

Press release: Minister: "Northern Ireland's businesses are champion exporters"

International Trade Minister, Baroness Fairhead, today (Friday 2nd November) visited Belfast where she met members of the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) in Belfast to understand their concerns and help encourage SMEs to make the most of ever increasing global opportunities and demand for their high-quality goods and services.

99% of Northern Ireland's large businesses already export. Baroness Fairhead will urge SMEs to consider exporting as a way to boost their prosperity, hire more people and drive growth in their communities.

The event comes ahead of Small Business Saturday, with FSB and the Department For International Trade (DIT) organising a series of events to promote 'business-to-business' engagement and overseas trade. Baroness Fairhead will be attending the latest of these events, which will give companies the chance to share their thoughts on exporting and current government support.

Speaking at the event, Baroness Fairhead, said:

Northern Ireland's export performance is a great example to the rest of the UK, and I hope to see others taking inspiration from those businesses that are selling their goods and services in all corners of the world.

Our job is to ensure that SMEs, and all of Northern Ireland's businesses, are able to make the most of increasing export opportunities. The government's [Export Strategy](#) sets out an offer which will help companies reap the rewards that exporting brings, and I'd encourage companies to talk to their local Trade Adviser or visit [GREAT.gov.uk](https://www.great.gov.uk) to access this support as soon as they are ready.

Members of the FSB in Northern Ireland, such as Core Systems, Environmental Street Furniture, SMART Global and The Momentum Group will all attend the event.

Commenting, FSB NI Head of External Affairs, Roger Pollen said:

The SME sector in Northern Ireland employs more people than the entire public sector and all larger businesses combined, and is vital to the overall success of the NI economy. FSB members run businesses across a variety of industry sectors, with many already exporting their products in markets around the globe. For some not

currently exporting, there exists an opportunity to expand their business overseas. It is crucial that the support and guidance is available from government to help them on that path.

Looking closer to home, in the run up to Small Business Saturday, we would encourage consumers to support their local small business, in what are challenging times for the high street. While the world of retail is changing, local small businesses provide a personal service which often can't be replicated elsewhere. Beyond this, we must look to assist businesses that have traditionally served a home market to seize the opportunity to export as well – whether that is in manufacturing or retail. We are very pleased to be working with the department to help assist this expansion of trade for our members and look forward to continued engagement.

Last month, FSB and DIT hosted an 'engagement day' in Dungannon, which included a number of workshops on key topics such as Brexit, exporting, procurement and social media, with one of the aims being to break down common preconceptions to trading overseas.

Northern Ireland exported £10 billion worth of goods and services in 2017. The country's renowned aerospace industry, with 60 companies serving the sector, is particularly prominent as machinery and transport make up £2.6 billion of the total figure.

In the Summer, DIT launched the government's Export Strategy which sets out how they will support businesses to make the most of the opportunities presented by markets around the world.

A government-led collaboration with business, developed after extensive engagement with a range of UK firms – the Strategy sets a new ambition increase exports as a proportion of UK GDP to 35%.

Further Information:

DIT's [Survey of UK Registered Businesses 2017](#) shows that only 1% of Northern Irish businesses with a turnover of more than £500k and a product that suitable for export are yet to do so

Export support is available to businesses of all sizes, including:

- [GREAT.gov.uk](#) – which offers a tool to help SMEs take their first steps towards international trade, a range of export opportunities and details of how to contact our network of Trade Advisers in the UK
- [UK Export Finance](#) – which has up to £50 billion of export credit available to help British businesses break into exciting overseas markets

- Export Champions – DIT has set up a network of businesses who currently export across the UK, these champions are on hand to offer help and advice to their fellow SMEs.
 - If you or your business is interested in exporting, the Department for International Trade has a range of support to suit your business. You can contact your regional trade team here or access wider support on your export journey. [here](#)
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[News story: National award for supporting young people in space](#)

SpaceCareers.uk launched in 2015 and has since helped thousands of young people find their dream job in space.

Robert Garner, Mission Analyst at the UK Space Agency said,

I'm honoured to have been awarded with a Sir Arthur Clarke for my work with UKSEDS and SpaceCareers.uk.

I could not have done it without the team of student volunteers who give up their spare time to highlight the importance of the space sector, and provide opportunities for young people to launch their careers.

Robert served on the UK's national student space society ([UKSEDS](#)) Executive Committee and Board of trustees, where he helped run the organisation and developed opportunities for fellow students by building partnerships with major space companies and supporting the organisation of the National Student Space Conference.

Robert studied Physics (with Space Science and Technology) at the University of Leicester and completed his Aerospace Engineering PhD at the University of Strathclyde. He now works in the UK Space Agency's Chief Engineer's office as a Mission Analyst.

The UK Space Agency recently (5 October 2018) unveiled a list of space sector [work placements](#) available to recent graduates or postgraduate students. The full list of placements can be found on SpaceCareers.uk.

Earlier this year, the Agency announced an allocation of up to £4 million to

find solutions to major challenges facing the [NHS in its 70th anniversary with NHS England](#).

The Agency's Emily Gravestock, Head of Applications, was finalist for the Individual Industry/Project award for this collaborative work with the NHS.

The Sir Arthur Clarke Awards were presented yesterday (1 November 2018) at the British Interplanetary Society's Reinventing Space Conference.

Other winners include:

- Industry/ Project Team – Oxford Space Systems
- Industry/ Project Individual – Magali Vaissiere
- Academic Study/ Research – The UK Cassini-Huygens Team
- Team Education & Outreach – ESSERO-UK Space Ambassadors
- Individual Education and Outreach – Vix Southgate
- Media, broadcast and written – BBC2 'Astronauts: Do you have what it takes?'
- Lifetime Achievement – Richard Peckham
- International Space Achievement – SpaceX Falcon Team

[Press release: Chief Executive's Blog – 3rd Edition – October 2018](#)

October has been another busy month and one that has asked questions about how we can shape the future of the Parole Board.

Justice Select Committee, 10 October

I appeared at the Justice Select Committee on 10 October to speak about the work of the Parole Board and how the prison population can be safely reduced, as part of the "Prison Population 2022: planning for the future inquiry."

The evidence I gave showed the work being done by the Parole Board and its justice partners to reduce delays caused by unnecessary deferrals and adjournments – important work which I spoke about in my last blog.

I also spoke about the fact that the backlog of outstanding parole cases that had occurred after the 2013 Osborn Booth & Reilly Supreme Court Judgment has been cleared. This backlog had a peak of over 3000 prisoners in 2015 and it was a huge success to eliminate it. To do this we had to completely change how we worked and now hold more oral hearings than we have ever held before (and 5 times the amount held in 2005/6!).

Despite the success of getting rid of the backlog, the number of parole eligible prisoners remains at a high level and we cannot stop working and innovating to ensure that they are provided with fair and timely hearings.

The IPP sentence

Prisoners sentenced under the Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) are a contributing factor to the high prison population. My evidence to the Justice Select Committee explained that there are many reasons why the IPP population isn't going down as quickly as we would like.

The IPP sentence was abolished in 2012, but not retrospectively, and many prisoners remain in custody years after their original tariff has expired. Since the abolition of the sentence, the headline IPP prison population has now fallen by 57% – from a peak of 6,080 in 2012 down to 2,598 by 30 September 2018. These cases are some of the most complex that come before the Board and so, despite increased progression rates in recent years, there is further work to be done across the system.

Whilst this progress is encouraging, the number of IPP prisoners recalled to custody continues to rise. Without further legislative change the legacy of IPP prisoners will remain for many years to come, not least because and it can be expected that the rate of progression will slow down as the number of IPP prisoners in the system falls.

IPP Families Event in Parliament

On 17 October I spoke at a policy launch event on 'The Secondary Pains for Family Members of Indeterminate Imprisonment'. The research by Drs Harry Annison and Rachel Condry (from the Universities of Southampton and Oxford respectively) examines the challenges faced by family members of prisoners sentenced to the indeterminate Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentence.

What is clear is that the Parole Board can play its part to help family members of IPP prisoners. For example, the work we are carrying out to reduce the number of deferrals – we know the impact such delays have on prisoners and their families.

Another way we can help is by doing our main role well – ensuring that we continue to deliver timely hearings in a safe manner. To do that we need a steady stream of members joining the Parole Board.

New Members Joining on 1 November

On 1 November we welcome 25 new members to the Parole Board (13 judicial members and 12 psychiatrist members). This comes at an important time – a lot of our members came to the end of the tenure in September 2018 and we need these new members to fill the gaps that our very experienced former colleagues have left. We held a great New Members Training event in Derbyshire last week and I am sure that our new 2018 cohort will be a credit to the Board.

Welcome Caroline

And last – but by no means least – Caroline Corby starts her tenure as

permanent Chair of the Parole Board on 1 November. She has been our Interim Chair since the Spring and I have every confidence that she is the right person to guide us through the reforms that are happening, and help make the Board more effective than ever before.

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[News story: Sellafield engineers shine at global awards](#)

The company has won 2 awards at the annual Institute of Chemical Engineers

(IChemE) event, which celebrates the achievements of chemical engineers around the world.

The 'Young Industrialist Award' went to Sellafield Ltd employee, Rojiar Fersch, a process design engineer helping to solve the site's decommissioning challenges.

Rojiar was recognized for her outstanding professional and personal achievements, having moved to the UK from Iran in 2006 before learning to speak English at the age of 17.

She has since excelled in her training and career at Sellafield as a passionate advocate of chemical engineering.

Judges were particularly impressed by Rojiar's personal dedication to voluntary work, using her free time to mentor aspiring engineers, help on water and sanitation projects abroad and teach English within refugee camps in Iran and Turkey.

The 'Team Award' went to Sellafield Ltd, Progressive Alliance and AXIOM for their work to build a new facility to enable long-term storage of nuclear material at the Sellafield site.

They were praised for their collaborative approach to the design and construction of the Sellafield Product and Residues Store retreatment plant.

Teams from Jacobs, Atkins and Sellafield Ltd were also highly commended for their work in the First Generation Magnox Storage Pond and Evaporator D projects.

Paul Haworth, chief process engineer for Sellafield Ltd said:

Congratulations to all finalists and our winners. It is fantastic that our teams and supply chain colleagues have been recognised on this global scale, for their contribution to the site's clean-up mission.

Ken Rivers, IChemE President said:

The IChemE Global Awards are a clear demonstration of the contribution chemical engineers are making worldwide for the benefit of society. Every finalist is living proof that chemical engineering matters.

As President of the Institution, I'm so proud to have seen first-hand the fantastic work that our professional chemical engineering community are doing. Congratulations to all our deserving winners.