

Press release: More than 100 housing estates receive regeneration cash boost

More than 100 housing estates across the country are set to benefit from a significant investment to kick-start their regeneration, the Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has announced today (24 March 2017).

From Gateshead to Plymouth, the £32 million Estate Regeneration Fund will be distributed to local authorities and housing associations across England to speed up the building of thousands of new homes.

After successful engagement with local communities, a total of 105 estates will benefit from the funding, to be used to speed up regeneration schemes in their early stages. It will also help address problems that hold up projects and give local authorities access to skills to ensure high-quality regeneration.

In Birmingham, the money will be used to start discussions with local communities and ensure the Meadway regeneration creates a place local residents are proud of. In Milton Keynes it will be used to kick start the regeneration of 6 estates to provide thousands of new homes.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

For too long a number of housing estates across the country have been areas characterised by low-quality homes and high social deprivation.

This government is determined to have a housing market that works for everyone. That's why we're turbocharging the regeneration of these rundown estates, so they can thrive as communities.

Housing and Planning Minister Gavin Barwell said:

Our housing white paper set out ambitious proposals to help fix the broken housing market and to encourage good design.

Estates regeneration must be locally-led, and this £32 million fund will help breathe new life into estates throughout the country. It will help more ordinary working people have the security of a decent place to live.

Reforms in the recently published [housing white paper](#) set out the government's bold new plans to build more homes across England. This funding

will help provide thousands of new homes from the carefully planned redesign of estates.

Announced last year, the [Estate Regeneration Strategy](#) offered a blueprint for regenerating estates, providing advice and guidance to help improve and speed up development.

In addition to the £32 million released, £140 million in loan funding is available over the length of this Parliament to encourage investment in regeneration from the private sector to help build places that work for everyone.

Local authorities and housing associations submitted bids for the funding. Bids were assessed by a joint panel of the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Homes and Communities Agency.

The £140 million loan fund was initially announced last year, and is designed to cover costs such as land assembly, leaseholder buy-outs, re-housing costs, demolition, and preparatory construction works.

The Estates Regeneration Advisory Panel, co-chaired by the Housing Minister and Lord Heseltine met 6 times during 2016 to help develop the [Estate Regeneration National Strategy](#).

[News story: Alcohol industry updating the health information on its labels](#)

The alcohol industry is updating the health information on its labels, to reflect the latest scientific evidence.

The Department of Health worked closely with industry on the [guidance for this labelling](#), to better reflect the latest advice on alcohol published by the UK Chief Medical Officers last year.

Public Health Minister Nicola Blackwood said:

The right to enjoy a drink responsibly is part of our national culture, and we want to ensure that adults have clear information in order to make informed choices.

This change is industry-led, and I welcome this commitment to giving clear and factual information to consumers.

[The UK Chief Medical Officers' low-risk alcohol guidelines](#), released in 2016,

aim to help people understand the risks alcohol may pose to their health, as part of the Government's common sense approach to this issue.

They are based on the latest scientific information and represent the most comprehensive review of the evidence on alcohol in 20 years.

[No. 2 Mechanical Transport Squadron Rolls out for Exercise Frisian Flag](#)

No. 2 Mechanical Transport Squadron Rolls out for Exercise Frisian Flag

The Netherlands is the destination for No. 2 Mechanical Transport Squadron as RAF Wittering's famous drivers set off in support of Exercise Frisian Flag on 21st March 2017.

A blustery afternoon saw seventeen trucks loaded with enough equipment to support six tornado jets and 140 personnel leave Cambridgeshire's historic air station. During Exercise Frisian Flag the RAF will operate alongside many European air forces and the United States Air National Guard.

Squadron Leader Rick Longworth is Officer Commanding No. 2 Mechanical Transport Squadron. He said: "Not everything can be moved by air; sometimes you need the economy and flexibility of surface transport, which helps us to keep our valuable transport aircraft available for tasking."



2MT, as the Squadron is known, provides the RAF with its only heavy-lift transport capability by road or sea, supporting operations and exercises across the globe. In addition to HGVs, the Squadron also boasts airfield support vehicles like aircraft towing tractors and fuel bowsers.

Squadron Leader Longworth continued: "This is not the sort of work you can just give to a haulage company. Trained airmen and airwomen are needed for this job; military drivers who understand how to work around an operational airfield and move aviation equipment."



The Squadron was formed during the Battle of Britain when spares for the Spitfires and Hurricanes, ammunition and equipment had to be urgently ferried from airfield to airfield. In Exercise Frisian Flag, the air forces of the world will practise defensive and offensive mixed-fighter operations.

In addition to the RAF Tornados, F-16s, F-15s, Mirage 2000's and the distinctive Typhoon will be operating in the Dutch skies for the duration of the exercise. When Frisian Flag ends, 2MT will be sent to recover all the UK equipment and return it in good order.

Group Captain Rich Pratley is the Station Commander at RAF Wittering and Commanding Officer of the A4 Force Elements, of which 2MT is a part. He said: "Frisian Flag is an important exercise; in deployments like these the Royal Air Force projects the UK's global influence by working in close partnership with our international allies."



Group Captain Pratley continued: "This is the second time in as many days that 2MT has been dispatched to support an exercise, this tells us that the Squadron offers Defence a very useful capability and one that the RAF is happy to showcase to our international partners."

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[Press release: Oxford flood alleviation scheme uncovers a piece of the city's history](#)

The findings include ancient road surfaces, culverts, pottery, and other objects which have helped date an ancient crossing point of the River Thames and its tributaries, at what is now known as Old Abingdon Road.

The Oxford flood alleviation scheme project team commissioned the archaeological study as part of the detailed design for the scheme. Part of the proposed scheme is to construct new culverts to carry flood water beneath the road. These investigations have enabled the team to carefully plan where the new culverts will go to minimise impact on the ancient structures lying beneath.

The route of the Old Abingdon Road is thought to be part of a stone or earth causeway known as Grandpont, which also includes Folly Bridge, built by Robert d'Oilly who built Oxford Castle in 1071. Grandpont had over 30 different arches or culverts which crossed the rivers, streams and marshes in the area, with over 7 of these thought to be beneath the Old Abingdon Road. The causeway may have dated from the Saxon period as there is evidence of 2 fords in this area from that time (source: [Historic England](#)).

From past investigations in this area it is believed that there were culverts beneath the road dating from Norman (1066 to 1154) and later medieval (12th to late 15th century) times. The culverts were designated 'scheduled monuments' in October 2012. Our findings suggest there are more culverts along this road.

Joanna Larmour, Project Director, said:

Our archaeologists found that as the ground was quite compacted beneath the various road surfaces, they had to use hand digging tools to complete their investigations.

We found some great pieces, including pottery shards from a medieval jug, a horseshoe from the late 17th Century to 18th century and most importantly for us, evidence of ancient culverts. These all help us understand just how long this has been a river crossing and a route into Oxford.

The investigation found a total of 6 pottery shards, 4 pieces of clay tobacco pipe, 2 pieces of ceramic building material, 6 iron finds including nails, a horseshoe, a connecting piece from a harness, 7 pieces of glass from a post-medieval bottle or flask, and a window pane.

These were all hidden amongst a series of medieval and post-medieval road surfaces which the team had to break through to get to the oldest features underneath.

In addition, the investigations found some structural features including stone kerb, a roadside ditch likely to be from the 12th Century, and a culvert, now demolished, which is likely to be Norman or Medieval similar to the known, scheduled culverts.

From these finds and using existing historical knowledge, we can build up quite a picture of life in this area. The type of soils and gravels in this area suggest that it had firmer soil deposits than the rest of the floodplain, and indicate why it was chosen as a suitable crossing point of the River Thames. The medieval causeway was probably cambered, with drainage ditches either side carrying run off into the streams of the Thames that ran beneath the causeway in a stone culvert. The other culverts in this area have a raised roof, and if this culvert had the same, the causeway would have had a hump-back at this point. From the artefacts found, we know that the route has been used as a crossing from medieval times, up to the present day.

In the late 17th to 18th centuries, the route underwent a major rebuild, which we can tell from the deposits and material that we found. It is possible that this is when our culvert was demolished. The surfaces from this time lie within a series of kerb stones.

The Oxford flood alleviation scheme project team have shared these finds with Oxford City and County Archaeologists as well as Historic England (due to their responsibility for scheduled ancient monuments). They will follow this work up with more archaeological investigations in different locations in the scheme area, which will be completed over the coming months.

Catherine Grindey, Senior Archaeologist for the Environment Agency, said:

From our perspective, the archaeological evaluation was a great success. We have had many questions answered and have better information on which to base our plans.

This knowledge means that the team can finalise the scheme design in the Old Abingdon Road area, and ensure it has minimal impact on the history beneath the road.

The detailed design of the scheme will be shared at a public consultation from 5 May to 6 June 2017, which will be run both online and at a series of 4 events in the scheme area:

- 2pm to 8pm, Thursday 11 May 2017 at West Oxford Community Centre, OX2 0BT
- 2pm to 8pm, Friday 12 May 2017 at South Oxford Community Centre, OX1 4RP
- 2pm to 8pm, Monday 15 May 2017 at Oxford Deaf and Hard of Hearing Centre, OX1 1RL
- 2pm to 8pm, Thursday 18 May 2017 at St Luke's Church, OX1 4XB

The consultation will also give local communities the opportunity to give feedback about some of the scheme features they have told us they are most interested in, such as the new bridges we will be installing, footpath furniture and signage.

Keep up-to-date with the scheme via the [Oxford flood scheme webpage](#), via our [Facebook page](#), on [Twitter](#) and via our scheme newsletter. If you would like to sign up for our newsletter, please email oxfordscheme@environment-agency.gov.uk.

The Oxford flood alleviation scheme is a partnership project involving the Environment Agency, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, Vale of White Horse Council, Oxford Flood Alliance, The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, University of Oxford, Thames Water and Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

The scheme will involve lowering parts of the floodplain and widening some of the rivers and streams that run through it, to create more space for floodwater, and reduce flood risk to the city. It is currently estimated to cost £120 million.

For media enquiries Mon-Friday 9am to 5pm please call 03708 506 506. After this time, please call the Duty Communications Officer on 0800 141 2743.

[Press release: Report 05/2017: Near](#)

miss between a train and a track worker at Shawford

RAIB has today released its report into a near miss between a train and a track worker at Shawford on 24 June 2016.

Summary

At 12:22 hrs on 24 June 2016, a train travelling at about 85 mph (137 km/h) narrowly missed striking a track worker near Shawford station, Hampshire. The track worker and a controller of site safety (COSS) had gone onto the railway to locate a reported rail defect. The track worker was not injured but was badly shaken by the incident. After making an emergency stop, the train driver reported the incident and was fit to continue his journey.

The immediate cause was that the track worker had become distracted while he was standing on a line on which trains were running. This happened because there was a breakdown in safety discipline and vigilance when the COSS and track worker went onto the railway. Firstly, they did not implement the required safe system of work for going onto the railway at Shawford. Secondly, the track worker crossed the railway without the permission of the COSS. Thirdly, the track worker was distracted and stopped on an open line when crossing back. The RAIB found a similar breakdown in safety discipline and vigilance when it investigated a fatal accident at Newark North Gate (report 01/2015). It is probable that the track worker's alertness and decision making were affected by fatigue, because he had slept in his car all week to avoid making long journeys to and from home each day. A possible underlying factor was that the rail testing and lubrication section within the Network Rail delivery unit involved was not resilient to any loss of resources or sudden increase in workload. Although not causal to the incident, the RAIB also observed that the way in which the section carried out safe system of work planning for its staff was not compliant with Network Rail's processes, and neither the COSS nor the track worker reported their involvement in the incident at the time.

Recommendations

In addition to a previous recommendation and learning point from the Newark North Gate accident, which also address the key issue of the breakdown in safety discipline and vigilance in this incident, the RAIB has made three new recommendations, addressed to Network Rail. The first relates to the management of fatigue for staff needing to make long journeys before and after a shift. The second relates to making the rail testing and lubrication section of the delivery unit more able to accommodate a short-term loss of resource and peaks in workload. The third recommendation calls for Network Rail to consider the reasons why its management arrangements on Wessex Route did not detect and rectify the non-compliances with the processes for managing the safety of people working on or near the line. The investigation

also identified six learning points about: reminding staff of the importance of following existing rules and procedures; how the early use of the train's horn by drivers to give an urgent warning can avert an accident if track workers on their line do not acknowledge the first horn warning; and the timely reporting of operational incidents.

Notes to editors

1. The sole purpose of RAIB investigations is to prevent future accidents and incidents and improve railway safety. RAIB does not establish blame, liability or carry out prosecutions.
2. RAIB operates, as far as possible, in an open and transparent manner. While our investigations are completely independent of the railway industry, we do maintain close liaison with railway companies and if we discover matters that may affect the safety of the railway, we make sure that information about them is circulated to the right people as soon as possible, and certainly long before publication of our final report.
3. For media enquiries, please call 01932 440015.

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