work done by schools in areas of high disadvantage, by tackling the perverse incentives that leave them feeling they have to narrow the curriculum. Shifting the emphasis away from performance data will empower schools to always put the child first and actively discourage negative practices such as off-rolling.

Ofsted has also responded to the demand for parents to give better information about how well behaviour is managed in a school. A new separate behaviour judgement will assess whether schools are creating a calm, well-managed environment free from bullying. Alongside that, proposals for a 'personal development judgement' will recognise the work schools and colleges do to build young people's resilience and confidence in later life – through work such as cadet forces, National Citizenship Service, sports, drama or debating teams.

Launching the consultation in a speech to the Sixth Form Colleges Association, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, will say:

> The new quality of education judgement will look at how providers are deciding what to teach and why, how well they are doing it and whether it is leading to strong outcomes for young people. This will reward those who are ambitious and make sure that young people accumulate rich, well-connected knowledge and develop strong skills using this knowledge.
>
> This is all about raising true standards. Nothing is more pernicious to these than a culture of curriculum narrowing and teaching to the test.

She will continue:

> Two words sum up my ambition for the framework: substance and integrity.
>
> The substance that has all children and young people exposed to the best that has been thought and said, achieve highly and set up to succeed.
>
> And the integrity that makes sure every child and young person is treated as an individual with potential to be unlocked, and staff as experts in their subject or field, not just as data gatherers and process managers. And above all that you are rewarded for doing the right thing.
>
> Ofsted is committed to making sure that any changes to the inspection framework and approach are fair, reliable and valid.

Today's proposals are the result of well over a year of research, developmental work and discussions with a wide range of stakeholders. Since June 2017, Ofsted has held over 200 engagement events attended by more than 16,000 people. The feedback from these events has helped shape the new framework and approach. More stakeholder events are planned during the course of the consultation. The draft framework criteria have also been tested in a series of pilot inspections, which will continue throughout the spring term.

The draft framework is accompanied by a research commentary which underpins the evidence base for each of its aspects. As a result, Ofsted is confident that this will be the most evidence-based, researched and transparent framework in our history.

The consultation is open until 4 April 2019. Views are sought on the overall changes to the framework as well as on how they will work in practice for the individual education remits. All responses received will be considered carefully, and will help Ofsted to refine and improve the proposed approach before the final framework and inspection handbooks are published in summer 2019.