

Press release: Breaking down barriers to Welsh global exporting ambitions

- UK Government seeks views of Welsh businesses on how to boost export potential
- Global Welsh exporters Hiut Denim and Aerfin to help inform UK Government's export strategy review

Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns will challenge Welsh enterprises to set their sights on a global future when he gathers business leaders around the table to discuss the priorities, opportunities and challenges they face on their exporting journeys around the world.

It is part of a series of engagement opportunities undertaken by the UK Government as part of its Export Strategy review.

The Government is working closely with industry to understand the challenges faced by UK firms, increase awareness of export support and finance that is already available, and explore how this can be improved.

Cardigan based denim manufacturer Hiut – who export 25% of their jeans around the world, and the UK's fastest growing exporter, AerFin in Caerphilly will be among those joining the Secretary of State at the first roundtable meeting in Cardiff today (15 March) with another planned for north Wales later this month.

Exports from Wales rose by 12.3% to £16.4 billion in the latest year on year figures, is home to nearly 4,000 exporters with an average value per exporter of more than £4.2million.

Yet there is huge scope for more businesses to reach new customers by meeting demand for UK goods and services overseas.

As such, the UK Government is calling on Welsh businesses to contribute to the Export Strategy review and share their views on how the UK Government can encourage and support British businesses to take advantage of the enormous potential to grow.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

The big increase in Welsh exports shows our home-grown companies are succeeding on the world stage and consumers want the high quality goods and services that we have to offer.

The Export Strategy review will draw on expertise from across government and the private sector, helping us to understand how best to support British companies to take advantage of opportunities in overseas markets.

Throughout this process, I want to see significant input from businesses in Wales, both large and small, to ensure we develop a strategy that meets their needs.

The meeting comes in the week before a host of Welsh companies attend the UK Government's GREAT Festival of Innovation in Hong Kong (21-24 March) – an event which will showcase the power of UK innovation and technology to the world.

The four-day event will bring together some of the UK and Asia's most pioneering companies to share innovations that will drive the future of free trade and for businesses to build lifelong partnerships.

The UK Government will report on the export strategy in spring this year.

Top 5 ways the UK Government supports businesses to export:

1. [great.gov.uk](https://www.great.gov.uk) – export platform which lists thousands of export opportunities worth millions of pounds. It also puts firms in touch with global buyers at the click of a mouse.
 2. [UK Export Finance](#) – the UK's export credit agency provides financial support like capital loans, to ensure no viable export deal fails due to lack of finance and insurance. UKEF has recently partnered with 5 of the UK's biggest banks, to help small businesses easily access government-backed financial support.
 3. Face-to-face support for exporters in England – delivered via a network of around 250 international trade advisers (ITAs). ITAs are managed by 9 delivery partners who operate in each of the 9 English regions.
 4. Trade shows – DIT supports trade shows across the world to showcase the best of UK companies from sectors including life sciences, automotive and food and drink.
 5. Board of Trade – with representatives from the business community to be the 'eyes and ears' of modern businesses. It meets 4 times a year rotated around the UK guaranteeing all parts of the union have a chance to raise the issues most important to them.
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News story: £67 million boost for a Full Fibre future

Tens of thousands of businesses and homes across the UK are set to benefit from a £67 million investment in faster internet connections, the Chancellor Philip Hammond announced today.

The Nationwide Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS) will provide vouchers worth up to £3000 for a small or medium sized business or £500 to residents to help with the costs of connecting to full fibre broadband.

The scheme is part of a wider government plan to get more homes and businesses connected to full fibre broadband. It builds on the £200 million Local Full Fibre Networks programme which gives funding to local areas to boost full fibre delivery. £95 million of this funding was allocated at Spring Statement to 13 successful bidders across the UK.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond said:

We're backing Britain's small businesses by investing £67 million to bring full-fibre broadband to more businesses up and down the country.

This means faster, more reliable broadband access as we build the digital infrastructure we need to make our economy fit for the future.

DCMS Secretary of State, Matt Hancock said:

Small businesses are the backbone of the British economy and now they can turbo-charge their connectivity with gigabit speeds.

By building a full fibre future for Britain we are laying the foundations for a digital infrastructure capable of delivering today what the next generation will need tomorrow.

Full fibre connections are faster, more reliable and cheaper to operate than traditional copper lines, and are capable of supporting not only gigabit, but terabit and even petabit speeds, which will serve the UK far into the future. Currently only around 3% of UK premises have access to a full fibre connection.

The scheme forms part of the Government's commitment to make full fibre

broadband available to at least 10 million homes and businesses by 2022. Over the past 18 months, the government has taken significant steps to support the commercial roll out of full-fibre broadband, including:

This next generation of connectivity will help the country to remain productive and competitive over the long-term, creating a Britain fit for the future, and enabling businesses to create better, higher-paying jobs in every part of the UK. Through its Industrial Strategy, the Government is continually driving the UK's connectivity, telecommunications and digital sectors, and investing in the skills, industries and infrastructure of the future. Registration for new suppliers will open before the launch of the scheme at the end of March 2018. The scheme will be open until March 2021 or until all available funding has been allocated. There is more information [on our website](#).

Notes to editors:

- The Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme is intended to further the strategic objective of the Local Full Fibre Networks programme to stimulate commercial investment in full fibre coverage across the UK in both rural and urban locations across the UK.
- A market trial of the voucher scheme for business premises was launched in late 2017 in four areas across the country, with one area also running a trial of residential vouchers. Around 1000 vouchers were issued to small businesses through this pilot. These areas were:
 - Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire
 - Bristol, with Bath and North East Somerset (also had residential vouchers)
 - Coventry and Warwickshire (North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Rugby, Stratford-on-Avon, Warwick)
 - West Yorkshire and York (Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, Wakefield and York)
- Businesses and residents can get vouchers from suppliers who are registered with the scheme. Vouchers may only be used to support the cost of eligible connections. Suppliers can offer vouchers to both new and existing customers.
- Where suppliers are able to provide qualifying connections to single SMEs, vouchers will be made available to cover up to £3,000 of eligible costs.
- The only way residents can benefit from the voucher scheme is as part of a local community group scheme, which must also include small businesses. Residents and businesses taking part in a group scheme are able to join together to pool the value of their vouchers. Within this group the total value of vouchers used by businesses must always be greater than the value of vouchers taken by residents.
- In some areas the value of a single voucher will not fully meet the installation costs of a gigabit capable full fibre connection. Anyone in this position can also benefit from the group approach outlined above. Businesses and local community groups interested in requesting a voucher will be able to find full details of our scheme [on our website](#). The website also includes instructions on how to register for new suppliers,

and the full details and terms and conditions of the scheme.

News story: Saga Sky and Stema Barge II report published

The MAIB's report on the collision between Saga Sky and Stema Barge II on 20 November 2016 in which both vessels had been driven towards the coast under the influence of adverse weather conditions created by Storm Angus and resulting in two subsea power cables being severed, is now published.

The report contains details of what happened, subsequent actions taken and recommendations, [read more](#).

Press enquiries

Press enquiries during office hours 01932 440015

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Speech: "The Russian State was responsible for the attempted murder...and for threatening the lives of other British citizens in Salisbury."

Thank you Mr President.

And thank you for arranging this urgent meeting of the of the Security Council today to give the UK the opportunity to update Council colleagues on our investigation into a nerve agent attack in Salisbury.

On Sunday 4 March, Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia were found in the town centre slipping out of consciousness on a public bench and were taken to hospital by our emergency services, where they remain in a very serious condition.

Investigations by world-leading experts at the Defence, Science and Technology laboratory at Porton Down, accredited by the OPCW, discovered that they had been exposed to a nerve agent. British Police Officer Nick Bailey, was also exposed and remains in hospital in a serious condition. Hundreds of British citizens have been potentially exposed to this nerve agent in what was an indiscriminate and reckless act against the United Kingdom. We have deployed our military to secure and decontaminate numerous sites. The police continue an exhaustive, wide-scale investigation. Through those investigations, we have concluded that Mr Skripal and his daughter were poisoned with a "Novichok", a military grade nerve agent of a type developed by Russia.

It is not a weapon which can be manufactured by non-state actors. It is so dangerous that it requires the highest-grade state laboratories and expertise. Based on the knowledge that Russia has previously produced this agent and combined with Russia's record of conducting state sponsored assassinations – including against former intelligence officers whom they regard as legitimate targets – the UK Government concluded that it was highly likely that Russia was responsible for this reckless act.

We saw only two plausible explanations: either it was a direct attack by Russia on my country; or Russia had lost control of a military-grade nerve agent which they had developed. We requested the Russian Government provide an explanation by the end of Tuesday 13 March on how this Russian-produced nerve agent could have been deployed in Salisbury. They provided no credible explanation which could suggest they lost control of their nerve agent.

Mr President, we therefore have no alternative but to conclude that the Russian State was responsible for the attempted murder of Mr Skripal and his daughter, and Police Officer Nick Bailey, and for threatening the lives of other British citizens in Salisbury.

Mr President, this was no common crime. It was an unlawful use of force – a violation of article two of the United Nations charter, the basis of the international legal order.

Mr President, the UK is proud to have been one of the states who played an integral role in drafting the Chemical Weapons Convention, a landmark piece of international law. We are therefore dismayed that Russia suggested that our response fails to meet the requirements of the convention. Article 7 of the Convention calls on the State Parties to implement the convention under their own legislation. The United Kingdom has enacted the Chemical Weapons Act in order to fully comply with this obligation. That legislation, together with relevant criminal law, is now guiding our investigation into this incident, as the convention was designed.

This was an attack on UK soil. Under the convention, we have the right to lead our response, engaging the OPCW and others as appropriate. On 8 March the UK formally notified the OPCW Technical Secretariat that a chemical attack had taken place on UK soil. The Russian Federation has complained that we are not using article 9 of the Convention. On the contrary, on 12 March, once it became clear to us that the United Kingdom had been attacked, my

Foreign Secretary summoned the Russian Ambassador and sought an explanation from his government, as article 9 is clear we have the right to do. We have received no meaningful response. It is therefore Russia which is failing to comply with the provisions of the convention and this Council should not fall for their attempts to muddy the waters. In addition the UK has welcomed the offer of technical assistance from the Director General of the OPCW and we have invited the Technical Secretariat to independently verify our analysis. We are making every effort to expedite this process.

Mr President, let us now turn to the part of the Chemical Weapons convention which Russia not talking about. The part which requires State Parties to declare chemical weapons stockpiles and facilities which have been used at any time since 1946 to produce chemical weapons. Chemical weapons were to be verifiably destroyed and production facilities destroyed or converted subject to approval, within ten years of entry into force of the Convention. Russia completed destruction of its declared stockpile in September 2017 – ten years later than required by the Convention and five years beyond the single five year extension period.

Russia did not declare Novichok agents or production facilities associated with them as it was required to do under the Convention. No development facilities were declared. Yet we know from testimony by the Russian scientist Vil Mirzanayov that Novichoks were developed as part of the Soviet Union's offensive chemical warfare programme and inherited by the Russian Federation. Such facilities associated with that programme should have been declared under the CWC. Even today, a Russian politician has said that Russia has destroyed the Novichok nerve gas.

Mr President, from all of this we can conclude that Russia is in serious breach of the Chemical Weapons convention through its failure to declare the Novichok programme. This fact alone means you should discount any arguments you hear from them about the possibility of other countries having inherited this technology. Had Russia declared and destroyed their own programme, there might have been some truth to this.

Mr President, on 4 March a weapon so horrific that it is banned from use in war was used in a peaceful city in my country. This was a reckless act carried out by people who disregard the sanctity of human life, who are indifferent to whether innocents are caught up in their attacks. They either did not care that the weapon used would be traced back to them, or mistakenly believed that they could cover their traces. Russian officials and media channels have repeatedly threatened those they consider traitors, even after the 4 March attacks.

Russia has a history of state-sponsored assassinations, including that of Alexander Litvinienko, poisoned by radioactive materials in my country a decade ago.

Russia has a history of interfering in other countries, whether the botched coup in Montenegro, repeated cyber-attacks on other states or seeking to influence others' democratic processes.

Russia has a history of flouting international law, most egregiously in Crimea, Eastern Ukraine and Georgia.

Russia shows disregard for civilian life, we all remember flight MH17 shot down by Russian proxies, supplied with Russian weapons.

And Russia has shown in its repeated protection of Asad's chemical weapons use that it has different standards when it comes to the use of these terrible substances.

We have not jumped to conclusions. We have carried out a thorough, careful investigation, which continues. We are asking the OPCW to independently verify the nerve agent used. We have offered Russia the chance to explain. But Russia has refused.

We have therefore concluded that the Russian state was involved and we have taken certain measures in response. In taking these measures we have been clear that we have no disagreement with the people of Russia who have been responsible for so many great achievements throughout history. It is the reckless acts of their Government which we oppose.

Mr President, we are grateful for the support of so many countries around the world. We will come back to the Council as the investigations make more progress and continue to keep you informed.

We have already heard the attacks and threats Russia has made over the past few days. We know that there will be more to come. This is how Russia has acted in every other case where it has been caught flouting international law: denial, distraction and threats. It is what Russia does.

But we will not let such threats deter us. We will not weaken our resolve. We will stand firm, confident in our democracy, our rule of law and the freedom of our people. We will stand by the values which are shared by the overwhelming majority of those in this Council, in this United Nations. And we ask you today to stand by us.

Thank you.

Press release: PM call with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau: 14 March 2018

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

"The Prime Minister spoke to Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada this evening to

discuss the incident in Salisbury and the actions that the UK government is taking against Russia in response.

“Prime Minister May said the use of a military grade nerve agent on British soil was a reckless and shocking act.

“She thanked Prime Minister Trudeau for the strong message of support from Canada in recent days. He said that Canada would continue to stand squarely with the UK.

“They agreed on the importance of the international community showing solidarity at this time, and demonstrating a collective commitment to hold Russia to account for its unacceptable pattern of behaviour.”