

# Press release: 20 years after the Northamptonshire Easter floods

The Environment Agency and its partners are calling on people to take steps to prepare for flooding and keep themselves and their families safe, 20 years after the Easter floods of 1998 caused devastation in Northamptonshire.

In 1998, an unusually wet spring led to severe flooding, with thousands of homes across the county affected. Two people lost their lives and over 150 people were hospitalised.

Northamptonshire County Council, Northampton Borough Council, Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service, Northamptonshire Police and the Environment Agency worked together both over the course of the floods and during the recovery process. In the 20 years since Easter 1998, great strides have been made to help protect over 7,000 properties that are at risk of flooding in the county.

The EA has invested £12 million in flood risk management in Northamptonshire over the last 2 decades. This investment contributed towards the completion of a number of works, including the construction of a flood storage reservoir at Weedon and significant improvements on the flood defences at Far Cotton and St James.

The EA is planning with its partners to invest a further £1.8 million by 2021 to reduce flood risk to even more people and properties across the county.

In addition to this investment, the EA has also made progress by using modern technology to improve the way it can warn people when flooding is possible. Over 4,500 properties in Northamptonshire are now signed up to receive flood warnings via their landlines, mobile phones or email addresses through the EA's free flood warning service.

Although the EA and its partners work around the clock to protect people and their property from flooding, the risk can never be completely eliminated. A third of properties at risk are still not registered to receive flood warnings, as residents have not signed up to the EA's free flood warning service. The EA urges people to prepare themselves and their loved ones for flooding by signing up now.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Flooding is always devastating for those affected, and I know this has been the case for people and businesses in Northamptonshire.

That is why we have invested almost £12m in Northamptonshire flood defences in the past 20 years with a further £1.8m planned by 2021 to reduce the risk even further for home owners and businesses.

Environment Agency Area Flood Risk Manager Ben Thornely said:

Although we can reflect on 20 years of progress being made since the significant floods of 1998, we also recognise that flooding remains a risk to local communities across Northamptonshire. Our staff and our partners work around the clock to protect people and their properties from flooding, but we can never stop the risk completely.

This is why our free flood warning service is so important. Flood warnings give people valuable time to prepare for flooding – time that allows them to move themselves, their families and precious items to safety. Our flood warnings save lives and enable the emergency services to prepare and help communities.

I'd urge residents across the county to check whether they are at risk of flooding and to sign up for flood warnings, by visiting [www.gov.uk/flood](http://www.gov.uk/flood) or calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

Cllr Ian Morris, county council cabinet member for transport, highways and environment, said:

Working with partners as the Lead Local Flood Authority for the County, an enormous amount of work has been done in the past two decades to tackle local flood risks.

The Pathfinder projects have empowered communities to tailor-make measures for their local areas, while the award-winning Flood Toolkit provides an online resource which acts as a central point of information for all flood-related issues.

However, we cannot be complacent and we recognise that we must continue to work together with the people of Northamptonshire to further reduce flood risk.

Cllr Mike Hallam, Northampton Borough Council's Cabinet member for environment, said:

Such events can be disastrous and it can take an age to recover from the devastation they leave in their wake.

A huge amount of work has been done in the past 2 decades to minimise the risk of such an awful event occurring again in Northampton but we remain ready to offer whatever support is needed in the event that it does.

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service's Deputy Chief Fire Officer David Harding, who served during the flooding 20 years ago, said:

As in 1998, Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service is there to help and protect people.

Advances in both training and equipment mean we are well prepared and equipped to respond to all emergency incidents requiring our services, including flooding, but our aim is to help prevent incidents before life is at risk. In this respect I urge everyone to help themselves and be prepared by signing up to the flood warning system.

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## [News story: Defence People Innovation Challenge Launch Event](#)

Following on from the Market Interest Day held on the 7 February 2018 to gather feedback from industry on the development of the competition. The [Defence People Innovation Challenge](#) will be officially launched on the 27 March 2018 at a Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) launch event in London.

Suppliers are invited to attend the event and submit ideas which are focused on the five sub-challenges; Recruitment, Skills and Training, Retention, Motivation and Rehabilitation, as outlined in the competition summary document.

People are central to Defence. We employ 195,520 full time military and civilians and 32,240 Part Time Reserves (as at 1 January 2018). We rely on the skills, commitment and professionalism of our people and place heavy demands on them. Recruiting, training and retaining the right mix of capable and motivated people is essential to success both on operations and at home.

Spending on People accounted for around 30% out of £36 billion Defence spending in 2016-17. Defence must continually keep its costs and activities under review to ensure that the best result is achieved with the resources available. This includes exploring all opportunities to consider how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our people and the supporting processes, behaviours and cultures.

The Defence People Innovation Challenge is intended to pull through innovative thinking from the private sector to help both address the challenges and consider how to integrate and exploit the benefits within current Defence structures.

Up to £3 million is available for this challenge in the first year with further funding available in future years.

The competition closes at 5pm on Wednesday 16 May 2018.

If you have any queries on how to enter this competition, please email the DASA inbox [accelerator@dstl.gov.uk](mailto:accelerator@dstl.gov.uk).

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## [Press release: Highways England gear up for the Easter getaway](#)

Highways England is preparing to lift and complete hundreds of miles of roadworks to help people travelling over Easter – with more than one billion miles set to be travelled in the run-up to the bank holiday.

To help those miles flow as smoothly as possible, teams from Highways England are working around the clock to remove 300 miles of roadworks – meaning 99 per cent of motorways and major A roads will be roadworks-free in time for Easter.

Highways England data shows of the more than 1bn miles travelled in the week leading up to Easter last year, more than 280 million miles were on Maundy Thursday alone; that's almost 20 million more than the preceding Thursday.

Highways England's customer service director, Melanie Clarke, said:

We're doing everything we can to make journeys as smooth as possible this Easter and that's why we're keeping 99 per cent of the road network we manage, free from roadworks.

Safety is our top priority and we know from experience that almost half of breakdowns can easily be avoided if motorists carry out simple vehicle checks before setting off over this period.

The motorway and major A-road network will be free of roadworks from 6am Thursday 29 March until 12.01am on Tuesday 3 April.

Highways England traffic officers will be working around the clock to help people who get into difficulty.

Highways England research shows almost half of all breakdowns are caused by simple mechanical problems which could be avoided with simple checks and nearly a quarter are caused by tyre problems.

Before they set off, Highways England is urging motorists to:

- Check fuel: Make sure you have enough to get to your destination

- Check tyres: check your tyre pressure and the condition of your tyres, including the spare. Look out for cuts or wear and make sure the tyres have a minimum tread depth of 1.6mm, which is the legal limit
- Check engine oil: Use your dipstick to check oil before any long journey, and top up if needed – take your car back to the garage if you're topping up more than usual
- Check water: To ensure you have good visibility, always keep your screen wash topped up so you can clear debris or dirt off your windscreen
- Check your lights: If your indicators, hazard lights, headlights, fog lights, reverse lights or brake lights are not functioning properly, you are putting yourself at risk. In addition, light malfunctions can be a reason for your vehicle to fail its MOT

Highways England also has a series of specialist videos online to help people carry out basic vehicle checks before they set off on their travels. The videos can be [viewed online](#).

Highways England is also urging drivers to stay safe this Easter by adhering to motorway signage, including the red X signals on smart motorways. Highways England close lanes for a reason and drivers ignoring red X signs put themselves and others at risk.

Find out more about [driving on smart motorways](#) for further information.

Drivers planning to use the Dartford Crossing are reminded to pay Dart Charge in advance or by midnight the day after crossing.

More information can be found on our website or by calling our information line (0300 123 5000) they can keep up to date with conditions on the roads.

For more detailed information on how to carry out your vehicle checks, [search Think!](#)

## Roadworks completed

A30 Hayle to Redruth (near Camborne) 1.3 mile(s) of roadworks completed.

A303 Honiton to Ilminster (near Newtown) 11.6 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A259 between Skinner roundabout and Brenzett roundabout (near Brookland, Kent ) 6 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A23 in both directions on Airport Way (near Crawley, Sussex ) 0.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A23/M23 jct11 Pease Pottage (near Crawley, Sussex) 0.2 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A27 between Cote Street and Offington roundabout (near Worthing, Sussex) 1.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A2 between Dover and Lydden (near Kent) 2.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed

for Easter period.

A27 Grovelodge roundabout (near Worthing, Sussex) 0.2 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A27 between Adur and Lancing (near Lancing, Sussex) 1.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A27 between Beddingham and Newhaven (near Sussex) 4.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A21 between Flimwell (A268) and Johns Cross (A2100) (near Robertsbridge, Sussex) 7 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A21 between Johns Cross (A2100) and Whatlington Road (near Mountfield, Sussex) 1.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A20, Western Heights roundabout to Courtwood Interchange (B2011) (near Dover, Kent) 3 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 16-17 (near Gerrards Cross) 0.2 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 10-9 (near Hatchford) 0.3 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M1 jct 4-5 (near Letchmore Heath) 0.3 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M1 jct 6A-6 (near Bricket Wood) 0.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A30 eastbound entry-slip from Egham (near Egham) 0.2 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 25-27 (near Epping) 3 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 / M3 link road (near Chertsey) 2.7 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A30 jct 13-12 (near Egham) 0.55 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M3 jct 1-2 (near Shepperton) 2.3 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 9-10 (near Hatchford) 1.75 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 12-11 (near Chertsey) 2.2 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A1 jct M25 to jct A5135 (near Ridge) 0.25 mile(s) of roadworks completed for

Easter period.

M25 jct 20 (near Kings Langley) 1.85 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 20 (near Kings Langley) 0.25 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A282 jct 2 (near Darenth) 0.1 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A282 East Tunnel (near Dartford) 0.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 28-27 (near Navestock) 2.55 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M11 jct 5-6 (near Abridge) 0.6 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 14-15 (near Longford) 1.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 / M23 link road (near Merstham) 2.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 8 (near Merstham) 1.45 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 7-9 (near Headley) 2.95 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A3 Esher Exit Slip (near Esher) 0.4 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 9-8 (near Headley) 0.75 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A13 – A1012 to A1089 (near North Stifford) 1.45 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 26-27 (near Waltham Abbey) 2.15 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A3 jct 10 (near Wisley) 0.3 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A1M jct 2 Slip Road (near Weltham Green) 0.2 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A1M jct 3-1 (near Weltham Green) 4.95 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M4 jct 4-4B (near Harlington) 2 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A3 Painshill to Esher (near Esher) 2.35 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A3 jct A245 to jct M25 (near Cobham) 1.6 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 11 entry slip (near Addlestone) 0.2 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 13-14 (near Hythe End) 2.35 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A30 / M25 jct 13 (near Egham) 0.3 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M1 jct 5-4 (near Letchmore Heath) 0.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A13 jct 30 (near South Ockendon) 1.1 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A2 / M25 jct 2 (near Darenth) 1.85 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A3 jct A245 to Transport for London local road (near Esher) 1.55 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A282 East Tunnel (near Dartford) 0.55 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A282 East Tunnel (near Dartford) 0.65 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 5-6 (near Westerham) 2.75 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A13 jct 30 (near South Ockendon) 0.2 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A3 jct A244 to jct M25 (near Cobham) 2.65 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 26 (near Waltham Abbey) 0.1 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 27-28 (near Navestock) 0.65 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 26-25 (near Waltham Abbey) 1.95 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A2 / M25 jct 2 (near Darenth) 2.6 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 16-17 (near Gerrards Cross) 2.6 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M3 jct 1-2 (near Shepperton) 2.3 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 5-6 (near Westerham) 2.8 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 5-6 (near Westerham) 2.8 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A3 Ripley Bypass to Painshill (near Wisley) 1.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 25-26 (near Waltham Abbey) 1.05 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 9-8 (near Headley) 0.7 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M3 jct 2-3 (near Chertsey) 2.7 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 5-7 (near Westerham) 2.7 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 15-14 (near Longford) 2.05 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A2 / M25 jct 2 (near Darenth) 3.8 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 8-9 (near Leatherhead) 2.25 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A30 / A308 (near Staines-upon-Thames) 4.95 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A30 London Road to Crooked Billet Roundabout (near Staines-upon-Thames) 3.1 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 15-14 (near Longford) 2.05 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A3 Ockham to Wisley (near Wisley) 0.2 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 10-11 (near Byfleet) 2.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 4-5 (near Shoreham) 3.05 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A3 jct A244 to jct M25 (near Cobham) 2.4 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A3 jct A245 to Transport for London local road (near Esher) 2.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 8-10 (near Hatchford) 1.65 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 12-11 (near Chertsey) 1.75 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 5-6 (near Westerham) 0.75 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M11 jct 4-5 (near Chigwell) 2.1 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A3 Transport for London local road to jct with A245 (near Esher) 2.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 12-10 (near Byfleet) 2.25 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M25 jct 5-6 (near Westerham) 2.65 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M1 jct 26-27 (near Nottingham) 5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A1 Carlton on Trent – Tuxford (near Newark on Trent) 5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A1 Colsterworth – Barrowby (near Grantham) 5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A14 jct 8-7 (near Kettering) 1.25 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A43 Abthorpe Roundabout – M1 jct 15a (near Towcester) 4 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A43 Evenley (near Brackley) 0.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A46 M1 jct 21a – Hobby Horse Roundabout (near Leicester) 5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A46 Groby – Anstey (near Leicester) 0.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A5 Burbage-Mancetter (near Nuneaton) 0.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A5 Kilsby – Danesway Roundabout (near Rugby) 1.75 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A5 Old Stratford – Towcester (near Towcester) 1.25 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A5 Danesway – Gibbet Hill Roundabout (near Rugby) 0.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A5 Gibbet Hill Roundabout – Magna Park (near Lutterworth) 2 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A5 Danesway – Gibbet Hill Roundabout (near Catthorpe) 2 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A5 Kilsby to Weedon (near Daventry) 5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A5 Magna Park – Burbage (near Hinckley) 5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A5 Kilsby to Weedon (near Daventry) 1.25 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M65 jct 8 eastbound exit (near Hapton) 0.2 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A1 (near Alnwick) 0.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A1 (near Alnwick) 13 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A66 (near Darlington) 0.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A1 (near Newcastle) 0.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A180 Stallingbrough to Great Coates 0.5 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

M1 Jct 45 (near Leeds) Junction improvement completed for Easter period.

M62 (Jct 33 to Jct 34) – Leeds 2 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

Marston Moretaine to Renhold (near Bedford) 2 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

A5 jct A4012 (near Hockliffe) 0.3 mile(s) of roadworks completed for Easter period.

## **Roadworks lifted**

A38 M1 (jct 28) – Ripley (near Alfreton) 5 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A38 Kingsway (near Derby) 2.5 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A14 jct 1-2 (near Market Harborough) 5 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A14 jct 2-3 (near Desborough) 5 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A1 Barrowby – Long Bennington (near Grantham) 5 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A453 Farnborough Road – Silverdale and A52 – Nottingham Knight (near Nottingham) 5 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

M55 jct 3 (near Windy Harbour) 3 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A66 junction with the B5322 (near Threlkeld) 1.5 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

M6 jct 39-40 (near Hardendale) 2 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A595 junction with the A597 & B5306 (near Distington) 1 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A1(M) (jct 57-58) – near Darlington ) 0.2 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

M62 (Jct 32 to Jct 30) – Leeds 3 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

M11 jct 7 (near Harlow) 1 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

M1 jct 9 – 10 (near Luton) 2.85 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A14 jct 58-55 westbound (near Ipswich) 2 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A120 Dovercourt to Ramsey (near Ramsey St Mary) 0.5 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A12 Colchester (near Colchester) 6 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A14 jct 38 (near Bury St Edmunds) 4 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

A12 jct 17-26 (near Colchester) 13 mile(s) of roadworks lifted for Easter period.

## General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

## Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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## [News story: More support to boost house building momentum](#)

Further steps that will support the government's comprehensive plans to build the homes the country needs were announced today (13 March 2018) by the Chancellor.

The measures include £100 million to back the Mayor of the West Midlands' ambitious plan to deliver 215,000 homes and confirmation of an £1.67 billion funding package for London to build affordable homes that families living in the capital so desperately need.

£60 million investment has also been announced to boost the Housing Growth Partnership fund that supports small and medium sized housebuilders enabling them to invest in housing projects and develop their businesses – so they can play their part in getting Britain building again.

Sir Oliver Letwin has also set out [next steps of his independent review](#) into the gap between planning permissions granted and homes completed.

These measures build on the major overhaul to the National Planning Policy Framework focused on increasing the supply of land, maintaining protections for the Green Belt and a greater emphasis on converting planning permissions into homes, [launched last week by the Prime Minister](#).

Measures announced as part of the Spring Statement:

### West Midlands Housing Package

A £100 million funding boost to the West Midlands for a [housing package](#) to support the mayor's ambitious target of delivering 215,000 homes by 2030 to 2031.

The funding, which will help acquire land and prepare it for housing as well as increasing density, recognises the Mayor's commitment to increase delivery to nearly 16,000 homes a year and ensure that all local authorities in the

area have local plans in place by the end of 2019 that reflect the commitment to deliver 215,000 homes.

We will be taking the Housing Infrastructure Fund Forward Funding bid for Housing Growth Areas including the Commonwealth Games site at Perry Barr through to co-development – the next stage of the competitive HIF process.

This comes ahead of a planned announcement next week setting out the 44 areas we will work with through the Housing Infrastructure Fund. Through this co-development stage we will be working with areas to develop projects with £4.1 billion available, to help build the homes the country needs.

## **Funding boost to build affordable homes in the capital**

A £1.67 billion funding package for London – to build 26,000 more of the affordable homes that are desperately needed by working families struggling with the costs of rent.

This deal, as part of the government's commitment to actively boost affordable housing supply, will overall see at least 116,000 more affordable homes in London and bring the total funding for affordable housing in London to £4.8 billion.

Giving a clear sign that the government recognises the acute housing problems faced in London this move is a key part of supporting councils and housing associations in the city to build more homes at rents that are affordable to local people.

This additional funding will deliver homes for social rent, as well as homes for London Affordable Rent, flexible shared ownership and rent to buy. At least two-thirds of the homes built with this additional funding will be for rent.

With London's population growing at its fastest rate in history and expected to rise to 9 million by 2020 the government has already delivered nearly 82,000 affordable homes in the area, including 58,000 homes specifically for rent since 2010.

And work continues with the Mayor, who has overall responsibility for housing policy and delivery in London.

£60 million investment has also been announced to boost the Housing Growth Partnership fund that supports small and medium sized housebuilders enabling them to invest in housing projects and develop their businesses – so they can play their part in getting Britain building again.

Lloyds Banking Group have match funded to bring the total additional investment to £120 million. The Partnership, launched in 2015, now stands to be worth £220 million, delivering 3,400 homes.

This money will help fund smaller builders to be able to invest in projects

and develop their businesses – allowing them to recruit and train skilled workers and become more competitive in their area.

## **Early review findings to tackle barriers to building**

Early findings of the independent review to understand why hundreds of thousands of homes haven't been built, despite having planning permission has been published in a [letter to the Chancellor and Sajid Javid](#).

Originally announced at Autumn Budget, the review, led by Sir Oliver Letwin is looking to explain the gap between the number of planning permissions being granted against those built in areas of high demand.

The first phase, which aimed to identify the main causes of the gap by reviewing large housing sites where planning permission has already been granted, focused on information-gathering sessions with local authorities, developers and non-government organisations and visits to large sites.

Sir Oliver's review has found that the absorption rate – the rate at which newly constructed homes can be sold into the local market – appears to be a fundamental driver of the rate at which houses are built.

In advance of publishing a Draft Analysis in June, Sir Oliver will investigate whether increasing the variety of homes built increases the rate at which homes can be sold. The final report will make recommendations on practical steps to increase the speed of build out is expected at Autumn Budget this year.

Thousands of first time buyers have already benefitted from the stamp duty relief the government announced at the Autumn Budget and over a million first-time buyers are set to benefit over the next 5 years.

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## **[News story: UK ratifies Hague Agreement for industrial designs](#)**

The UK has completed its final step in the UK joining the Hague Agreement for industrial designs. The UK instrument of ratification was deposited in Geneva today. It will come into effect three months following from today. Users will then will be able to choose design protection in the UK for international applications

The UK's decision to join the Hague system in a national capacity is about flexibility. It is part of a wider designs modernisation programme to streamline the designs legal framework. Businesses will have a greater choice

in how they register their designs internationally. They can also:

- save money on design registrations
- protect their Intellectual Property more efficiently, and
- encourage non-UK owners of designs to register their rights in the UK

The Hague Agreement allows applicants to register a design in any one of the 67 contracting parties through a single application.

Applications are filed to the International Bureau at the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). It provides protection in the territories of up to 82 countries through a single international application and a single set of fees.

Her Majesty's Ambassador, Julian Brathwaite and WIPO Director General, Francis Gurry, at WIPO HQ Geneva. Image source: WIPO

Tim Moss CBE, Chief Executive, IPO said:

Design intensive UK business generate in excess of 11 per cent of our GDP with a total investment in intangible assets protected by design rights estimated at more than £14 billion.

The UK's decision to join the Hague system in our national capacity will give businesses a greater choice in how to protect, manage and register their designs internationally, and save them money.

Our membership of this international system may also encourage non-UK owners of designs to register their rights in the UK for basing manufacturing, distribution or licensing of their intellectual property (IP).

These IP assets are important for innovative companies, especially for SMEs. They have a positive impact on job creation and economic growth.

UK businesses have had to access the Hague system since 2008 through the EU's membership of it. The UK currently has membership via the EU and is not a contracting party in its own right. Joining in a national capacity creates this option.

Further updates and guidance for business will be published in due course.