

News story: £90 million Stirling and Clackmannanshire UK City Region Deal Launched

The UK Government is investing more than £45 million in the Stirling and Clackmannanshire UK City Region Deal. That will be matched by funding from the Scottish Government, bringing total funding to more than £90 million.

This Deal will drive economic growth across the region, creating jobs and boosting prosperity for generations to come. It is expected to create thousands of jobs over and beyond the 15 years of the plan.

Innovation and research are at the heart of the Stirling and Clackmannanshire UK City Region Deal, while making the most of the area's fantastic heritage. Projects will drive business start-up and growth, help companies develop and export their world-class expertise, and help more local people get the skills they need to get into jobs.

Secretary of State for Scotland David Mundell said:

The UK Government is investing £45 million in the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal. The ambitious and innovative Deal will drive economic growth across the region, creating jobs and boosting prosperity for generations to come. It is now for Stirling and Clackmannanshire to get on with the hard work needed to turn these proposals into a reality.

This is just one part of a programme of UK City Region Deals across Scotland. Today's announcement brings the UK Government's investment in UK City Region Deals in Scotland to more than £1 billion. All of Scotland's seven cities either have, or are in negotiation for, a deal. And talks are underway on the Borderlands and Ayrshire growth deals.

The UK Government is working hard to boost economic growth right across the UK. We want to work with the Scottish Government where we can to ensure the sustainability and prosperity of Scotland's economy.

Projects in the Deal to be funded by the UK Government include:

- A new Tartan visitor centre in Stirling
- A new Aquaculture Innovation Hub

- A new International Environment Centre
- Releasing land at MoD Forthside for housing and a business premises
- Skills support for people from disadvantaged groups across
- Other capital projects across Clackmannanshire

Work will now start on the detailed business plan for each project.

UK City Regional Deals are a UK Government initiative, delivered in Scotland in partnership with the Scottish Government, local authorities and other partners. All of Scotland's seven cities either have, or are in negotiations for, a deal. And talks are underway on Borderlands and Ayrshire growth deals. Today's announcement brings UK Government investment in UK City Region Deals in Scotland to more than £1 billion.

The UK Government is working hard to release economic potential across the UK with our ambitious industrial strategy. We want to work with the Scottish Government where we can to ensure the sustainability and prosperity of the Scottish economy, and make the most of the opportunities of Brexit.

[News story: Revealed: The worst explanations for not appointing women to FTSE company boards](#)

- shocking explanations for not having more women on top company boards include 'they don't fit in', 'they don't want the hassle' and 'all the good ones have already gone'
- evidence has shown that bridging the gender pay gap could add £150 billion to the UK economy by 2025 and tackling the gender pay gap is part of the government's modern Industrial Strategy
- the [Hampton-Alexander Review](#), which reaches halfway mark in June calls for bosses to ensure that one-third of FTSE leadership positions are occupied by women by 2020
- number of all-male FTSE 350 company boards fell from 152 in 2011 to 10 in 2017

Despite a major drop in the number of top companies with all-male boards, many are still refusing to move with the times – and some of the worst explanations firms have made for not having women among their top employees have been revealed today (Thursday 31 May).

Outrageous explanations for not appointing more women include suggestions they are not able to understand the 'extremely complex' issues FTSE boards deal with and the idea women do not want the 'hassle or pressure' of sitting on a top board.

The explanations, which come from a range of FTSE 350 Chairs and CEOs, were heard by the team behind the government-backed Hampton-Alexander Review, which has challenged all FTSE 350 companies to make sure at least a third of their board members and leadership are women by 2020.

The explanations include:

1. 'I don't think women fit comfortably into the board environment'
2. 'There aren't that many women with the right credentials and depth of experience to sit on the board – the issues covered are extremely complex'
3. 'Most women don't want the hassle or pressure of sitting on a board'
4. 'Shareholders just aren't interested in the make-up of the board, so why should we be?'
5. 'My other board colleagues wouldn't want to appoint a woman on our board'
6. 'All the 'good' women have already been snapped up'
7. 'We have one woman already on the board, so we are done – it is someone else's turn'
8. 'There aren't any vacancies at the moment – if there were I would think about appointing a woman'
9. 'We need to build the pipeline from the bottom – there just aren't enough senior women in this sector'
10. 'I can't just appoint a woman because I want to'

The number of women on boards has more than doubled in the FTSE 350 since 2011 according to the most recent statistics (November 2017). In that time, the number of all-male FTSE 350 company boards also fell from 152 to 10.

But Business Minister Andrew Griffiths said such appalling explanations as those released today proved companies have more work to do.

He said:

It's shocking that some businesses think these pitiful and patronising excuses are acceptable reasons to keep women from the top jobs. Our most successful companies are those that champion diversity.

Thankfully, there has been great progress in recent years and through our modern Industrial Strategy and the Hampton-Alexander Review we are determined that everyone has an equal opportunity to reach the top.

Chair of the Hampton-Alexander Review Sir Philip Hampton said:

Around a third of FTSE 350 companies still have very few women either on their boards or in senior leadership roles. We used to hear these excuses regularly a few years ago, thankfully much less so now.

However, leaders expressing warm words of support but actually doing very little to appoint women into top jobs – or quietly blocking progress – are really not much better.

These explanations have been published ahead of the announcement of the latest figures for the number of women on FTSE 350 boards on 27 June, which will mark the halfway point of the independent Hampton-Alexander Review which launched in November 2016.

Many companies reporting their gender pay gap earlier this year explained to the Hampton-Alexander Review team that the pay gap was due to insufficient women in senior roles, and/or a predominance of women in lower paid work. Ensuring women are selected in more equal numbers for senior roles, significantly reduces the pay gap.

Chief Executive of Business in the Community Amanda Mackenzie said:

As you read this list of excuses you might think it's 1918 not 2018. It reads like a script from a comedy parody but it's true. Surely we can now tackle this once and for all. Maybe those that give credence to these excuses are the ones that are not up to sitting on boards and should move over: we are in the 21st century after all.

However, we have plenty of reasons to be optimistic; the combination of gender pay gap reporting and the increased focus on equality and diversity in general by responsible businesses means there are more women on boards than ever before. While we still have a long way to go, with the collaboration between government, employers and their employees (both men and women), we could see true equality in our lifetime.

Director of Corporate Governance, Legal & General Investment Management (LGIM) Sacha Sadan said:

As a major investor in the UK we see diversity as a key business issue. LGIM has been active in the diversity debate since 2011, and has been voting against all male boards since 2015.

Boards made up of just men, from the same socioeconomic backgrounds, cannot be the optimal forum for challenging debates.

Although we have seen good progress at non-executive level there is still much more to do on the senior leadership pipeline. Therefore we continue to encourage companies to tap into the whole talent pool.

UK government Minister Lord Duncan said:

These shocking and pathetic excuses for not appointing women to FTSE company boards highlight the necessity to keep driving home the message that women must be in senior roles.

However, with the number of women on boards doubling in the FTSE 350 since 2011, there has been solid progress. The UK government will continue to build on this as a key part of our modern and diverse nation.

According to research by McKinsey bridging the gender pay gap could add £150 billion to the UK economy by 2025 and it could translate into 840,000 additional female employees.

Under new laws introduced in April 2017, more than 8,100 private and voluntary sector companies reported their gender pay gaps by the 4 April deadline this year. All companies with more than 250 employees are required to report their gender pay gaps.

Tackling the gender pay gap is a key part of the government's modern [Industrial Strategy](#), through which the government aims to help businesses create better, higher-paying jobs while boosting people's earning power and ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to progress in the workplace.

Speech: Condemning attacks from Gaza into Israel and calling for direct negotiations for two-state solution

Thank you very much indeed Madam President and thank you to the Special Co-ordinator for that very sobering briefing.

Echoing Ambassador Haley's concern, I condemn without qualification, in the strongest terms, yesterday's mortar and rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel. Indiscriminate attacks against civilians are unacceptable and they are unjustifiable. Those that risk killing or injuring children are heinous. These attacks can't be ignored by the Council. The UK fully supports Israel's right to self-defense and the right to defend their citizens from such acts of terror. The recent spike in rocket attacks from Gaza is a stark reminder that the risk of a renewed conflict is very much present and I think the Special Co-ordinator brought that out very starkly in his briefing today. The latest attacks follow the deaths of over a hundred Palestinians in recent weeks of protests, and the Council has addressed that previously. Civilians live in fear and in despair. Further escalation of violence risks a devastating effect on efforts to restore the peace process and can only bring renewed suffering for the region. As Council members, we should act to ensure

that this doesn't come to fruition.

The situation in Gaza, Madam President, is undeniably dangerous, it is sad and it is complex. The perpetual cycle of violence needs to end and serves no one's interests. The actions of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad represent real and concerning threat to Israeli security. Ultimately, the ongoing decisions of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to embrace violence and reject the Quartet principles lie at the heart of the Gaza situation. We should use this Council session today to demand that Hamas and other terrorist groups cease all violent and provocative actions and cease any and all actions that put civilian lives at risk.

At the same time, we do not ignore the significant contribution that restrictions on movement and access imposed on Gaza have on the dire humanitarian situation that we witness. The United Kingdom continues its support for the full return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza, and we encourage further progress on reconciliation.

An end to this violence requires a tangible path for changing Gaza and what the Special Coordinator had to say about the plan was very interesting. We believe it's the responsibility of the international community to work together to find a way to alleviate the humanitarian suffering in Gaza. We welcome the proposals that Mr Mladenov has made, and these include commitments to advance urgent infrastructure and economic development projects to improve access and movement and to support the Egyptian-led reconciliation process.

We stand ready as the United Kingdom to do everything that we can to support these efforts. The people of Gaza are in urgent and they're in desperate need. Yesterday, my government committed to providing a new package of over two million dollars of lifesaving support. The funding will support work by the International Committee of the Red Cross Red Crescent in keeping hospitals open and functioning at a time when the healthcare system in Gaza is under huge strain.

But ultimately Madam President, peace will come only through fresh negotiations between the parties, supported by the international community. Every day makes it more critical that both Israelis and Palestinians return to direct negotiations and urgently prioritise steps to resolve the situation in Gaza. This is the only way that we will be able to achieve a two-state solution: a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. Those who seek to undermine this, including through unjustified acts of violence, deserve the rightful condemnation of this Council, but also the condemnation of the whole world.

Thank you Madam President.

Speech: Karen Bradley toasts success of NI Commonwealth Games Team

Good evening.

It is my great pleasure, as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, to welcome you all to Stormont House this evening to celebrate the success of the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games squad.

It was a magnificent achievement on the world stage and as a passionate supporter of sport I only wish I could have been there in person to cheer you on!

You even managed to bring some of the Australian sunshine along with you tonight, even if it is a few degrees cooler than what you experienced on the Gold Coast!

For a small country we have once again excelled and shown that big is not always best -, securing a total of 12 medals across a range of disciplines. It is fantastic to see some of those on display here this evening.

This was of course our best ever medal haul for a Games hosted outside the United Kingdom and matched our second best ever medal tally.

Special mention goes to Rhys McClenaghan for his fantastic Gold medal winning performance in the Men's Pommel event – a feat made all the more remarkable by the fact that he beat reigning Olympic and World Champion, Max Whitlock from England.

Congratulations also goes to Kirsty Barr and Gareth McAuley for their respective Silver and Bronze medals in shooting and Leon Reid for his impressive bronze in the men's 200 metres.

And of course, we cannot forget all of those who carried on our proud tradition of medal winning in boxing with Brendan Irvine, Kurt Walker, Aidan Walsh, Kristina O'Hara, Carly McNaul, Michaela Walsh, Stephen Donnelly and James McGivern securing an impressive haul of eight silver and bronze medals.

Beyond those medal-winners, let me congratulate every one of you who were selected to be part of this team. I want to take an opportunity to acknowledge the long years of preparation and dedication that went into that achievement. And for those of who have supported, advised and trained our athletes every step of the way, we thank you too.

Above all, your achievements will help inspire a generation of young people to follow their own sporting dreams and believe that nothing is impossible. In my former role, I was Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport – a role which left me with an enduring passion for the impact sport has on individual lives. It teaches valuable life-lessons, encourages confidence and self-discipline, but above all – it encourages you to be the very best that

you can be. Your achievements have left a lasting legacy and you should feel enormously proud of that contribution to the wider society.

Congratulations once again on your fabulous achievements. I look forward to meeting you all and hearing about your own individual performances and experiences during the course of this evening.

Thank you.

Press release: PM meets European Roundtable of Industrialists: 30 May 2018

The Prime Minister welcomed representatives from the European Roundtable of Industrialists (ERT) to Downing Street and set out the Government's desire to hear views from businesses in the UK and across Europe as the UK prepares to leave the EU.

She spoke about the need to ensure our future economic partnership with the EU is ambitious and comprehensive, going beyond existing models, as she set out in her Mansion House speech. EU Exit Secretary David Davis then provided an update on progress in the negotiations.

On customs, the Prime Minister explained the work that was underway on the two customs models and underlined the importance of ensuring that our future trading arrangements with the EU are as frictionless as possible, delivering on the commitments to avoid a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, and allowing the UK to pursue an independent trade policy.

The PM recognised the necessity of providing certainty for businesses, pointing to the agreement of an implementation period at the European Council in March to provide time to allow businesses to prepare for the new arrangements.

The attendees discussed regulatory standards, with the Prime Minister and David Davis reiterating the UK's commitment to maintain high standards.

There was consensus that reaching a robust agreement on data-sharing is vital to our future economic and security relationship with the EU.

The PM finished by thanking ERT members for an open and productive discussion, and they agreed to continue the dialogue on the issues discussed.

Attendees

Carl-Henric Svanberg Chairman, ERT, Chairman, BP
Vittorio Colao Vice-Chairman, ERT, Chief Executive, Vodafone Group
Svein Richard Brandtzaeg President and CEO, Norsk Hydro
Paul Bulcke Chairman, Nestlé
Ignacio Galán Chairman and CEO, Iberdrola
Moya Greene Chief Executive Officer, Royal Mail Group
Paul Hermelin Group Chairman and CEO, Capgemini
Frans van Houten President and CEO, Royal Philips
Harald Krüger Chairman of the Board of Management, BMW Group
Rafael del Pino Chairman, Ferrovial
Tony Smurfit Group Chief Executive, Smurfit Kappa Group
Johannes Teysen Chairman and CEO, E.ON
Brian Ager Secretary General, ERT