

News story: UK and South Africa welcome progress on trade relationship

The Minister of Trade and Industry (the DTI), Dr Rob Davies had a bilateral meeting with his United-Kingdom counterpart Dr Liam Fox in London on Tuesday 17 April 2018. In the margins of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting they discussed the trading relationship between the UK and South Africa. The ministers were pleased with the strength of the UK-South Africa trade and investment relationship.

As the UK is in the process of exiting the European Union (EU), South Africa welcomed the UK's intention to avoid any disruption to trade. In particular, both ministers welcomed the significant progress made so far in discussions with the Southern African Customs Union (SACU which includes Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland) and Mozambique. These are to ensure continuity of the EU-SADC Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) as the UK leaves the EU.

Both parties welcomed the agreement reached between the EU and UK at the March European Council that the UK is to be treated as a Member State for the purposes of international agreements during the EU-UK Implementation Period (1 April 2019 to 31 December 2020). This provides further certainty that there will not be disruption to the existing trading relationship during the implementation period.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:

Free trade has transformed developing economies across the world, and 44 of our 52 Commonwealth partners, including South Africa, benefit from development-focused preferential trade access to the UK market. That's why it's important to ensure continuity and certainty in our current trade arrangements as we leave the EU, and UK officials with their counterparts across Southern Africa have made excellent progress in this.

As we leave the EU and create a new independent UK trade policy, we will build further on our £9 billion of annual trade with South Africa, our biggest trading partner in Africa, and champion free trade to help developing countries combat poverty and grow their economies.

Minister Davies, said that the UK remains an important strategic partner for South Africa globally. South Africa and the UK have enjoyed mutually beneficial preferential trade since entry into force of the first reciprocal trade agreement between South Africa and the EU in January 2000.

Minister for Trade and Industry, Dr Rob Davies said:

The UK is South Africa's second largest trading partner in the EU Region. Our goods exports to the UK in 2014 were R37.6 billion and increased to R46.3 billion in 2017.

Noteworthy is the positive trade balance that South Africa continues to enjoy in its trade with the UK, which earns the country foreign currency and contributes to reducing the country's current account deficit. The key priority for South Africa is to change the structure of our trade to more value added products.

Minister Davies also welcomed the progress made by experts towards finalisation of the rollover of the EPA arrangement between SACU + Mozambique and the UK. "This is critical to ensure continuity post-Brexit", added Davies.

Both parties agreed to assess options for bilateral technical cooperation in the areas of trade and investment promotion. In addition, the parties agreed to work together to promote investments in priority sectors to advance sustainable economic development.

[News story: Find out what's new about the National Apprenticeship Awards 2018 – now open for entries](#)

One of the new categories is the recruitment excellence award – and will recognise employers who have attracted a diverse and high-quality apprenticeship workforce through new and innovative approaches to recruitment. The National Apprenticeship Service will identify one individual winner to receive a recognition award, rewarding someone who has made a special contribution to the promotion and delivery of apprenticeships.

For the first time, a rising star award will showcase apprentices who have made impressive progress in their career to date and who show the potential, through their apprenticeship, to take a career path to the very top of their chosen profession. Nominated by their employers, at the national stage of the awards the public will be invited to vote on the overall winner for this category.

Apprentice employers and apprentices from all sectors and industries are invited to enter the awards. Judged by a team of experts, entrants have the opportunity to be crowned a regional winner at nine awards ceremonies set to take place across the country. From the regional champions, a national judging panel will select the overall National Apprenticeship Award winners, to be celebrated at a national ceremony on 28 November 2018.

The awards are the largest and most prestigious celebration of apprentices and apprentice employers across the country. Previous winners have experienced a diverse range of benefits following their success. Here, 2 award winners from last year share the benefits that their victory has had for them so far.

Charlotte Hughes, GSK employee and winner of the Higher or Degree Apprentice of the Year 2017, said:

“I am extremely proud to have been a winner at the National Apprenticeship Awards. It’s provided a huge boost to my confidence and has helped raise my profile within and outside my organisation. Everyone is really proud of my achievement and many opportunities have opened up due to winning. The whole process has made me realise what I’m truly capable of. I would encourage anyone that is eligible to apply.”

Tim Brown, managing director of Superior, a Dorset-based manufacturing firm, crowned medium Employer of the Year 2017, said:

“The whole experience of entering the awards, winning at regional stage and then being crowned a winner at the National Apprenticeship Awards has been unforgettable. It has motivated us to do more and continue raising the profile of apprenticeships.

“Everyone at Superior is incredibly proud of this fantastic achievement, it has helped us gain positive recognition as an employer that is committed to offering quality apprenticeships and careers to people of all ages and backgrounds – it has also helped us attract the best talent. If you’re thinking of applying for the National Apprenticeship Awards, you should absolutely do it – getting that gold award is unbeatable.”

Apprentice employers and apprentices are invited to enter the award categories

Employer of the Year categories:

- SME of the Year: 1 – 249 employees
- Large Employer of the Year: 250 – 4,999 employees
- Macro Employer of the Year: 5,000+ employees
- The Recruitment Excellence Award: new for 2018, the winner will be selected from the Employer of the Year award entries

Apprentice of the Year categories:

- Intermediate Level (level 2)
- Advanced Level (level 3)
- Higher or Degree Level (level 4 or higher)

Special recognition categories:

- Rising Star Award: new for 2018, recognises apprentices that have made impressive progress in their career to date, and have the potential to

go even further

- Recognition Award: new for 2018, awarded to an individual who has made a special contribution to the promotion and delivery of apprenticeships – to be selected by the National Apprenticeship Service
- Apprenticeship Champion of the Year: recognises individuals who go 'above and beyond' to champion apprenticeships

The application site is now open, entry is free and online at appawards.co.uk. To help with entries, this year the process has been simplified further and guidance documents for employers and apprentices are available to download.

The deadline for entries is the 25 May 2018.

Applying is easier than ever before. Start your awards entry today, visit: appawards.co.uk.

News story: Sports industry can be top of the league in reducing plastic pollution

Environment Secretary Michael Gove will today call on sports leaders from across the Commonwealth to join the fight against plastic pollution in the world's oceans.

As part of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting taking place in London this week, the Environment Secretary will host leaders from across the sports sector on board the HMS Belfast in London to drive forward innovation and agree actions to tackle the global scourge of plastic.

With mass sporting events often generating up to 750,000 plastic bottles and seven tonnes of waste, the Environment Secretary and representatives from Premier League football, swimming and ocean sailing will look at how the sector can use its influence to tackle this blight and bring about global change.

This will build on the work already underway by industry – with this year's Commonwealth Games banning the use of plastic balloons and rolling out water refills to reduce plastic, and Twickenham Stadium introducing a deposit return scheme for 'fan cups', where fans pay an extra £1 for their cup and get the money back when they return it to the bar. Tottenham Hotspur has also announced its commitment to phasing out single-use plastics across all Club operations.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Plastic pollution is one of the most pressing environmental challenges of our time and we all have a role to play to tackle the threats our oceans face.

There are few groups which have the global reach and power the sports sector does to inspire change and mobilise action. The industry is already making great strides, and I look forward to seeing how they can build on this progress to be true ambassadors for global change.

Bill Bush, Executive Director of the Premier League, will also attend the roundtable. He said:

The Premier League is well aware of the importance of taking action against plastic pollution, it affects us all and our fans expect us to do what we can to tackle this threat. We are here today to learn from others as we develop our plans to reduce plastic use throughout our operations.

We also want to use our reach to fans here and across the world to spread the word that each and every one of us can make a difference by choosing to use less plastic.

Jointly co-hosted with United Nations Environment, attendees at the roundtable will also be encouraged to join the UN's ['Clean Seas'](#) campaign – a global initiative to reduce plastic pollution in the oceans.

Endurance swimmer Lewis Pugh will attend in his role as the UN's Patron of the Oceans. He said:

I've been swimming for 30 years and can be under no illusion life in our oceans is under threat like never before. Beaches across the world are littered with bags, bottles and straws, and plastic has made its way to some of the most remote corners of the ocean.

Single-use plastics have no place in the modern world and I will be urging sportsmen and women, especially those involved with ocean sports, to help us share this important message and be voices for the protection of our oceans.

This year's World Environment Day on June 5 will focus on the issue of plastic pollution – with UN Environment working with sports organisations across the world to take action to address their plastic footprint.

The roundtable comes as just this week the Prime Minister [announced](#) the UK and Vanuatu-led Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance – an agreement between

member states to join forces in the fight against plastic.

Britain, together with joint chair Vanuatu, will call on other countries to pledge action on plastics, be this by a ban on microbeads, a commitment to cutting down on single use plastic bags, or other steps to eliminate avoidable plastic waste. New Zealand, Sri Lanka and Ghana have already joined.

To drive this forward, the Prime Minister also announced a £61.4 million package of funding to boost global research and help countries across the Commonwealth stop plastic waste from entering the oceans in the first place.

News story: International Trade Secretary urges UK business to show off the best of Britain at Expo 2020 Dubai

Dr Fox announced that the Department for International Trade (DIT) is looking for an innovative, award-winning design concept for the UK's pavilion at Expo 2020, which creates the most original, inspiring and memorable visitor experience possible.

The Expo 2020 theme will be 'Connecting Minds, Creating the future' with an expected footfall of 25 million visitors from around the world, providing an ideal platform to project Britain as a global force for prosperity, innovation, creativity and thought leadership. As this is the first World Expo to take place in the Middle East, the opportunities to connect with one of the most dynamic, young, and fastest growing regions in the world are immense.

The UK's participation will consist of a self-build pavilion, supported by an accompanying programme of business and cultural events all related to the theme: Global Britain – Innovating for a Shared Future.

Britain has a proud tradition in supporting global expos, hosting the first ever Expo, The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry at Crystal Palace in 1851, with previous winning entries at Shanghai 2010 and Milan 2015. This historic expertise was a key factor in British companies, including Foster and Partners and Grimshaw Architects, winning contracts worth £1 billion to help build and deliver Expo 2020 Dubai itself.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox said:

I am delighted to announce that the UK will be participating in Expo 2020 Dubai which will offer UK businesses a fantastic opportunity to showcase the best of British innovation, over 150 years on from the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace, the world's first ever expo.

As an international economic department, DIT is ensuring British businesses make the most of growing markets and export their goods around the world. The festival will be a major showcase for the UK in the Middle East, and a shop window for the best of our creativity and innovation.

Further information

- [Expo 2020 Dubai](#) takes place between 20 October 2020 and 10 April 2021 and is based on the theme: Connecting Minds, Creating the future. This will be the first Expo to take place in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia region (MEASA). 180 nations will take part in Expo 2020 Dubai alongside NGOs and sponsors.
- Six million visitors attended the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace in 1851. This gave rise to the development of the area now known as 'Albertopolis' in London, which contains a large number of educational and cultural sites including the Natural History Museum, Royal Albert Hall and the V&A.
- Companies have until the 24 April to apply to design the pavilion – [applications should be made online](#)
- Companies interested in wider Expo supply opportunities should visit the [Expo procurement portal](#) for further information
- DIT is holding a [series of events](#) across Britain for everyone interested in the design tender.

About Department for International Trade

The UK's Department for International Trade (DIT) has overall responsibility for promoting UK trade across the world and attracting foreign investment to our economy. We are a specialised government body with responsibility for negotiating international trade policy, supporting business, as well as delivering an outward-looking trade diplomacy strategy.

[News story: PM meets South African President Cyril Ramaphosa](#)

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister had a bilateral meeting earlier today with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The Prime Minister said she was pleased to welcome Mr Ramaphosa to the UK on his first visit as President, noting that the relationship between the UK and South Africa is strong and deep, both bilaterally and as a key Commonwealth partner.

They discussed the potential for reinvigorating and revitalising the partnership between the UK and South Africa, and the Prime Minister noted that the UK stood ready to support South Africa's transformation and national development plan. They agreed that tackling youth unemployment and social inequality was a key priority.

They agreed an ambition to build on our strong bilateral trade and investment relationship, including as we leave the European Union. The Prime Minister noted that the UK is already the largest investor in South Africa, and that we are firm supporters of the President's drive to attract even more investment to the country.

They agreed £50 million new UK funding across the next four years to help South Africa improve its business environment to make it more attractive to investors including in the UK, and ultimately lift some of the poorest people in South Africa out of poverty by creating jobs and opportunities. The funding will be used to help identify and dismantle barriers to trade within Africa and beyond, creating a wealth of opportunities for UK business over the coming years.