BCC: Practical support for businesses will help boost UK's trade performance

BCC's Head of Economics, Suren Thiru, comments on the latest trade statistics.

7th April 2017

Commenting on the UK trade figures for February 2017, published today by the ONS, Suren Thiru, Head of Economics at the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

"Although the UK's trade deficit widening in February is disappointing, its largely as a result of an increase in 'erratic' goods. The longer-term measures continue to point to an improvement in the UK's trade performance.

"Trading conditions for UK exporters are likely to improve over the near term as a persistently weaker Sterling, and an improving outlook for the global economy, combine to boost international demand for UK goods and services. However, the extent of the improvement is likely to be limited by the rising cost of raw materials, which together with the raft of other high input costs facing businesses, is putting pressure on their cost bases.

"Although trade's contribution to UK economic growth is set to rise over the next few years, this is unlikely to be sufficient to offset the expected slowdown in other areas of the economy, most notably consumer spending.

"As we move through the negotiating process for exiting the EU, there must be a greater focus on providing practical support for those businesses looking to export, including revitalising and expanding the trade mission programme to help firms take full advantage of growth opportunities in new markets."

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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