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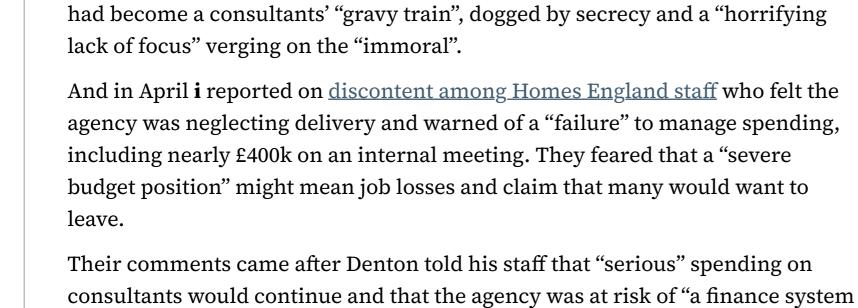


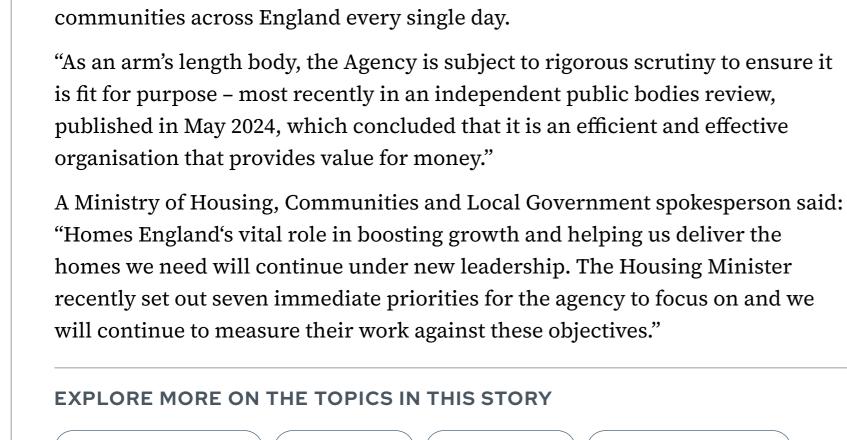
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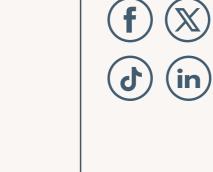
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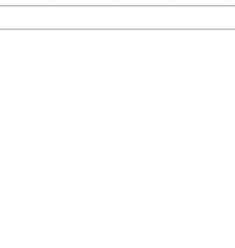
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# Labour will miss its new homes pledge... says official leading the plan

## Ministers promise the 'biggest growth in affordable housebuilding in a generation' by 2029. Homes England CEO says it could take a decade

**Keith Cooper** 

Housing targets across large parts of the country are threatened by water scarcity. This is particularly so in some areas where homes are most needed (Photo: Christopher Furlong/Getty) November 13, 2024 7:27 pm (Updated November 14, 2024 1:56 pm)

≪ Share Gift this article free □ Save Labour's pledge to build 1.5 million new homes by 2029 and deliver the "biggest

growth in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation" has been

plunged into doubt by the official who has been leading the plan.

In an email to his staff seen by i, Peter Denton, chief executive of the

Government's Homes England agency, which is responsible for boosting housing supply; describes them as "amazing and incredible ambitions". He adds that "realistically", this is a "two parliamentary term approach". That would stretch the end date to 2034 - twice the length of time ministers set for their flagship new housing target.

Homes England has told **i** it will not comment on a "personal" email that was not intended to be shared externally, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has said that it remains committed to delivering the new 1.5 million homes in five years. But the developers who will have to build the homes are also warning that the goal is, in reality, likely to take a decade to achieve.

'No chance' of 1.5m new homes in five years

Federation of Builders, which represents small and medium-sized

Rico Wojtulewicz, head of housing and planning policy at the National

housebuilders, told i: "There is no chance that the Government's plan for 1.5 million homes will be delivered in five years. "It really could take two terms because they continue to put all their eggs in one basket and rely on the big house builders and big developments which can take 10 years to complete. ADVERTISEMENT

"On the outside it will take at least one-and-a-half parliamentary terms and only

if they put all right policies in place. But they've not been quick enough off the

welcome but to achieve its ambitious target of 1.5 million homes in the next five years Government will need to pull more policy levers," the federation's chief executive Neil Jefferson told **i**. It would take a whole Parliamentary term just to finish the first house on a major 1,000-home development once a planning application was accepted as

'Anger' among Homes England staff at 'lack of focus'

The news comes against a backdrop of huge uncertainty for the Government's

new homes programme. On Friday it announced that Denton would be leaving

Homes England - which ministers have described as being "vital" to their

Meanwhile,  $\mathbf{i}$  has been told of further "anger" among Homes England staff

"pissed off" at the way they think the agency has been "throwing away" money

They have also told of new frustrations about its "lack of focus", "dysfunctional"

working, and a "top-down management culture" that "treats people badly".

housing agenda - along with the agency's chair Peter Freeman.

An aerial view of recently built homes and those under construction at the Skelton Lake development

The Home Builders Federation, which represents many of the country's biggest

house building firms has expressed similar doubts over the target.

"The swift moves to address constraints in the planning system are very

in Leeds (Photo by Christopher Furlong/Getty Images)

valid by a local authority, he added.

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But the agency says it does not recognise "this anonymous commentary on our

leadership and culture, and it does not align with the feedback we receive from

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Sharp takes on the big issues and key players setting the

An interim chief executive has been appointed who will start at the agency in January. In his e-mail to Homes England staff on Friday, Denton said the agency had done "rather well despite the economic and political volatility and the scale of ambition versus resources".

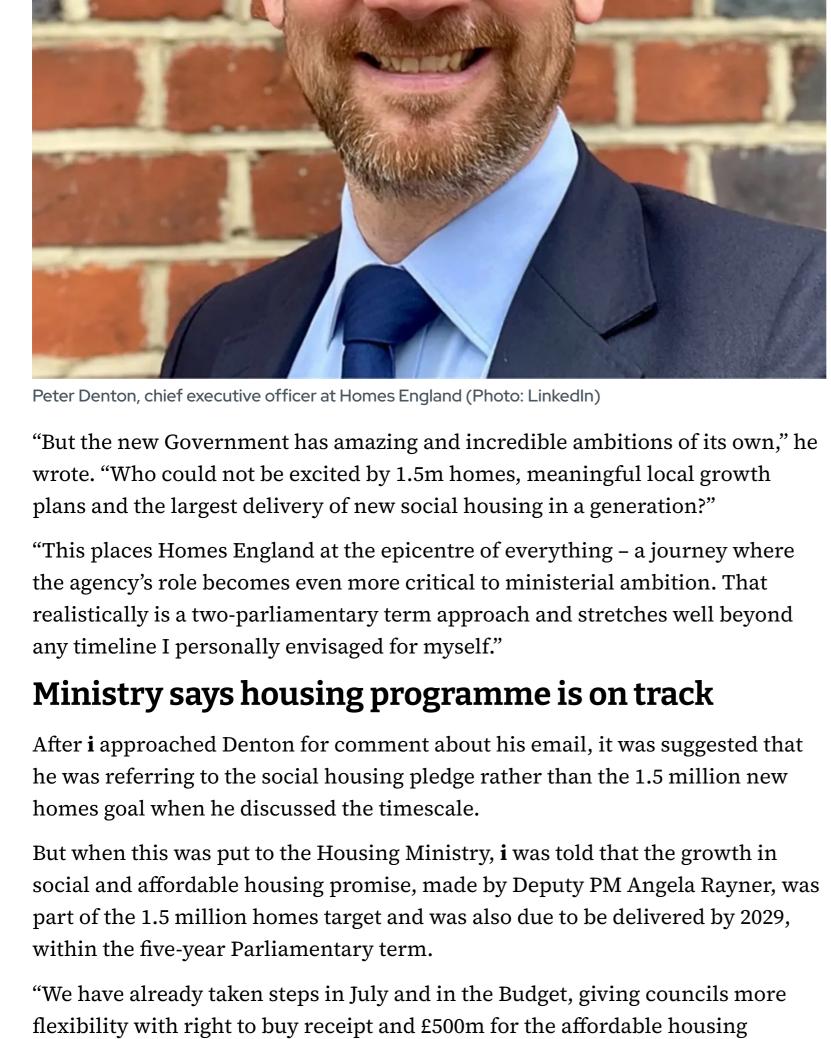
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### "You need a body to push the house building industry forward and Homes England is perfectly placed to do that but it has been broken by its high turnover of staff and has not been doing that job," the federation's head of housing and planning policy Rico Wojtulewicz told i. "They need certainty

programme," a spokesperson added. "These are the first of a series of

'Homes England is broken'

"broken".

long-term vision."

interventions which will be announced in the coming weeks and months."

The National Federation of Builders says Homes England is "absolutely key

to fixing many of the problems with the housing market" but is currently

because house building projects take time but Home England is constantly

chopping and changing its approach. They haven't appeared to have any

i analysis found that half of the 10 executives and key managers named in

Homes England's annual report in 2022/23 have since left the organisation.

"The executive leadership has suffered from regular resignations and some

unexplained and very immediate departures," one staff member told the i.

throughout last 2023 - more than twice the rate they were paid when they

started the job permanently in January, according to Government data seen

One executive was paid a day rate equivalent to a £415,000 salary

by i and confirmed by DLHUC. Two recent departures were due to ill health and retirement. Denton's candid email admits he had been "pretty clueless in many respects" when he joined the agency in 2021.

"I also had minimal political or government exposure and crucially, little

appreciation of the actual position of the agency internally or with its

Nearly £400k spent on internal staff meeting

In March an i investigation into the quango revealed concerns about a

Denton had been expected to stay at the agency until 2026.

stakeholders... it's been a learning curve."

frustrated builders who ended up walking away.

"I simply had no idea of the scale, reach, and complexity of the agency," it reads.

Freeman's departure from Homes England next year as chair was expected, but

"dysfunctional", "sick" organisation that had kept councils waiting for years and

Former senior insiders spoke of how the organisation that the then Housing

Secretary, Michael Gove, was relying on to "supercharge" urban regeneration

that is literally about to fall over" and could leave Homes England "in proper trouble". ADVERTISEMENT

Last night a Homes England spokesperson said: "Homes England does not recognise this anonymous commentary on our leadership and culture, and it does not align with the feedback we receive from colleagues and partners. We're immensely proud of the positive difference our colleagues make to communities across England every single day. "As an arm's length body, the Agency is subject to rigorous scrutiny to ensure it is fit for purpose - most recently in an independent public bodies review, published in May 2024, which concluded that it is an efficient and effective

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