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Press release

## **Pro-growth package unshackling Britain to get building**

Pro-growth changes to the government's landmark Planning and Infrastructure Bill to get Britain building faster.

From:

[\*\*Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government\*\*](#), [\*\*The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP\*\*](#) and [\*\*The Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP\*\*](#)

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- New measures to slash delays and get Britain building faster through landmark Planning and Infrastructure Bill
- New powers for Secretary of State could stop councils rejecting planning permissions, tackle blockers in the courts, alongside plans to accelerate reservoirs, windfarms and large housing schemes
- Turbocharging the Plan for Change to create high-paying jobs, put money back into people's pockets, and secure more homegrown clean energy

New homes, more clean energy, and greater water security will be within reach for hundreds of thousands of working people and families, as the government vows to sweep aside blockers standing in the way of growth and dismantle barriers to get Britain building.

A pro-growth package announced by the government this week (Tuesday 14 October) will look at supporting the full potential of the landmark Planning and Infrastructure Bill – a key driver for growth to slash planning delays currently shackling the UK economy.

If voted through, Ministers will get new powers to prevent applications being rejected by local councils while they consider using 'call-in' powers to decide whether or not they should be approved. Currently some councils are dragging their feet to get on and build with nearly 900 major housing schemes blocked in the past year alone.

New proposed measures would greenlight reservoirs faster, pumping fresh water into the taps of people's homes, and unlocking new opportunities for housebuilding after more than 30 years without a new reservoir in the UK.

Pro-growth changes will pave the way for cleaner energy, including onshore windfarms, to drive millions of pounds of investment into local areas, prevent bill hikes and create thousands of new jobs.

Allowing Natural England to streamline its role by freeing it up to make sensible choices on when to provide advice to local authorities will free up valuable resources. This will enable the organisation to focus on higher priority planning applications and nature recovery, helping to accelerate approvals for new homes and infrastructure.

Under government plans builders will also receive a helping hand to stop planning permissions from being timed out on vital housing projects tied up in the courts, accelerating and unlocking stalled schemes so money can be better spent on getting spades in the ground rather than starting back at square one.

If passed, each of these pro-growth changes will accelerate the government's Plan for Change to build 1.5 million homes, achieve clean power by 2030, raise living standards in every corner of the country and put more money back into working people's pockets.

**Housing Secretary, Steve Reed said:**

"Britain's potential has been shackled by governments unwilling to overhaul the stubborn planning system that has erected barriers to building at every turn. It is simply not true that nature has to lose for economic growth to succeed.

"Sluggish planning has real world consequences. Every new house blocked deprives a family of a home. Every infrastructure project that gets delayed blocks someone from a much-needed job. This will now end.

"The changes we are making today will strengthen the seismic shift already underway through our landmark Bill. We will 'Build, baby, build' with 1.5 million new homes and communities that working people desperately want and need."

As the landmark Planning and Infrastructure Bill rapidly continues its way through Parliament and is set to become law this year, this week's wide-ranging package fully embraces the government's drive to go further and faster in unleashing the biggest era of building in the country's history. Key changes include:

- Ministers will be able to issue ‘holding directions’ to stop councils refusing planning permission whilst they consider using their ‘call-in’ powers. Under existing rules, they can only issue these holds when council are set to approve applications. This will ensure Ministers can properly use their call-in powers where necessary to boost growth and build more homes.
- Speeding up the approvals for large reservoirs by enabling non-water sector companies to build reservoirs that are automatically considered as nationally significant infrastructure projects.
- Unlocking more onshore windfarms, securing around 3GW of onshore wind and up to £2 billion extra investment for UK based businesses, whilst safeguarding UK defence and seismic detection capabilities.
- Stopping planning permissions from being timed out for approved major housing schemes facing lengthy judicial reviews, building on existing measures to cut back meritless legal challenges for major infrastructure projects from three to one and slashing a year off the statutory pre-consultation period.
- Securing a win-win across land and sea by allowing the Nature Restoration Fund to support the delivery of marine development, securing better environmental outcomes for marine habitats whilst accelerating the construction of coastal projects.
- Natural England is currently wasting precious resources because they are required by law to respond to every query from local authorities that relates to nature. Streamlining Natural England’s role will speed up approvals for new homes and infrastructure by reducing unnecessary duplication and allowing greater discretion to focus on applications that pose higher risks or present stronger opportunities for nature recovery, with standard guidance provided to local authorities for straightforward cases.

Thanks to new pro-growth reforms, the government remains firmly on track to make 150 planning decisions on major infrastructure projects, with a record breaking 21 decisions in the first year of any Parliament, and has already greenlit projects including hot-off-the-wheels Gatwick airport expansion and the long-awaited Lower Thames Crossing.

**Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves said:**

“The outdated planning system has been gummed up by burdensome bureaucracy and held to ransom by blockers for too long.

“Our pro-growth planning bill shows we are serious about cutting red tape to get Britain building again, backing the builders not the blockers to speed up projects and show investors that we are a country that gets spades in the ground and our economy growing.”

This announcement follows the Housing Secretary's commitment to 'Build, baby, build', as the government begins to embark on the next phase of reforms to remove every barrier to build 1.5 million homes this Parliament as well as accelerate the construction of major infrastructure including roads, railways, and solar farms.

Planning reforms already made by the government will alone drive housebuilding to its highest level in over 40 years, and this does not account for measures to be brought forward through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

The government's own analysis confirmed earlier this year that changes to get Britain building could benefit the economy by up to £7.5 billion over the next 10 years.

**Further information:**

The government's package of amendments to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill can be read in full [here](#).

The landmark Bill is set to return to the House of Lords for its Report Stage on Monday 20 October.

**John Foster, CBI Chief Policy & Campaigns Officer, said:**

"The CBI welcomes the latest amendments to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill as an important signal that the government wants to go further and faster in reforming our inefficient planning system.

"Action that cuts delays to planning processes and simplifies environmental approvals is critical to getting projects moving faster and unlocking the economic growth the country needs.

"Allowing ministers to act decisively on major applications, streamlining Natural England oversight, and broadening investment to key assets like reservoirs will unlock significant investment across the country."

**Vicky Evans, UKIMEA Cities, Planning and Design Leader, Arup, said:**

"Investing in critical infrastructure, such as housing, clean energy, and water security, is crucial to unlocking economic growth and building a sustainable, low-carbon future.

"The amendments put down by the government today are an important step forward in streamlining the planning system which will help significantly to speed up the delivery of water and energy infrastructure, and new homes."

**Ana Musat, RenewableUK's Director of Policy and Engagement said:**

"We have ambitious targets across various clean technologies and our grid infrastructure to ensure we deliver the government's Clean Power 2030 mission, and the measures outlined today represent a vital step towards realising these whilst protecting

our environment and enabling local businesses and billpayers to directly feel the benefits.

“Onshore wind is one of the quickest and cheapest technologies to build and we welcome these proposals to ensure we can fully capitalise on this through a more efficient planning process, potentially enabling up to 3GW of capacity and £2 billion in additional investment for local businesses. Additionally, we welcome the introduction of the Nature Restoration Fund, which will work alongside the upcoming Marine Recovery Fund to deliver a joined-up approach to protecting the UK’s precious species and habitats while we construct and connect our substantial pipeline of clean energy projects. This will dovetail with the reduced administrative burden on Natural England, which will be freeing up its resources to work collaboratively on solutions to support the deployment of renewables.”

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