

Press release: UK Government Ministers support rural businesses at Royal Highland Show

The UK Government will show its support for Scotland's agriculture, food and farming sectors this week (from Thursday 21 June) when it takes part in the Royal Highland Show.

The UK Government's presence at the four day Edinburgh event will give the rural industries and members of the public the chance to speak to UK Government ministers and staff about what is important to them and find out more about how the UK Government delivers for people in Scotland.

Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

The Royal Highland Show is Scotland's biggest agriculture event and the UK Government will be taking this excellent opportunity to engage with the industry, underline the importance of the rural economy to Scotland and wider UK and show how determined we are to get a good deal for the sector in our EU exit negotiations.

Scottish agriculture is worth £1.4 billion a year to the UK economy and my message is clear: We need to be bold and ambitious and maximise the opportunities Brexit brings. To achieve this it is vital that the UK and Scottish Governments work together – as well as with businesses – to ensure our rural economy can continue to grow.

Attracting almost 200,000 visitors last year, the show also provides an important platform for show-goers to find out how the UK Government is delivering for people in Scotland – including on funding for childcare, pensions, defence and business start-up support. I look forward to meeting businesses and members of the public over the course of the show, to hear about their priorities over the coming months and years.

The Scottish Secretary will meet industry leaders and tour the show to meet businesses and show-goers. UK Government Environment Secretary Michael Gove, UK Government Minister of State for Exiting the European Union, Lord Callanan and UK Government Minister for Scotland Lord Duncan will also visit the show.

UK Government Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

I am very much looking forward to attending the Royal Highland Show and celebrating the very best of Scottish farming, food and rural life.

As we leave the EU we want an ambitious agricultural framework that works for all of the UK. This means more freedom for Scotland to support their farming sectors and enhance their beautiful and environmentally rich landscapes.

We are continuing to work together ahead of the Agriculture Bill taking a common approach where it benefits all farmers and consumers to do so.

According to official figures, in 2016 agriculture contributed approximately £1.4 billion to Scotland's economy, employing around 67,000 people.

The Scottish Secretary will also host a Scottish beer reception, showcasing the best of Scotland's brewers.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and Department for International Trade (DIT), will be promoting the GREAT Campaign: Food is GREAT. Overseas Scottish food and drink exports were worth approximately £6 billion in 2017 and food and drink businesses now employ around 115,000 people.

For further information contact the Scotland Office press office on 0131 244 9028.

Press release: Life sciences sector focus for UK-US event

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox MP, will set out his vision for increased trade between the UK and the US in the fast-growing life sciences sector tonight (Tuesday 19 June) in front of an audience of large scale investors.

Speaking to members of the American Pharmaceutical Group (APG) and representatives from the US Embassy at the Churchill War Rooms, Dr Fox will set out the UK's world leading research and development capability which enables British businesses and universities to export their goods and services around the globe.

The Secretary of State will highlight:

- opportunity for UK SMEs: there is great potential for UK SMEs specialising in the likes of biotech R&D to secure substantial deals with US pharma companies to export their cutting-edge products and expand their UK operations
- jobs: the APG is made up of 10 of the largest US life science investors

in the UK, who together support more than 14,000 UK jobs

- exports: the UK's exported £6 billion worth of pharmaceutical products to the US last year – demonstrating the clear demand for British innovation

The Secretary of State will call for collaboration between the UK and the US to push the boundaries of science in key areas such as cancer treatment, early diagnosis of disease and realising the potential of AI in a healthcare setting. He will also set out how the UK is committed to the continued growth of the sector by highlighting measures such as the £20 million in funding the government has pledged to the joint UK-US CARB-X project to address the global rise of antimicrobial resistance.

As well as calling for joint working in the life sciences sector, Dr Fox will stress that the UK's departure from the European Union offers an unprecedented opportunity to build on our already strong trading relationship with the US, including through a potential future Free Trading Agreement.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox MP, said:

The UK and US already has strong ties in the life sciences sector with our world leading innovation helping American companies improve the lives of billions of people around the globe.

As an international economic department, I want us to go further and see even more British businesses making the most of the opportunities presented by this relationship, not just in this sector, as we look to deepen our trading ties with the US after we leave the European Union.

The event comes as the latest statistics from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy show that health and life sciences are worth over £70 billion to the economy and provide jobs for almost 241,000 people across the country.

The recent launch of the government's Industrial Strategy [Life Sciences Sector Deal](#), demonstrates how the government will support the sector to develop and launch the next generation of medicines, technologies and diagnostics and provide better care and treatments for millions of patients.

The Minister for Trade and Export Promotion, Baroness Fairhead, travelled in June to [Bio Conference 2018](#) in Boston with a strong delegation of UK businesses. Whilst at the conference, the Minister emphasised the strength of the sector in Britain as the UK pavilion was designed around a theme of being 'the home of healthcare'.

Total trade in goods and services (i.e. exports plus imports) between the UK and US stood at more than £180 billion in 2017, an 8% increase over 2016.

News story: David Mundell Statement on Glasgow School of Art

As the House will be aware, on the night of 15 June a fire broke out at Glasgow School of Art's renowned . The Building is one of Glasgow's iconic landmarks and regarded as Mackintosh's greatest work. It is, rightly, respected as of great architectural significance and a unique and irreplaceable building in the eyes of many worldwide.

Indeed the art school was itself a work of art. It is a jewel in a city that sparkles with architectural splendour.

And it is also worth noting that the building next door, the O2 ABC music venue has also been affected. It was an even older building and had a colourful and varied history.

The art school was never a museum piece but a living, breathing, working art school – a powerhouse of creativity, a much loved part of the fabric of Glasgow.

We can, however, be grateful that this tragedy was not worsened by a loss of life. My heartfelt thanks go out to the emergency services, particularly the fire service, who attended the scene under such adverse conditions, in the heart of the vibrant city's nightlife.

Many people, like myself, are still in disbelief that this could happen again after the devastating fire of 2014, particularly so given the painstaking and careful efforts that have taken place over the past years to restore the building.

I visited the building on 1st June for the Degree Show 2018 opening. I saw the restored library and famous Hen Run and was struck by the love and passion of those involved in restoring the building. I am personally devastated by this fire, a fact I communicated directly when speaking to the School's Director, Professor Tom Inns, over the weekend. My heart goes out to the School, its students and supporters who have done so much to raise funds for the restoration after 2014.

At this point we do not know the cause of the fire, but I note that the fire service has assured us that a "comprehensive and professional" probe will be carried out in due course.

The UK Government previously gave £10 million to rebuild the School after the last fire and we stand ready to help again.

There was never any question about the need to rebuild and restore it when tragedy struck just four years ago. The situation is far worse after the

weekend's fire, but I hope we can start with that aim in mind.

Obviously there are real questions about what will happen next. But we stand ready to work with the School, the City Council and the Scottish Government. I am visiting the site and meeting the Head of the School on Friday. I will update Members when I am in a position to do so.

Statement to Parliament: Home Secretary statement on medical use of cannabis

With permission Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the medical use of cannabis.

Over the weekend, I issued an emergency licence to allow Billy Caldwell's medical team to access cannabis-based medicine to treat life-threatening seizures caused by a severe form of epilepsy.

This was an emergency procedure which was led by a senior clinician with the support of the Medical Director at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital.

I am pleased to say Billy has now been discharged from hospital. It is now for his senior clinicians to develop a long-term care plan.

I'm sure the whole House would like to join me in expressing my sympathy for Billy and his family who have been going through a very difficult time.

The course of action in this case was unprecedented.

There is strong scientific evidence that cannabis is a drug which can harm people's mental and physical health, and damage communities.

There are currently no legally recognised medicinal or therapeutic benefits.

To date, under successive governments, Home Office policy has been to permit the production, supply and possession of raw cannabis solely for research purposes under a Home Office licence.

The cannabis-based medicine Sativex can however be prescribed in the UK because there is a proven case for its safety and efficacy.

However, cases like Billy's, Alfie Dingley's and others like it, have shown that we need to look more closely at the use of cannabis-based medicine in the healthcare sector in the UK.

Because it has become clear to me since becoming Home Secretary that the

position that we find ourselves in currently is not satisfactory.

It's not satisfactory for the parents, it's not satisfactory for the doctors, and it's not satisfactory for me.

Review

I have now come to the conclusion that it is time to review the scheduling of cannabis.

Before I go into any detail of the review, let me be absolutely clear that this step is in no way a first step to the legalisation of cannabis for recreational use.

This government has absolutely no plans to legalise cannabis and the penalties for unauthorised supply and possession will remain unchanged.

We will not set a dangerous precedent or weaken our ability to keep dangerous drugs off our streets.

The approach that we will be asking the review to consider will be no different than that which has been used before for other controlled drugs where there is evidence of medical benefits.

The government review will take place in 2 parts.

Part one of the commission will consider the evidence available for the medicinal and therapeutic benefits of cannabis-based medicines.

Professor Sally Davies, who also serves as the Chief Medical Officer, will take this part forward.

This would then inform exactly which forms of cannabis or cannabis-based medicines should be taken forward in Part 2.

Part 2 will be led by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD).

The ACMD will not reassess the evidence issued by Professor Sally Davies, but will provide an assessment, based on the balance of harms and public health needs, of what, if anything, should be rescheduled.

If the review identified that there are significant medical benefits then we do intend to reschedule.

We have seen in recent months that there is a pressing need to allow those who might benefit from cannabis-based products to access them.

It will of course take time for Professor Sally Davies and the ACMD to complete their work and for the government to consider their recommendations.

Expert panel

In the short term, the Policing Minister announced yesterday that the government will be establishing an expert panel of clinicians to advise ministers on any applications to prescribe cannabis-based medicines.

This is intended to ensure that advice to ministers on licensing in these cases is clinically led, based firmly upon medical evidence and is as swift as possible.

The chief medical officers across the UK have been actively working together already, and the expert panel will be able to start considering applications within a week.

Earlier today, the Policing Minister also spoke to Alfie Dingley's mum Hannah Deacon, and informed her that we will issue a licence for Alfie later today.

All of the work I have outlined today is about making sure that we keep in step with the latest scientific evidence and that patients and their families have access to the most appropriate course of medical treatment.

And I would like to pay tribute to the Policing Minister for all of his excellent and sustained work on this important issue.

As a father, I know there is nothing worse than seeing your child suffer.

You would do anything to take away their pain.

Utmost sympathy

That is why I have the utmost sympathy for Billy Caldwell, Alfie Dingley and others like them, and for their parents who have been under unimaginable stress and strain.

I know that they are following a gut parental instinct to do whatever is in their power to try and alleviate their child's suffering.

And today I would like to say to this House that I will do everything in my power to make sure that we have a system that works so that these children and these parents get access to the best medical treatment.

I commend this statement to the House.

[News story: Karen Johnston reappointed](#)

as Deputy Pensions Ombudsman

Guy Opperman, Minister for Pensions and Financial Inclusion, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, has reappointed Karen Johnston as Deputy Pensions Ombudsman for a further 2 years. Following on from a 3 year term, Karen's reappointment will start on the 1 July 2018.