

Press release: Welsh Secretary visits new US Embassy in London to promote UK-US trade ties

Cultivating and nurturing the strong UK-US trading relationship topped the agenda when Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns met with the Ambassador of the United States to the UK, Robert W Johnson at the new US Embassy building in south London earlier today (22 Feb).

Mr Cairns and Mr Johnson discussed providing certainty, continuity and increasing confidence for UK and US businesses as the UK leaves the EU and how the UK Government is committed to a post-Brexit economy that gives the UK and the USA even more opportunity to trade than ever before.

The meeting comes hot on the heels of the Secretary of State's three-day mission to New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania last week (12-14 Feb).

With the aim of attracting American businesses to invest in Wales and build on a trading relationship already worth more than £3.9 billion, Mr Cairns met with companies operating in sectors from cyber security to pharmaceuticals.

Businesses in Wales already have strong links with some of the strongest and fastest growing economies in the world. There are over 250 American companies based in Wales such as GE Aviation, Ford and General Dynamics.

Welsh companies exported more than £2 billion to the world's largest economy in the year to September 2017.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

As our largest trading partner, the US remains an enormously important market for Wales as well as the rest of the UK.

During last week's trade mission to the USA so many of the businesses I met looked upon the UK as the bridge between America and Europe and a partner of choice for trade.

I was delighted to have the opportunity today to discuss the positive meetings I had there, and to discuss how we can take the next positive steps to create more investment and exporting opportunities for companies on both sides of the Atlantic.

Ambassador of the United States to the United Kingdom Robert W Johnson said:

Wales is an important partner for the United States.

There is a significant amount of trade and investment between us, which is great news for workers in Wales and America.

But there is still a lot of potential for us to do more business, and together we are going to help more companies cross the Atlantic and find new opportunities to succeed.

Speech: Attorney General speech at the Modern Slavery Summit

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak to you this morning. Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to pass on my thanks to the CPS for organising and hosting this important summit on prosecuting Modern Slavery crimes.

On behalf of the UK Government may I also pass on a very warm welcome to you all. Many of you have travelled a long way to be here, and I hope this summit will be an important step in improving international dialogue and combatting the crimes of forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking.

As we are all very well aware, modern slavery exists in all our societies. It respects neither borders nor jurisdictions and its victims are subject to the most appalling mistreatment and exploitation, this brings our task at this summit into sharp focus.

I know you will be looking at identifying ways to better support victims and witnesses, and establishing a strong, active international network to tackle Modern Slavery.

In the last 8 years, the UK has clearly demonstrated that with the right will and mind-set it is possible to transform our approach to Modern Slavery.

The then Home Secretary, and current Prime Minister, identified modern slavery as a significant problem, and since then this Government has put in place an ambitious strategy and dedicated legislation to tackle it.

Prior to 2010, there was no bespoke legislation and the law enforcement response was not sufficiently coordinated or effective to deal with this type of offending.

Giving law enforcement agencies the tools to tackle modern slavery is paramount in achieving successful prosecutions, and at the same time protecting victims. The Modern Slavery Act 2015 does just that. The Act not only consolidates all modern slavery legislation into one Act, assisting both the police and prosecutors but introduces other equally important measures to

improve the criminal justice response. For example :

- the introduction of maximum life sentences for perpetrators;
- the provision for civil prevention and risk orders', which stop potential acts of trafficking or forced labour from taking place; and
- the introduction of a statutory defence for those forced or coerced to commit crimes like cannabis farming – which will also help safeguard victims from abuse.

These measures are now beginning to have a real impact and – we are seeing a real rise in convictions for new offences prosecuted under the Modern Slavery Act and at least 56 Slavery and Trafficking Prevention and Risk Orders to restrict offender activity are in place.

In addition to these new measures and tools, training remains important. Investigators and prosecutors need to be well trained so they are readily able to identify elements of Modern Slavery in their cases. They also need to be aware of the new tools they have available to tackle these crimes and prevent further offending from taking place and to identify and protect victims.

As well as a criminal justice response, it is important that there other powers and regulations in place to stop the exploitation of vulnerable victims and to disrupt potential crimes before they take place.

The Modern Slavery Act established an Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. Their job is to work with law enforcement agencies, local authorities and third sector organisations to encourage identification, prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of modern slavery crimes – across the UK and internationally. This role is essential in order to advise the Government on improvements to the system and to encourage joined up working across the UK.

More recently the Government has used the Immigration Act 2016 to extend the remit and strengthen the powers of the Gangmasters Labour Abuse Authority. Its new mission will be to prevent, detect and investigate worker exploitation across the entire economy.

The Modern Slavery Act also includes a world-leading transparency in supply chains measure requiring certain businesses to report how they are eradicating modern slavery from their organisation and their supply chains. By forcing business to report on this, it has made them much more aware of potential modern slavery crimes. Most importantly, the Modern Slavery Act has provisions to give protection to overseas domestic workers, a duty on public authorities to notify the Home Office when they come across potential victims.

Crucially, we have found that where support for victims of this crime, who are typically extremely vulnerable and often reluctant, or fearful of engaging with law enforcement, is prioritised prosecution rates are higher and the chance of a successful prosecution much more likely.

The National Referral Mechanism – the NRM – is the UK system for identifying and providing access to support to potential victims of modern slavery. The Modern Slavery Act ensued that this support was extended to all victims of Modern Slavery in England and Wales.

The NRM should act as bridge – helping victims to be lifted out of situations of exploitation; providing specialist care and support to enable them to begin to recover and rebuild their lives; and facilitating their return to the relevant community.

We recognise that the NRM does not always do this for victims, and that is why we are committed to reforming it to ensure better results for victims.

Having a regulatory environment which encourages collaboration between law enforcement agencies, first line responders and licensing authorities is essential in tackling such a wide ranging crime and our research reflects that this aligned approach produces better outcomes for victims. The global prevalence of Modern Slavery is significant, and whilst it is a largely hidden crime the International Labour Organisation and Walk Free Foundation in 2016 estimated that there are 40.3 million caught up in Modern Slavery globally. This is a conservative estimate and in reality there could be many more victims worldwide.

No country can tackle modern slavery alone and I am proud to be part of a Government that is leading the fight against this horrendous crime internationally.

To drive further progress and collaboration at the international level, the Prime Minister convened a group of world leaders at a modern slavery event during the UN General Assembly in September 2017. Leaders and senior ministers from 21 member states attended the event and 42 countries have now endorsed an ambitious Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. This sets out the practical steps that countries will take to effectively respond to modern slavery and fulfil the commitments set out by the international community. At that meeting the Prime Minister also announced that the UK would double its aid budget spend on modern slavery to £150m.

£33.5 million of this is set aside in a Modern Slavery Fund, managed by the Home Office, and of this £11 million has been allocated to an innovation fund to trial new approaches to tackle and reduce the prevalence of modern slavery and to identify interventions that could be scaled up.

This £11 million fund is currently supporting 10 successful projects which are being taken forward by a range of organisations including NGOs, universities and multilateral organisations. These projects target issues such as tackling slavery in supply chains, supporting victims, exploring vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation and helping to share skills and expertise with overseas partners.

It should not be surprising that the majority of the victims referred to us are from countries other than the UK. In the last year there has been a

significant increase in referrals from Sudan and Ethiopia with the most referrals coming from Vietnam and Albania.

In response, we are increasing bilateral engagement with and increasing the operational response in countries from which a high number of vulnerable people are exploited and trafficked into the UK.

Building strong partnerships is the key to improving our understanding of the context that leads to vulnerable people being exploited and trafficked to the UK to better inform our approach and operational response so this can be disrupted. This conference is an excellent step in improving that collaborative approach.

We are increasing law enforcement cooperation, including through establishing joint investigation teams and greater intelligence sharing, to tackle this crime and bring perpetrators to justice. Additionally we are working with international law enforcement agencies to improve the international operational response. For example, the UK has encouraged Interpol to strengthen its understanding of modern slavery and its enablers to better understand international law enforcement challenges and gaps.

We all share a moral duty to end Modern Slavery, a duty that transcends party politics and country borders and which unites us in our determination to root out this dreadful crime from our society.

I welcome the opportunity this summit brings to create a unified, international approach to tackling modern slavery and ensure that victims receive the support and assistance they need to begin the process of rebuilding their lives.

The leadership we show at this summit is therefore important. The task of tackling modern slavery is an urgent one, so we need swiftly to put our words into practice and hold ourselves to account for the progress that can be made.

[News story: Review launched to respond to patient concerns about NHS treatments](#)



Health and Social Care Secretary Jeremy Hunt has announced a review into how the health system responds to reports from patients about side effects from treatments.

The review comes after patient-led campaigns on 3 NHS treatments:

- the hormone pregnancy test Primodos, which was used up until 1978
- the anti-epileptic drug sodium valproate
- the use of vaginal mesh

Mr Hunt said that the response these groups of patients received from the NHS and its regulators was “not good enough”.

Baroness Julia Cumberlege will lead the review. She will consider:

- whether any further action is needed relating to the complaints around Primodos, sodium valproate and vaginal mesh
- the processes followed by the NHS and its regulators when patients report a problem
- how to make sure communication between the different groups involved is good

Mr Hunt has asked the review to set up an independent committee to help ministers decide on the best approach to resolving these issues.

He said:

Over the years, there have been significant concerns raised by individuals and campaign groups about the potentially harmful effects of 3 products used by the NHS. The response they have received from those in positions of authority has not always been good enough.

From Primodos to mesh and sodium valproate, patients and their families have had to spend too much time and energy campaigning for answers in a way that has added insult to injury for many. I want to see if we can establish a fairer and quicker way of resolving these concerns both now and in the future.

Chair of the review, Baroness Cumberlege, said:

I look forward to undertaking this tremendously important review and in particular to working with patients to ensure that our health system learns from those it may have failed. It's essential that voices aren't just listened to, but properly heard, and that whenever appropriate, the system promptly learns lessons and makes changes.

Published 22 February 2018

News story: HS2's gateway to London set for transformation as Lendlease wins Euston development role

A conceptual vision depicting how the new Euston station could look.

Lendlease will be appointed as Master Development Partner (MDP) by the Secretary of State for Transport and Network Rail. They will then work with the Greater London Authority and London Borough of Camden to develop a masterplan for the 54 hectare station site and take forward opportunities for sustainable mixed-use development once station construction is complete.

The arrival of HS2 will more than double the number of seats out of Euston during peak hours, providing much-needed extra capacity alongside an opportunity to improve accessibility and open up the station to the surrounding communities, creating new access routes, public and green spaces across the wider station site. Euston will be one of the best connected parts of London, and the country.

Welcoming the appointment, HS2 Minister Nusrat Ghani, said:

Confirming Lendlease as our intended major partner is an exciting and important moment as we drive forward the regeneration of Euston. We are setting out a strong vision for creating new homes and jobs, stimulating economic growth and building a modern development that will match the ambition and scale of HS2.

Crucially, as we build Britain's future railway we will ensure that communities are at the heart of our plans and share the transformative economic benefits on offer.

HS2 Chief Executive Mark Thurston, said:

The arrival of HS2 gives us a unique opportunity to transform the wider Euston station site, opening up the station to the surrounding community with new streets and public realm as well as opportunities to unlock thousands of new jobs and homes, anchored around a common masterplan vision.

It was great to see such a strong competition and I'm pleased to welcome Lendlease to the team. Their experience of delivering some of the world's most challenging transport and development projects will be vital as we move forward with this exciting new phase in the story of Euston station.

David Biggs, Managing Director Network Rail Property, said:

Network Rail has a successful history of creating great places and we're excited to use this expertise to work with stakeholders, landowners, and our new development partner to establish a visionary masterplan for Euston.

Like our award-winning work at nearby King's Cross, which attracted £2.2bn of private investment including new offices, jobs and homes, we will work to transform Euston station to meet modern needs and act as a catalyst for wider regeneration. With this transformation and the arrival of HS2, Euston station quarter will become a new thriving London destination which meets the needs of passengers and local communities.

Lendlease are currently developing the International Quarter London at the gateway to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, which will be home to 25,000 jobs centred around some of the best transport connections anywhere in the country.

Like Euston, the development of the Olympic Park shows how infrastructure investment can help areas live up to their full potential, delivering new jobs, homes shops and leisure opportunities. In the six years since the Games, the area has been transformed, with new neighbourhoods created and work ongoing to integrate the new development into the surrounding community with new streets, public spaces and leisure facilities.

Lendlease worked with a broad consultant team including Prior and Partners, Grimshaw, Arup, BIG, AHMM, Haworth Tomkins, Asif Khan and AECOM.

Dan Labbad, Lendlease Chief Executive Officer International Operations, said:

We are proud and excited to be selected as preferred bidder to deliver the Euston OSD in partnership with HS2, Network Rail, London Borough of Camden, GLA and wider stakeholders.

We believe this is a fantastic project in a key area of London

which will provide opportunity for all and act as a catalyst for wider UK growth.

Opened in 1837, Euston was London's first inter-city train station. It was completely rebuilt in the early sixties and now caters for around 42 million passengers a year, more than double the design capacity of the current station.

By taking a coordinated approach with Network Rail, who own and run the existing station, and pooling publically owned land across the site, the appointment of the MDP will allow a unified approach to long-term development, which could unlock up to 4.84 million square foot of development space. The Masterplan will be in line with Camden's Local Area Plan.

Jules Pipe, London's Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills, said:

Euston has the potential to be much more than just a transport hub, and we look forward to working with Lendlease to make it into a real public space, which benefits local people, drives business growth, and unlocks some much-needed housing.

As one of our capital's main stations, it must seamlessly connect HS2, national rail, the Tube and, in the future, Crossrail 2.

The new HS2 station will be designed with input from local communities, using best practice principles from stations around the world, and guidelines and specifications endorsed by an independent panel of leading architects and designers.

The project will include a new interchange with the London Underground, combining Euston and Euston Square for the first time and including provision for a future connection to a potential Crossrail 2.

HS2 Ltd recently announced a shortlist of bidders in the running to build the station, and appointed Engineers Ove Arup & Partners, working with Grimshaw Architects, to take forward the design. The main construction phase is due to begin in 2019 with the first HS2 services arriving in 2026.

HS2 services will also travel beyond the new high speed network via existing tracks to a wide range of destinations including Liverpool, the North West, Newcastle, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Speech: What you should really be worrying about: climate change

What you should really be worrying about: climate change

Speech by Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency

Carbon Trust Low Carbon Cities Conference, London, 22 February 2018

Why you should worry about climate change

What keeps you awake at night? Fear of terrorism? Nuclear war? Economic collapse? If so, you're worrying about the wrong thing.

The Global Risk Report 2018, compiled by business leaders for last month's Davos meeting, put something else at the top of the list. The biggest risk now facing the world, they concluded, is none of the above – it's climate change. So if you have been worrying about the wrong thing, at least you are now at the right conference.

What it means for the UK

What does climate change mean for the UK? In 2009 the first UK Climate Projections brought together contributions from over 30 scientific organisations to model the likely changes to our climate out to the end of this century.

Those projections and more recent evidence suggest that average UK summer temperatures could rise by up to 4°C by 2080; that sea level will rise by up to 1 metre by the end of the century (more in some locations); and that we will see more extreme weather, including heavier, more intense rainfall.

Likely consequence: more frequent and more extreme flooding, greater coastal erosion and heightened risk of droughts. You don't need to be a genius to work out what that could mean for vulnerable communities up and down the country, rural as well as urban.

Why this matters for UK cities

We care about all communities in this country. But we're focusing today on cities. That makes sense. Over 83 per cent of the UK population now live in urban areas: that is expected to rise to over 90% by 2030. Our cities drive much of our economy and are engines for innovation. And they offer some of the biggest opportunities: if we get their future design right, they will play a crucial role in the transition to a low carbon and resilient future.

But our cities are also exposed to some of the greatest risks. It is an inconvenient truth that most of our cities, and therefore most of our

population, are located by coasts or rivers or in other low lying locations; and that wherever our cities are, every single one of them depends on water.

The Committee on Climate Change has identified six major climate-related risks for the UK. The biggest of all is increased flooding – from rivers, the sea and surface water. This will impact particularly on our cities. It will threaten our city homes and businesses; the power, water, communications and transport infrastructure on which our cities rely; and the broader supply chains on which our city economies depend.

Greater flood risk is not the only threat that climate change is bringing to our cities. The Committee identified others too: there will be heightened risks to health, wellbeing and productivity from high temperatures; risks of shortages in water supply (a risk that has already materialised in Cape Town right now); threats to our natural capital; to food production; and from pests and diseases.

The good news

That's the bad news. The good news is that we can successfully tackle these threats if we work together; and indeed that if we do this right, we can create even better cities that are life-enhancing places to live and work, an even stronger economy and an even better country.

What the EA is doing

The EA itself is directly engaged in trying to turn all this risk into opportunity. We're doing that in three main ways.

First, we're helping to reduce the causes of climate change.

We administer a number of the government's carbon reduction and energy efficiency schemes. We oversee the regulation of over half the UK's carbon emissions, and we're having some success – since 2000 greenhouse gas emissions from the industries we regulate have decreased by 39%. We're an energetic and positive regulator of the renewable technologies we need for the future, including hydropower and anaerobic digestion and, perhaps one day, tidal lagoons.

Gandhi said: "be the change you want to see in the world". So we also try and live low carbon in the Environment Agency's own daily operations. Over the last decade we have cut our emissions by over 40%. We have a travel hierarchy that encourages us away from carbon. We've invested in low emission technology and renewables across our estate and in our vehicle fleet.

We also ensure that our own Pension Fund makes sustainable and responsible investments, and it's been globally recognised for that. That includes investing in the Carbon Trust's Low Carbon Workplace partnership, in which businesses come together to acquire and refurbish office buildings to make them into modern city workplaces that minimise energy costs and carbon emissions.

Second, we're helping building long term resilience to climate change for our

cities.

Example: water. The biggest single influence on long term water availability is – you guessed – climate change. Water supplies are under further stress as our population rises. We are also seeing greater stress on the natural environment. Unless we take action now, demand for water in this country will eventually exceed supply.

Part of the answer is reforming the current system for taking water out of rivers and the ground. The Environment Agency regulates this through our abstraction licensing system. If you want to take more than 20 cubic metres a day, you will normally require an EA abstraction licence, many of which limit how much water can be taken. We actively manage thousands of those licences, working with the water companies, farmers and businesses who are their primary users to balance water availability and demand.

But this system of abstraction licensing was designed more than 50 years ago for a world with less demand for water, fewer people, almost no environmental protections and little awareness of climate change. That's why we are now working actively with water users and the government to reform it, so we can give abstractors what they need while protecting water supplies and the wider environment for the long term.

Second example of future proofing ourselves through resilience: flood defence. The Environment Agency's £2.6bn flood defence investment programme will better protect 300,000 homes – the majority in cities – by 2021. We have built climate change projections into all those schemes, to ensure they will continue to offer a high standard of protection over decades into the future as the climate changes. Those climate change projections are built into the present Thames Barrier not far from here, which we own and operate. And they are built into our thinking about what London will need to replace the present Barrier some time after 2070.

Third example of future proofing: urban planning. The Environment Agency is a statutory consultee on most development. We work actively with city planners and developers to ensure that new housing, new infrastructure and other developments are sustainable, and will remain resilient to flooding and to the other, less obvious effects of climate change.

One of those effects is the risk of extreme temperatures in our cities due to urban heat island effects. The way we design and build our urban spaces can avoid those urban hotspots, and we are active in helping cities shape the right design.

The third contribution the Environment Agency is making to a successful low carbon future is helping to shape future policy,

We contribute data, analysis and advice to the government's Climate Change Risk Assessment and its National Adaptation Programme, an updated version of which is due this summer. We contribute to the UK Climate Projections, which will also be updated this year. We helped write the 25 Year Environment Plan launched last month by the Prime Minister, which commits the government to

“all possible action to mitigate climate change, while adapting to reduce its impact”. That Plan has our full support and we will have a major role in delivering it.

Finally, we are supporting the government’s Clean Growth strategy. Our Chair, Emma Howard Boyd, is actively involved in initiatives to shape a bright urban future, including the Future Cities Catapult and the Green Finance Task Force.

Conclusion: think big, act early, be visible

Let me conclude with these thoughts. The Environment Agency is not, as we are sometimes portrayed, anti-growth. On the contrary. Our primary purpose, spelt out in the 1995 Environment Act that established the Agency, is not actually protecting the environment: it is promoting sustainable development. Our job is to do both of those things: to protect and enhance the environment on the one hand, and ensure sustainable growth and development on the other. And there is no greater prize in sustainability than successfully tackling climate change.

The Environment Agency has a slogan for handling flood incidents: think big, act early, be visible. That’s not a bad strapline for tackling climate change. We have another slogan too for how we try to work: One Team. We try to be One Team both inside the Environment Agency and with our partners.

All of us are here because we care. We’re all pretty good at what we do. But none of us is as good as all of us. So let’s not worry about climate change, let’s do something about it. Let’s tackle it together, and build a better future for our cities and our country. The Environment Agency will be your partner in that great endeavour.