

WEEKLY MONITORING

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Cabinet Reshuffle: new Housing Minister is John Healey MP

The Prime Minister has carried out a Cabinet reshuffle, brought forward following the resignation of the Work and Pensions Secretary James Purnell on the evening of June 4. This week also saw the resignation announcements of Jacqui Smith, the Home Secretary, Hazel Blears, the Communities Secretary, Beverley Hughes, the Children’s Minister and Tom Watson, the Cabinet Office Minister.

John Denham becomes the Communities and Local Government Secretary. Margaret Beckett leaves the Cabinet and Government, with John Healey who was the Local Government Minister, replacing her as Minister for Housing and Planning.

The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills is also merged with the Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform department creating the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills which will be headed up by Lord Mandelson. Sir Alan Sugar will also become Enterprise Tsar.

Cabinet	
Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service	The Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP
Leader of the House of Commons and Lord Privy Seal; Minister for Women and Equality (and deputising for the Prime Minister at PMQs)	The Rt Hon Harriet Harman QC MP
First Secretary of State, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills and Lord President of the Council	The Rt Hon Lord Mandelson
Chancellor of the Exchequer	The Rt Hon Alistair Darling MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs	The Rt Hon David Miliband MP
Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor	The Rt Hon Jack Straw MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department	The Rt Hon Alan Johnson MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP

Secretary of State for International Development	The Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government	The Rt Hon John Denham MP
Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families	The Rt Hon Ed Balls MP
Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change	The Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP
Secretary of State for Health	The Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	The Rt Hon Shaun Woodward MP * and #
Leader of the House of Lords and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	The Rt Hon Baroness Royall of Blaisdon
Minister for the Cabinet Office, and for the Olympics and Paymaster General	The Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP
Secretary of State for Scotland	The Rt Hon Jim Murphy MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions	The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Chief Secretary to the Treasury	The Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP
Secretary of State for Wales	The Rt Hon Peter Hain MP
Secretary of State for Defence	The Rt Hon Bob Ainsworth MP
Secretary of State for Transport	Lord Adonis
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport	Ben Bradshaw MP
Other Cabinet attendees	
Chief Whip (Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury)	The Rt Hon Nick Brown MP
Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office	The Rt Hon Lord Malloch-Brown
Minister of State (Housing), Department for Communities and Local Government	The Rt Hon John Healey MP
Minister of State (Business), Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	The Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP
Minister of State (Science and Innovation), Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	The Rt Hon Lord Drayson*
Attend Cabinet when their Ministerial responsibilities are on the agenda	
Attorney General	The Rt Hon Baroness Scotland of Asthal QC
Minister of State (Children), Department for Children, Schools and Families	The Rt Hon Dawn Primarolo MP
Minister of State (Employment), Department for Work and Pensions	The Rt Hon Jim Knight MP
Minister of State (Regional Economic Development and Co-ordination) Department for	The Rt Hon Rosie Winterton MP

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Halifax House Price Index – May 2009

According to the Halifax House Price index, house prices increased by 2.6% in May. This increase followed three successive monthly declines of between 1.8% and 2.3%.

However, Halifax stress that it is always important not to place too much weight on any one month's figures. Historically, house prices have not moved in the same direction month after month even during a pronounced downturn. For example, prices fell by 11% nationally during 1991 and 1992, but there were five monthly price rises in this period.

Prices in the three months to May compared to the previous three months - a better indicator of the underlying trend - were 3.1% lower. The rate of decline on this measure has slowed however, from the 5-6% recorded consistently between June 2008 and January 2009.

[May 2009 house price index](#)

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Housing and Construction

PMQs – Repossessions

During Prime Minister's Questions on 3 June, Paul Rowen MP asked: With up to 50,000 home owners facing repossession this year, if the Government are doing so much to help them, why is it that only two people have been helped so far?

The Prime Minister replied: That is not correct. Thousands of people are being helped with the various schemes. The first is the mortgage income support scheme for people who are unemployed, which is now available for those with houses worth under £200,000, and large numbers of people are claiming that. The second is the moratorium that is available on people's building society and bank payments, which we negotiated with building societies. The third is the shared equity scheme, where we are prepared to buy a share of the house to help people move forward. Discussions on that are moving forward for large numbers of people. The fourth is the measures that we are taking to deal with the way in which

the banks approach mortgages in the first place.

The recent report of the Council of Mortgage Lenders said that they expected repossessions to be far less than they had predicted, as a result of the action that we are taking. Any repossession is to be regretted. There are many circumstances in which repossessions happen—for example, if there is a family break-up which is nothing to do with the financial situation of an employee—but there are other situations where repossessions are caused by the lack of money. We are trying to help those people to maintain their mortgages and renegotiate them. I think the hon. Gentleman will find that no Government have done more to help mortgage payers to prevent repossessions. That is what a Labour Government are about. We will not walk by on the other side.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090603/debtext/90603-0002.htm#09060344000021>

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Oral Questions: CLG

The full transcript of Communities and Local Government oral questions which took place on 2 June 2009, is now available. It seems it was Hazel Blears' last appearance as Secretary of State.

During topical questions, David Kidney (Stafford) (Lab) asked: With the construction industry still severely depressed because of the recession, what is the Department doing to try to make sure that there is work for construction workers, especially in new house building, and with particular reference to the west midlands?

The Housing Minister, Margaret Beckett replied: My hon. Friend will know, I hope, that we have initially purchased substantial numbers of unsold homes; in fact, we have mopped up a large amount of stock. He will also know that in the Budget proposals, provision was made to kick-start schemes that are frozen. Every scheme that is being considered will be assessed to see whether housing can be made a priority, and that will very much be part of the key judgment that is made. That is true in the west midlands and across the country.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con) also asked: When local councils are under pressure to identify land for house building under Government targets, can they now adjust the targets downwards to allow for the fact that the actual building rates have fallen dramatically owing to the credit crunch and recession?

Margaret Beckett replied: Of course we are looking at housing delivery, but we are also very conscious of housing need, which has been

mentioned a number of times during this Question Time and which is not going away.

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090602/debtext/90602-0001.htm#qn_o1

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HSE Strategy: The Health and Safety of Great Britain

The HSE has published its new strategy today: "[The Health and Safety of Great Britain](#)".

Speaking at the launch, Judith Hackitt, HSE chairperson, said: "We believe this strategy represents a clear statement of core principles and a sensible approach to health and safety in Great Britain. Whilst the economic climate is difficult and the temptation for some may be to cut corners, HSE, its partners and businesses must resolve to continue to strive to improve health and safety performance. Good health and safety is good business".

The Strategy's overarching objectives are:

- to reduce the number of work-related fatalities, injuries and cases of ill health;
- to gain widespread commitment and recognition of what real health and safety is about;
- to motivate all those in the health and safety system as to how they can contribute to an improved health and safety performance; and
- to ensure that those who fail in their health and safety duties are held to account.

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PQ – Building Regulations consultation

Paul Rowen asked when the consultation on proposed changes to Part L of the Building Regulations would be published.

The Minister, Iain Wright, replied: The Department expects to publish a consultation document on proposed changes to parts L (Conservation of Fuel and Power) and F (Means of Ventilation) of the Building Regulations shortly.

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090603/text/90603w0028.htm#qn_219

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PQ – Ensuring the planned number of new homes are built during the next 12 months

Dr Ashok Kumar asked what steps were planned to ensure that the planned number of new homes are built during the next 12 months.

The Minister, Iain Wright, replied: The Housing Green Paper, “Homes for the Future: more affordable, more sustainable”, published in July 2007, set out the Government’s ambition to increase housing supply, in order to bring greater stability and affordability to the housing market.

In the past year, a range of measures have been announced to support the construction industry and boost housing supply. These measures included: bringing forward £550 million of funding from 2010-11 to maintain the supply of new social rented dwellings; £400 million to invest in new social housing over the 2009-11 two year period; an additional £775 million to support construction activities, including regeneration, decent homes and social rented housing over the next two years; and housing market renewal pathfinders were awarded £311 million for 2009-10 to support a range of activities, including new build.

Last month, the 2009 Budget announced a further £1 billion of additional resources for housing which included a £400 million kickstart housing delivery fund to restart stalled construction activity across the country. This should help developers retain jobs and skills, and boost the supply of homes over the next year—benefiting first time buyers and social tenants. The Budget also allocated £100 million over two years to enable local authorities to deliver new social housing on land they already own that can be developed only by them.

In order to compliment this investment, the Government are taking a range of measures to ensure that the housing sector grows strongly over the longer term. These measures will: ensure sufficient land for development, through housing allocations in local plans and further action on public sector land, supported by a responsive and efficient planning system; deliver effective and coordinated infrastructure provision; promote a strong and diverse house building sector; continue to ensure the increased long-term supply of social and affordable housing; and. ensure a proportionate approach to land-value capture and cumulative regulation. The Government will report on progress at the 2009 pre-Budget report.

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090603/text/90603w0029.htm#qn_227

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Shapps comments on Mortgage Rescue Scheme figures

Grant Shapps has commented on the Mortgage Rescue Scheme figures released last week. He said that the scheme "is failing" and that at the current rate it would only benefit 12 homeowners, when it was supposed to help 6,000.

Mr Shapps said: "This is typical of the Labour Government's approach: they promise big and deliver very little. They should spend less time making up headlines and more time helping hard-pressed families through the recession."

"Ministers promised (the Mortgage Rescue Scheme) would offer 'real help now' to homeowners living with the threat of repossession. Gordon Brown should now try telling that to the thousands of families being frozen out of this scheme and losing their homes as a result."

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EDM – Cross Industry Construction Apprenticeship Task Force

David Anderson MP has tabled an Early Day Motion supporting the work of the Cross-Industry Construction Apprenticeship Task Force and calls on the Government to help create an environment conducive to the success of apprenticeships in the construction industry.

In full, That this House supports the work of the Cross-Industry Construction Apprenticeship Task Force (CCATF); further supports its aim to reinvigorate the culture and ethos of training in the construction industry; accepts the intrinsic value of apprenticeships to young people and to the construction industry; notes the imminent skills shortage affecting the construction industry; recognises that there are currently over 3,000 displaced apprentices in the United Kingdom; further recognises the work of the CCATF in bringing industry together to effect a solution to the current crisis; and calls on the Government to help create an environment conducive to the success of apprenticeships in the construction industry.

Only Bob Spink MP has indicated his support so far.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmmedm/90602e01.htm>

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PQ – New-build & private sector homes purchased for social rent since 1997

The CLG Minister Iain Wright has responded to a written question from Grant Shapps on the number of new-build and existing private sector homes which were purchased for social rent by local authorities and registered social landlords in each year since 1997.

The Minister replied: The following table shows the number of homes purchased for social rent by registered social landlords or through private finance initiative in England, from 1997-98.

	Registered social landlord acquisitions	Private finance initiative acquisitions	Total social rent acquisitions
1997-98	11,770	0	11,770
1998-99	10,950	10	10,960
1999-2000	9,120	60	9,180
2000-01	8,840	20	8,860
2001-02	8,140	40	8,170
2002-03	6,420	30	6,450
2003-04	4,290	0	4,290
2004-05	2,890	0	2,890
2005-06	2,460	0	2,460
2006-07	2,450	0	2,450
2007-08	3,390	0	3,390

Source: Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Investment Management System (IMS) and Private Finance Initiative figures from local authority returns.

CLG do not have complete figures on the number of acquisitions by local authorities or categorised according to whether they were new build homes or existing private sector homes.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090602/text/90602w0040.htm#0906037000889>

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PQ – NHBC figures used

Grant Shapps asked to clarify statistics he received to a written question on 8 May. Iain Wright responded to the question with the below statistics which comprise figures from the NHBC.

Further details <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090601/text/90601w0045.htm>

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CML comments on Bank of England lending data

The Bank of England has announced lending figures. The CML responded and economist Paul Samter said:

"House purchase approvals continued to edge up in April, to 43,000 in the month on a seasonally adjusted basis. This is up from 40,000 in March and is the highest level since April last year (when the figure was 55,000, so this May's number still represents a 22% fall year-on-year).

"It looks almost inevitable that May approvals will be higher than a year ago for the first time since early 2007. However, activity remains at extremely low levels on any historic comparison - and weaker than at any point in the early 1990s. Limited lending capacity and the impact of further job losses are likely to act as a ceiling for how far the improvement can continue, although there could be further modest rises in the coming months."

<http://www.cml.org.uk/cml/media/press/2293>

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CLG on HCA spending

Grant Shapps asked Margaret Beckett a number of questions on the HCA's spending. This included a question on how much expenditure of the Homes and Communities Agency, and its predecessor bodies, required approval from her Department. Margaret Beckett stated that there were a number of different criteria which meant that prior approval was needed from the CLG. This included projects which involved public expenditure over £10 million or expenditure that was potentially novel, contentious or repercussive.

Since the creation of the HCA the CLG has not given any approval for such developments. She gave a list of approvals for English Partnerships. To view please see below:

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090601/text/90601w0043.htm#qn_447

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Planning

PQ – Planning Policy Statement 4

The CLG Minister Iain Wright has responded to a written question from Andrew George on plans to provide funding for local planning authorities to undertake changes to local development frameworks contained in the proposed PPS4.

The Minister replied: As noted in the consultation impact assessment accompanying the new streamlined Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4), we do not envisage that our proposals will impose additional burdens or extra costs on local planning authorities. We believe that there is potential for real cost savings in the medium to long-term by presenting policies for economic development in an integrated way, particularly in terms of speedier and better quality plan-making, and decision taking in respect to planning applications.

In particular, the revisions proposed to planning for town centres policy are amendments to the existing policy as set out in PPS6 "Planning for Town Centres", and are designed to improve the effectiveness of our 'town centres first' policy rather than making any fundamental change. Similarly, the approach to planning for economic development is intended to build upon the existing policy approach in PPG4 "Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms" by reinforcing messages and emphasising certain aspects of the approach.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090602/text/90602w0041.htm#0906037001109>

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PQ – Supply/Demand for social homes of 3 or more bedrooms

The CLG Minister Iain Wright has responded to a written question from Adrian Sanders on the levels of supply and demand for social homes of three or more bedrooms.

The Minister replied: Communities and Local Government have commissioned a team from Heriot-Watt university, led by Professor Glen Bramley, to develop a model that is capable of estimating the number of households with an unmet need for social or affordable housing, or other housing related support. The contract was awarded in August 2008 and developing the model is expected to take around 12 months.

The new research will expand the evidence base on housing need, going beyond the estimates used by Kate Barker in her 2004 Review of Housing Supply to allow ((Column Reference :459)) greater disaggregation of housing need by household type and region, as well as taking more account of the behavioural relationships that underpin household formation and tenure choice decisions. In recognition of the need for more family sized homes, for the 2008-11 Affordable Housing Programme (AHP) we set the Homes and Communities Agency, a new target to increase the national percentage of larger homes of three bedrooms or more provided through the AHP from 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. in 2008-09, rising to 33 per cent. in 2010-11.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090602/text/90602w0040.htm#0906037000889>

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Environment

Energy and Climate Change: Oral Questions

During questions to the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change on 4 June 2009, Dr Julian Lewis MP asked what recent assessment the department had made of the energy efficiency of domestic and commercial buildings in the UK.

The DECC Minister Joan Ruddock replied: The energy efficiency of individual domestic and non-domestic buildings is assessed primarily through energy performance certificates, which are required for all buildings when constructed, sold or let. The heat and energy saving consultation, published in February, sought evidence about energy efficiency in non-domestic buildings and asked for views on potential policy responses. We are now considering the responses to the consultation.

Dr Lewis then suggested that there had hardly been any improvement in household energy efficiency in the UK.

The Minister acknowledged “this country has a long poorly insulated buildings”, but continued, “The Government are making a real effort to ensure that much more attention is paid to insulation. We have already insulated 5 million buildings in the domestic sector as a consequence of our

carbon emissions reduction target provisions and the obligations on energy companies. Our current programme will lead to the insulation of a further 6 million buildings, and, as I said earlier, we have introduced energy performance certificates. We have the green homes service, run by the Energy Saving Trust, and we have the Act On CO2 helpline.

There are many, many strategies in place, and we are making improvements. People are saving money as a result of our policies, and they are lowering their carbon emissions. However, we accept that there is much more to be done. We recently engaged in a major consultation on a heat and energy saving strategy, which will bring about improvements in millions of houses over the next few years.”

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090604/debtext/90604-0001.htm#qn_o2

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PQ – Requirements placed on LB Camden to reduce its carbon emissions from housing stock

The CLG Minister Iain Wright has responded to a written question from Glenda Jackson on requirements her Department has placed upon the London Borough of Camden to ensure it reduces its carbon emissions arising from (a) housing stock, (b) business premises, (c) schools and (d) public buildings; and what steps her Department takes to monitor compliance with such requirements.

The Minister replied: Government planning policy, contained in PPS1 Planning and Climate Change, requires planning authorities to set out percentage targets for low carbon/renewable energy sources in new developments. Performance against target is monitored through annual monitoring reports.

Part L of the building regulations sets minimum energy efficiency standards for new buildings and when certain categories of building work are carried out on existing buildings e.g. extensions, conversions, renovations, replacement windows and boilers. The Government have announced that they intend to seek progressive improvements in part L standards and has set targets for all new homes to be net zero carbon from 2016 and has similar stretching ambitions for new non-domestic buildings. In addition, all new affordable housing receiving social housing grant through the Homes and Communities Agency must be built to at least Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 standard. As part of the new Government performance framework, Camden is required to report against National Indicator 185-CO2 reduction from local authority operations and National Indicator 186-per capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the local authority area. In addition, Camden has selected National Indicator 186 as a stretch target and action under this indicator is critical to achieving the Government's climate change objectives. Performance will be monitored by the Audit Commission under the comprehensive area assessment (CAA) which will look at how well Camden's services are working together to

improve the quality of life for local people. CAA will be a catalyst for better local outcomes, more responsive services and better value for money and an independent evidence base for central Government on progress against national priorities.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090602/text/90602w0041.htm#0906037001112>

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Devolved

Welsh planning

The Welsh Environment Minister Jane Davidson has announced a review of the planning application process in Wales.

Also she is providing £1.75 million of support for Local Planning Authorities. Each of the 25 planning authorities will receive £70,000 to support local improvements in delivery of their planning service, whilst a further £250,000 will support cross-Wales activity.

She said: "The planning application process has a key role in supporting the economy of Wales. It is central in our attempts to tackle climate change, shape our communities and support sustainable economic development. I want to see improvements to streamline the planning application process. We want to make sure the planning system is ready to support the economic upturn when it comes. Our evidence shows that 85% to 90% of applications are in fact approved. However, our review will look to identify any blockages and potential areas of improvement."

<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/item/2616/23/5/3>

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Mayor: London View Management Framework

Boris Johnson has published draft guidance The London View Management Framework, which updates guidance from 2007 and increases the protection of the ten established protected 'Viewing Corridors' between St Paul's Cathedral and the Palace of Westminster.

The consultation closes on Friday 4 September. A copy of the draft Revised London View Management Framework can be downloaded [here](#)

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Look Ahead

Date	Stakeholder	Issue	Comment
9 June 2009	House of Commons	Opposition Day Debate	(i) Youth Crime and (ii) Housing
9 June 2009	House of Commons	Ten Minute Rule Motion	Gangmasters Licensing Act 2004 – Jim Sheridan MP
10 June 2009	Work and Pensions Cttee	Evidence Session	Judith Hackett, Chair and Geoffrey Podger, Chief Executive, Health and Safety Executive
11 June 2009	House of Commons	Oral Questions	Innovation, Universities and Skills

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Consultations and Inquiries

Title	Dept	Deadline	
Scottish Planning Policy	SG	24.06.09	Scottish Planning Policy consultation
Building Control Charging Regime	DCLG	25.06.09	Consultation on Building Control Charging Regime closes

Flood and Water Management Bill	DEFRA	24.07.09	Consultation on Draft Bill. Contains provisions about new drainage requirements
Draft Planning Policy Statement 4	DCLG	28.07.09	Draft PPS4 consultation