

British Embassy delegation urges approval of UK-Honduras trade Agreement

The British Embassy's Deputy Head of Mission and the Trade and Prosperity Officer paid a two-day visit to Tegucigalpa to meet with Officials from the Ministry of Labour, the Board of Directors of the Honduran National Congress, representatives of the private sector (COHEP), and other partner organizations working in Honduras to improve the business climate.

The delegation stressed that the new treaty replicates the existing European Union – Central America Association Agreement, and will ensure that trade between the UK and Central America continues uninterrupted when the UK ceases to be a member of the EU on 31 October. The Agreement was signed by all countries, including Honduras, on July 18.

In 2018, Honduras exported goods and services to the UK worth US\$161 million mostly composed of coffee, fisheries, fruits, vegetables and apparel products. The main imports from the UK consisted of industrial products, machinery, vehicles and spiritual beverages worth US\$4 million. The Agreement also provides a framework for cooperation and development through political dialogue, increased economic ties and our work on important issues like the environment and human rights.

Barbara Amono-Oceng, Deputy Head of Mission for the British Embassy to Honduras, said:

We look forward to the approval of the Agreement, as it will help to build our political and economic ties with exporters and consumers and give them the certainty they need to continue trading freely and with confidence.

The British Embassy in Guatemala is concurrent to Honduras and we pay regular visits to the country to strengthen our economic, political and cultural ties.

PM meeting with Business Council co-chairs: 9 October 2019

The Prime Minister met with the co-chairs of the five Business Councils at

Downing Street this afternoon. The Business Secretary, Andrea Leadsom, also joined the meeting.

The Prime Minister thanked all the co-chairs for the policy initiatives they have put forward on issues affecting the UK business environment and competitiveness, and emphasised that he wants the UK to be the best place to start, grow and run a business.

Many of the councils' initiatives have been progressed as part of the Prime Minister's key priorities for post-Brexit Britain, including a new Trans-Pennine rail route between Manchester and Leeds to boost regional growth, a new immigration visa to enable international students to work in the UK for two-years after graduation, and a £5bn gigabit broadband boost.

The Prime Minister set out ongoing work in Whitehall to take forward ideas from the councils, from measures to boost research and development to support for tech entrepreneurs.

On Brexit, the Prime Minister reiterated that we want the UK to leave the EU with a deal when we depart on 31 October. The Business Secretary urged the co-chairs to support small businesses and those in their supply chain to get ready for Brexit at the end of the month.

They agreed to continue to drive progress on the recommendations from the councils across government in the upcoming months.

Co-chairs in attendance

- Sir Ian Davis, Chairman, Rolls Royce
- Sir Roger Carr, Chairman, BAE Systems
- Jan Du Plessis, BT Group
- Dave Lewis, CEO, Tesco
- Emma Walmsley, CEO, GlaxoSmithKline
- Baroness Shriti Vadera, Chair, Santander UK
- Emma Jones, Founder, Enterprise Nation
- Brent Hoberman, Chairman, Founders' Factory

[Detailed guide: Export fish after a no-deal Brexit](#)

How to export fish after a no-deal Brexit, what documents you may need and customs rules to follow.

News story: 'No deal' EU exit advice: further ports will be designated for movement of protected animals and plants

Government issues updated advice on moving internationally protected animals and plants, including types of fish, birds and rosewood, in the event of a 'no deal' EU exit.

Banks pledge their support to SMEs through Brexit and beyond in new Charter

- Banks and lenders make concrete pledges to continue supporting British businesses seeking finance to get ahead
- pledges include that banks are 'open for business and ready to lend'
- commitment comes following first meeting of the new Business Finance Council, made up of government, lenders and business representative organisations

In a new [SME Finance Charter](#) published today (Wednesday 9 October), Britain's top banks and others reaffirmed their commitment to back British business through access to finance, helping SMEs plan for the future ahead of Brexit on 31 October and beyond.

The Charter was adopted at the first meeting of the new [Business Finance Council](#), co-chaired by Business Secretary Andrea Leadsom and Economic Secretary to the Treasury John Glen today. The Council was attended by representatives from Britain's leading banks, alternative lenders and representatives from the British Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses.

The SME Finance Charter is made up of 5 overarching pledges that provide a framework for lenders to set out their own individual commitments to SMEs in the coming weeks. In order to become signatories to the Charter, each lender will need to demonstrate what specific actions they are taking to deliver on the pledges.

Business Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

I have met many businesses since my appointment as Business Secretary and access to finance is a common cause of concern. We want to see the banks and lenders back our small and medium sized businesses, and this commitment is the first step in giving them the confidence they need to invest and grow.

Finance is available, and I would urge SMEs to talk to their providers and get the advice they need to scale up on a truly global stage ahead of us leaving the EU and into the future.

The 5 pledges made by finance providers through the SME Finance Charter include:

- confirming they are 'open for business and ready to lend' which includes specific funds they have set up for SME lending
- helping SMEs to prepare for Brexit and beyond by setting out the resources that they can provide
- providing clear and accessible information for SMEs seeking finance, including expectations around the management of accounts, cashflow projections and security, explaining options if initial applications are declined
- treating all customers fairly, explaining how they will resolve any disputes that may occur
- working with the government-owned British Business Bank to signpost their guidance and to help businesses secure a loan or overdraft even if they lack the security for the borrowing, giving SMEs the ability to invest and expand

These 5 areas were identified by the Council as significant to ensure that the SME finance market works effectively and coupled with the cross-sector backing for the Charter secured today, demonstrates the attention and support that the UK gives to its SMEs.

Small Business Minister Kelly Tolhurst said:

As a former small business owner, I understand the challenges involved in securing finance. The banks have said that they are open for business and ready to lend, with today's Charter underlining that commitment, something that should be a great encouragement to our fantastic British SMEs.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury, John Glen, said:

I want to see our small and medium-sized businesses seize the opportunities of Brexit – expanding, creating jobs and boosting our economy.

Today's Charter shows that lenders are backing businesses and stand ready to provide advice, guidance and financial support to help

them prosper. I will continue to work closely with lenders and business representatives to ensure our SMEs have everything they need as we get ready to leave the EU.

UK Finance CEO Stephen Jones said:

The SME Finance Charter reiterates the banking and finance industry's commitment to support SME customers throughout the UK's departure from the EU and beyond.

Banks and lenders stand ready to support viable businesses whatever the outcome, and continue to provide guidance to help smaller firms plan for the opportunities and challenges ahead.

Through our Let's Talk Business campaign, we are encouraging all businesses to contact their finance providers now to discuss how best to prepare and consider any additional financing needs.

The Council will continue work to identify and address any barriers faced by small and mid-sized businesses on an ongoing basis, with a focus on securing finance and getting ready for Brexit on 31 October. The Council membership is made up of major lenders and alternative finance providers, as well as ministers, UK Finance and the Finance and Leasing Association, the British Business Bank and business representative organisations.

The secretariat for the [Council](#) is provided by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, HM Treasury and UK Finance, ensuring that British business gets the support it deserves across government and the financial sector.

The full list of signatories to the Charter, together with links to their individual statements, will be published on the [Charter page](#). The need for the Business Finance Council will be reviewed after 6 months.

£1.3 billion is available to lenders through the government-owned [British Business Bank](#) so they can enable their SME customers to invest in capital, increase export capabilities and manage cashflow: £300 million headroom available this financial year through the [Enterprise Finance Guarantee](#) which helps viable smaller businesses that lack sufficient security against which to borrow; and £1 billion available over the longer term under the ENABLE Guarantee, which helps reduce the amount of regulatory capital lenders need to hold against loans to small businesses. The British Business Bank is already supporting over £6.6 billion of finance to almost 90,000 SMEs.