

BCC comments on UK trade statistics for September 2017

Commenting on the trade statistics for September 2017, released today by the ONS, Suren Thiru, Head of Economics at the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

“The widening of the UK’s trade deficit in August is disappointing, and signifies a much weaker trading position than the average for the year, with exports falling and imports rising sharply in the month. Taken together with the recent widening of the current account deficit, the figures paint a rather gloomy picture of the UK’s external position.

“The latest trade data is further evidence that the decline in sterling’s value over the past year is doing little to boost the UK’s overall trade position. Businesses continue to report that the post-EU referendum weakness in sterling is hurting as much as its helping, with firms continuing to face higher input costs due to the weakening currency, particularly those locked into global supply chains. For those companies that rely on overseas suppliers for their production equipment, a weak pound also makes investment in growth less viable.

“Businesses want to see comprehensive trade talks begin in the EU negotiations before the end of the year, and need answers to the practical questions about our trading relationship with Europe beyond March 2019. At the same time, it is vital that more is done help firms take advantage of new trading opportunities, including greater practical assistance for exporters and tackling some of the longstanding issues at home including the chronic skill shortages and the cost of doing business in the UK.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: www.britishchambers.org.uk

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