

Press release: Preparing sirens for winter

Four sirens, located approximately 250 metres apart in Chiswell, will be activated on Thursday (30 November 2017) at 11am, 2pm and 5pm, weather permitting. Local residents are being informed in advance via a leaflet drop and door-knocking exercise.

Rachel Burden, Wessex Flood and Coast Risk Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

Regular siren testing is an essential part of our forward planning, not only to ensure we are incident ready, but also to make sure our community flood warning and informing measures are effective.

If severe storms hit Portland, the sirens will play a crucial part in alerting local residents to imminent danger and potential evacuation. Ultimately, these sirens could help save lives.

The Chiswell area of Portland is classed as a high risk flood area because of the potential for strong south westerly winds, high tides in Lyme Bay and the close proximity of properties to the sea.

Rachel added:

Chiswell was badly affected by the floods in 2013/2014. It is a vulnerable area and can take a heavy pounding from the tides when the south westerly wind picks up. Although good flood protection measures are in place, we can never fully defend against the worst that Mother Nature can throw at us.

The sirens, which are tested twice a year, are extremely loud so that they can be heard above the noise of crashing waves during a storm. These modern sirens were installed in 2010 and replaced older Second World War equipment. An additional siren was put in during 2015 in order to fill a 'quiet spot' which was identified during the storms of the previous winter.

The testing will involve remote activation from our Blandford incident room, from the coastguard's hut and from the individual sirens. Representatives from the Environment Agency will be on hand to assist.

The day supports the annual Environment Agency [Flood Action Campaign](#).

[Driving and your eyesight: staying safe on the road](#)

If you drive, it goes without saying that you know you need your eyes on the road at all times. What you might not know is that DVLA has minimum eyesight standards that all drivers need to demonstrate so they can be allowed to drive.

So how do we decide on the vision standards for driving? DVLA's Vision Panel Secretary Dr Gareth Rees tells us more about his role and these standards.



I've been a doctor for 41 years and have been DVLA's Vision Panel Secretary for 10 years. My main role is to liaise between DVLA and the [Honorary Medical Advisory Panel on Visual Disorders](#). The panel meets every 6 months and is made up of eyesight specialists, who provide DVLA with expert advice on how to apply and interpret the law when [assessing fitness to drive](#).

Think your eyesight's getting worse? Act now

We all have busy lives, and sometimes we might overlook the signs that our eyes are not as good as they were. You might be finding it harder to judge distances, you might be struggling to read the newspapers, or it's getting more difficult for you to drive at night. These are just a few signs that [your eyesight may be deteriorating](#).

In line with [advice from optometrists](#), our advice is that you should get your eyes tested at least every 2 years. But if you recognise any of the signs above, don't wait – go and get checked out straight away with your optician or doctor. If they advise you to tell DVLA about your eyesight, you can do this [online or by writing to us](#).

If you don't meet the eyesight standards, stop driving immediately and tell DVLA.

After you tell us about your condition

Don't worry – usually, most people who [tell us they've got a medical](#)

[condition](#) are still allowed to drive.

If you have a 'progressive' (worsening) condition but can still meet the eyesight standards for driving, you may get a short-term licence rather than a full-term one. This type of licence lasts for 1, 2, 3 or 5 years and when it's due for renewal, we let you know.

It's better to be safe than sorry. So if you're in doubt, get it checked out.

Follow DVLA on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) and [subscribe](#) to our [Inside DVLA blog](#).

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[News story: Civil news: change to telephone number for Recovery Services](#)

You should use 0203 8144 366 if you wish to contact Recovery Services about the repayment of legal aid costs.

The new telephone number for Recovery Services is 0203 8144 366.

Callers to the new number will have the same options as before to have their call redirected to the right team for their enquiry.

Anyone calling the old number of 020 3334 6373 will hear a recorded message from 28 November 2017 asking them to redial using 0203 8144 366.

We will give notice before the recorded message is removed and the old number taken out of service.

Further information

RecoveryServices-Enquiries@Justice.gov.uk – for questions about this change

[Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on Chennai Six verdict](#)

Following the announcement of a verdict in the Chennai Six case, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

Since I became Foreign Secretary, this case has been a top priority for everybody at the Foreign Office and today's verdict is fantastic news.

The FCO has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to reunite these men with their families. The importance the UK government places on their case cannot be understated.

The men, their families and their supporters, who have campaigned unrelentingly, must be overjoyed. I share their delight and I hope they can return home as soon as possible.

Speech: Community-led housing

Introduction

Thank you, Sophie. [Sophie Long, BBC News correspondent and presenter (event host)]

The BBC folk seem to get the best gigs in town.

I am speaking at an event being compered by Mark Easton next.

[Easton [RESI conference](#) story]

I am absolutely delighted to be here at what is a landmark moment for community-led housing.

Today's event – the first ever conference to bring the sector together – is testament to just how far you have come.

With [half of the 225 plus Community Land Trusts](#) in England and Wales having been set up in the past 2 years, the momentum is clearly growing.

And I want you to know that I am behind you all the way.

Benefits

Because the strengths of community-led housing speak for themselves.

You know your local areas better than anyone.

And are better placed to make things happen.

To see the potential of small sites.

Difficult sites.

Sites that are off limits or of no interest to developers.

You are not waiting for someone else to step in and just take what you are offered.

You are designing and developing houses that you and your neighbours are proud to call home.

Homes that, from the word go, are an integral part of your communities.

Homes that are not just affordable now, but are affordable forever.

That are models of high quality design, energy efficiency and innovation.

And it's not just the people in those homes who benefit.

Because your work raises the bar for the entire housing market.

Pushing up expectations of design quality.

Powering the growth of modern methods of construction.

And, by supporting smaller-scale building companies making the house building industry more diverse and resilient.

But the benefits go further still.

By giving people a hand in the conversion or refurbishment of empty properties you are equipping them with new and highly transferrable construction skills.

You are sustaining local economies by giving young home-grown talent affordable places to live and a reason to stay.

You're not just building better homes.

You're building better communities.

Barriers

And I certainly don't underestimate what that takes.

You face significant barriers, such as access to pre-development grants, loans or mortgages and a lack of understanding or resources at a local policy level.

But the biggest barriers are almost certainly cultural.

It is a simple idea: if you need a home, why not build it?

Yet most people in our country never even consider it seriously.

And, if they do, they might think of either Grand Designs or some kind of flat-pack nightmare on an epic scale.

I know, from living and working in Europe that homes built by local

communities are a normal part of the landscape in countries like Germany and Sweden.

People there may be somewhat surprised that we need to have a conference about it at all.

Yet here in Britain, the term “community-led housing” is likely to be met with blank looks.

Well, outside this room anyway!

And, even when explained, it’s seen as a heroic endeavour that is only for the most extraordinary and adventurous of individuals.

Of course you are extraordinary people. And I don’t normally like to single out individuals from a sea of excellence.

But on this occasion I must.

There’s Maria Brenton, who for 18 years and counting has committed herself to the Older Women’s Cohousing project in Barnet.

There’s Geoff Pook, from the Beer CLT, who formed a group, secured funding, secured Registered Provider status and built 7 homes – and did it all in just 2 years.

Two years!

I’ve had flat-pack furniture in garage still not assembled after 5 years!

And let’s not forget one of the first innovators, David Brown, who has just stood down as Chair of High Bickington Community Property Trust after almost 2 decades.

Maria, Geoff and David are truly inspirational, and I take my hat off to them, and indeed to all of you.

But I want community-led housing to be a realistic option not just for exceptional people but for all people.

Even politicians!

Realising the sector’s potential

This is vital if we are to realise the true potential of this sector.

To empower more communities.

To, ultimately, see community-led housing playing a much bigger role in delivering the houses our country desperately needs.

Delivering these houses is an overriding priority for this government.

Recent figures showed that the number of homes in England increased by more

than 217,000 last year – the highest level of net additions since the depths of the recession.

But you saw in February's [housing white paper](#), and again in last week's ambitious [Budget](#), that we want to go further still.

That we want to build more of the right homes, in the right places, at the right prices.

And I believe that community-led housing has a huge role to play in helping us to do just that.

Announcement

A year ago we backed the sector with the launch of the Community Housing Fund.

Since then, we've awarded £60 million in grants to help 148 local authorities support more community-led projects

The grants, which ranged in size, were paid to authorities that had the least affordable homes or the highest density of second homes.

Alongside the money, we gave advice on how to spend it in order to deliver the best results.

And we wanted the grants to help build capacity and support local projects, now and into the future.

Some fantastic work has been happening as a result .

Many councils – such as in Sussex, Hampshire and London – have pooled these resources to provide an information and support hub for community groups.

Others – such as Cornwall and West Dorset – have already used the money directly to help get the projects off the ground.

In short, this funding has been a success.

So today I can today announce that we will launch a new programme of funding to help build thousands more homes.

Worth £60 million in the first year alone, it will provide both capital and revenue funding, with flexibility to meet demand.

A significant element of the funding will also go towards developing an advisory network that supports community groups to bring forward projects.

We will shortly publish a prospectus setting out criteria for bids.

And, from January, we will invite applications from community groups, registered providers and any other appropriate organisations.

Bids will be assessed by the experts at Homes England, our new national housing agency.

And we hope to announce the first allocations as soon as Easter.

It is vitally important to me that we continue to work closely with the sector in delivering this programme, just as we have done in the design phase.

Many of you have had a hand in shaping this new programme of work. And I hope you will reap the rewards.

And I also hope you will come together to share your vast experience and expertise.

I want to ensure that our investment in the sector makes a real difference and your contribution will be invaluable in helping us achieve this.

That's why I will be setting up an advisory group to steer the Department of Communities and Local Government on the delivery of the programme.

Conclusion

Some will say this just small fry.

That community-led housing currently accounts for just a few hundred units a year – under half a per cent of total housing output in England.

That the scale of the challenge before us – building 300,000 homes a year – dwarfs the capacity of the community-led sector.

But when the community-led movement began it was producing just a handful of homes each year.

First that grew to a few dozen, then to a few hundred.

Now, with government on your side, there is no reason why those hundreds cannot become thousands.

No single measure will fix our broken housing market.

But with action on many fronts, with the dedication of many people, we can get there.

It will take time.

But I know that we can do it.

And community-led housing has a serious contribution to make.

There are few sectors that boast the combination of talent and passion that we have here today.

People who are totally committed to making their communities better places to

live.

So let's do everything we can to get even more people involved in community-led housing.

Together with you I want to make the idea of communities building the homes they need not a radical departure, but an everyday reality.

And for the sector to play its part in getting Britain building.

Thank you.