

Press release: International Trade Secretary visits World Trade Organization

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The International Trade Secretary is visiting the World Trade Organization today in final preparations for the UK taking its independent seat as soon as we leave the European Union.

Dr Liam Fox met with key WTO figures to reinforce the groundwork for strong diplomatic relationships post-Brexit and to set out the UK's priorities for global trade.

His top priorities include ensuring that businesses can keep trading with the UK on the same terms as they do now; supporting efforts to modernise the global trade rules so they are fit for the 21st century; and helping a wide-range of countries to benefit from the global trading system.

The UK's programme at the WTO is on track to provide continuity for businesses through our goods and services schedules, which replicate as far as possible our existing trading terms.

In addition, WTO members confirmed last week the UK's independent membership of the Government Procurement Agreement which will allow British businesses to continue bidding for £1.3 trillion of public sector contracts around the world.

Dr Fox has announced today that the UK will play an active and significant role in the first ever formal negotiations to update global rules for online trade, after years of informal talks on the issue.

He has also confirmed that the UK, as Chair in Office of the Commonwealth, is contributing funding for the Commonwealth Small States Office (CSSO) to help some of the world's least developed and most remote countries to represent

themselves at the WTO.

This benefits members including the Solomon Islands, Pacific Islands Forum, Guyana and Malawi.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:

As soon as we leave the European Union, the UK will have an independent seat at the World Trade Organization and will use this to be one of the most vocal supporters of free trade.

I would like to thank our trading partners for their support throughout more than 30 months of negotiations and cooperation. This will allow us to keep trading as closely as we do today, and I look forward to building even stronger trading relationships post-Brexit.

Top of our agenda is defending and reforming the global rules-based system. This includes modernising the trade rules and we will play an active role in the WTO's first ever digital trade negotiations, as well as helping some of the world's poorest countries to make their voices heard.

UK Permanent Representative to the WTO, Julian Braithwaite said:

The UK is a founding member of the World Trade Organization and the multilateral trading system that has been central to removing barriers to trade and promoting prosperity around the world.

The UK Mission in Geneva is ready to support the UK's new role in the WTO as we leave the European Union, preserving the gains that have been achieved and extending the benefits of trade still further.

Today's visit will help to establish strong alliances with countries that will be crucial in defending and reforming the global rules-based trading system.

Dr Fox is convening a meeting with close multilateral partners, including WTO ambassadors from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Finally, he will meet with WTO Director General Roberto Azevêdo to discuss the UK taking its independent seat, as well how the UK will be able to

support efforts to reform the WTO in the years ahead.

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[News story: New initiative to step up veterans' employment in the automotive sector](#)

Backed by the Ministry of Defence and the Royal Foundation, 'Mission Automotive' will help veterans with specialist skills find jobs in a range of roles across the automotive sector, including in engineering, manufacturing, infrastructure and logistics.

Central to Mission Automotive is a commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant – a promise by the nation that all those who serve and have served their country should be treated fairly. This includes support for those currently serving, ex-service personnel, and their families, as part of the military community.

With full backing from the Royal Foundation of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, and the MOD, Mission Automotive will also introduce HR best practice with a focus on the wider issue of corporate responsibility.

Mission Automotive was unveiled today at the Royal Hospital Chelsea, and will be delivered by armed forces charity Mission Motorsport, in partnership with Jaguar Land Rover, DHL, Westway Nissan, Alcon and Bicester Heritage, who are all members of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT).

The charity will also work with the MOD's Career Transition Partnership to help place personnel leaving the military into jobs in the automotive sector.

Since 2014, Mission Motorsport partners have helped 1,700 veterans into new careers, 150 of whom were ex-servicemen and women categorised as wounded, injured or sick. Mission Automotive will build on this success by enabling UK industry to tap into a pool of unrealised talent. It will deliver sustainable and relevant employment opportunities, mapping military career groups to the qualifications required by the sector.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Engineering is one of the range of skills which personnel hone in our armed forces and can be transferred to civilian life. Mission Automotive will be instrumental in ensuring that these exceptional skills are harnessed, bolstering this vital sector of our economy and providing high skilled jobs for the ex-forces community.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

A career in the armed forces sets our people up with skills that last a lifetime, with their team work, courage and self-discipline making them an asset to any employer.

Under the Armed Forces Covenant, we all have a duty to support military personnel, both while they are serving and beyond, and I applaud Mission Automotive for their commitment to championing our people as they take the next step in their professional lives.

Mission Automotive unveiled at the Royal Hospital Chelsea. Crown copyright.

The Covenant is fulfilled by the UK Government, charities, businesses, and the public sector, and support covers a number of areas, including education, housing, careers, healthcare, and financial assistance. Over 3,000 businesses and organisations have now signed the Armed Forces Covenant, committing to support the careers of former and current service personnel and military partners.

James Cameron, Mission Motorsport CEO, said:

Many service leavers and veterans struggle to attain their potential, unable to recognise where they will fit into civilian careers.

Mission Automotive helps organisations to recognize, foster and retain that talent through developing and implementing their own Armed Forces engagement strategies. By promoting these positive business behaviours, the Mission Automotive initiative gives member

companies the tools to unlock not only human potential, but also brand and corporate opportunities through embracing the Armed Forces Covenant.

Working as part of the MoD's Defence Recovery Capability, our partner companies have helped over 1700 veterans into employment since the first Invictus Games in 2014. Our service men and women are a national resource, and have much to offer to society beyond their military service. By helping them and their families we boost British industry, and by association the communities in which they resettle.

Mike Hawes, Society of Motor Manufacturers Traders Chief Executive, said,

SMMT is delighted to be a partner in the launch of Mission Automotive. We have sought to support Mission Motorsport over a number of years both in terms of grant support and helping connect them and the veterans and service leavers that they support with the wider automotive industry.

The work they do is helping the industry address critical skills gaps and, more importantly, providing a new career path for ex-Service people who rapidly become an asset to the companies involved.

Press release: 3km oil slick threatened local beauty spot.

Environment Agency officers have contained the oil slick with oil absorbent booms and pads, and are now starting the clear up process. As oil floats on the surface of the water, these booms prevent the oil from spreading and the pads soak it up, without interfering with wildlife or the flow of the river.

Whilst the exact source of the oil has still not been established, it has been narrowed down to the nearby Balby Carr Industrial Estate area. There is no further oil coming from the drain, but protective measures will stay in place over the weekend in case the forecast rain washes more through the system.

Rosie Foster, Area Incident Controller, at the Environment Agency said:

We look to have contained the pollution for now with the booms we put out across the river so we can now concentrate on the clean-up.

It is hard to judge the environmental impact at this point, but as oil generally sits on top of the water the aquatic life below should be ok. Although we will be keeping a close eye for wildlife that has come into contact with the oil and the riverbanks for any effects.

Investigations are ongoing to find the exact source of the oil and we have taken samples to allow us to identify the exact type of oil involved. If anybody has information about where the oil came from or if a local business has had an accident that they have not yet reported to us could they please contact our helpline.

If you see pollution or fish in distress, please call the Environment Agency Incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60. Alternatively, If you suspect illegal waste activities, call the Environment Agency or report it anonymously to [Crimestoppers](#) or call 0800 555 111.