

Speech: Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster speech at Cutlers' Feast: 23 May 2019

Master and Mistress Cutler. Lord Lieutenant. High Sheriff. Lord Mayor. My lords, ladies and gentlemen. It is an honour to speak at the 383rd Cutlers' Feast here in Sheffield.

Now I have to admit that as a Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, I received an invitation to speak in Yorkshire with some trepidation!

But your warm welcome has put me at ease, and I have to say: it's a true pleasure to be away from Westminster. At least here at the Cutlers' Feast, the knives are only out for loin of lamb.

In a similar spirit, I'd like you to consider the humble table fork in front of you. When the Company of Cutlers was founded nearly four centuries ago, the fork was considered a flamboyant affectation suitable only for Italians and their pasta. But it was popularised in the British Isles by the Elizabethan writer Thomas Coryat, who described this strange new utensil in his 1611 travelogue, *Coryat's Crudities*.

Ultimately, as you know, the fork was adopted by the Company of Cutlers, who took this strange pronged instrument, and laid it on tables around the world. But you might not know that in doing so, they may have changed the course of human evolution – by popularising the fork, it gave humans an overbite. So, Cutlers, I lay the responsibility for any jokes about British dentistry firmly at your feet!

Indeed, the people of Sheffield have always been quick to adopt innovation. And we know that this is a city whose history is built on its innovation in steel.

It is the steel forged in Sheffield that built British bridges and railways that have stood for centuries.

It is the steel forged in Sheffield that has improved lives around the world, from yes, the cutlery on our tables, to the biomedical implants used to help people walk again.

And it is steel forged in Sheffield that, today, is used in British nuclear submarines which are helping to secure our national defences.

Steel is a crucial part of our British heritage – and its future success. It's a vital part of the economy of this region. And that is why the government is committed to supporting the steel sector in every way possible.

On that note, I would like to say a few words in the wake of the deeply unwelcome news this week about British Steel. I know that in recent weeks, my

colleague, Business Secretary Greg Clark, has worked tirelessly with British Steel, its owner Greybull Capital, and lenders to explore all potential options for the company's future. We share your commitment to ensuring the success of the British steel industry, but Government must act within legal parameters. And I think that this Government's record speaks to its support.

We've successfully pressed for the introduction of trade defence instruments to protect UK steel producers from unfair steel dumping.

We've published pipelines of national infrastructure projects to help the steel industry prepare for future demand, and introduced steel procurement guidance to ensure that wider social and environmental effects are taken into account.

To help manage energy costs, we've provided more than £291m in compensation to the steel sector since 2013 and created a £315m fund to help businesses with high energy use to cut their bills and transition UK industry to a low carbon future.

And we've allotted £66m through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund to help industries like steel to develop radical new technologies, because steel has always been at the heart of innovation. And this government is dedicated to ensuring it remains so.

We are so focused on innovation because the city of Sheffield, and the history of the North of England, has shown us time and again that it can create widespread change, not only revolutionising manufacturing, but helping to create a better way of life. However, in order for that change to happen, innovation needs to be nurtured and managed effectively.

The Industrial Revolution saw Sheffield transformed from a market town to a city recognised around the world. This transformation was fired by incredible entrepreneurialism but also supported by government action – whether in maintaining and extending free markets, opening up infrastructure or improving working conditions.

Today, as we drive forward a Fourth Industrial Revolution, we may face a very different landscape. But some of the challenges remain the same.

As now, Sheffield's industries were intimately connected to the global economy, with steel forged from Russian iron being exported and sold to American markets.

As now, new technology brought both prosperity and challenges, as some workers enjoyed higher incomes but others worried whether automation would affect their jobs and those of their children.

As now, the desire to expand industry was balanced with an awareness of how it could impact the environment and public health, and an expectation that business should be a force for good.

So we must learn from the lessons of the past to ensure we are ready for the future.

Over the centuries, as trade and markets have grown, governments have been at their most successful in reforming and renewing capitalism when they have driven effective competition and recognised the social dimension of free enterprise.

This government has made significant advances in addressing these challenges. That's in part due to our modern Industrial Strategy, which aims to build on our strengths, close the productivity gap between different regions and drive growth more evenly across the country.

Our strategy builds on our ambition to create a Northern Powerhouse, by investing in growth deals, schools and transport across the region. Sheffield's success is central to this and today, our reforms are working in this city and beyond to create a more innovative business environment, a workforce that's fit for the future, and infrastructure to support growth.

Here in Sheffield, companies like Boeing, Rolls Royce and McLaren are partnering with Sheffield University, one of the top one hundred universities in the world, and using an open source research model to create cutting edge technologies at the Advanced Manufacturing Park.

In fact I was delighted to read in the papers today that Sheffield University has just become the top UK higher education centre for engineering income and investment; a clear measure of business confidence in this region.

Sheffield steel helped to shape the world. And the innovation we see flourishing here today has far-reaching effects, not just in this region, but for the wider national and global economy too. So we need to encourage more of that innovation, right across the country. That's why we have invested record amounts in research and development, with the aim of raising total R&D to 2.4% of GDP by 2027. And this government is doing more to help grow emerging industries, with incubator funds, productivity reviews and sector deals in aerospace, construction and artificial intelligence.

We also need to ensure that our workforce is fit for future challenges. In 1978, there were 4,000 students in Sheffield and nearly 45,000 people working in the steel industry. Today, those numbers are nearly reversed – which tells us a lot about how the economy is changing.

It's why our investment in higher education, technical education and apprenticeships is so important – as well as the work we are doing to create a National Retraining Scheme, which will ensure no-one is left behind by automation but are able to acquire new skills.

But the success of this area can never be driven just by policy emanating from Whitehall. Economic growth also relies on strong local leadership. That's why I'm delighted to see such enthusiasm in Yorkshire for devolution.

I know this hasn't always been easy. Some have questioned whether ministers, council leaders and mayors of different political parties could really work on this together effectively. But one thing that has always struck me throughout my time in politics is that – whatever their political differences

– everyone involved is fundamentally trying to improve the lives of the people they serve.

The Sheffield City Region deal is a landmark step on this journey, which will bring £900 million of investment to the local area. And the people of this region are now starting to feel the benefits of greater local partnership and investment, through work on projects like the Sheffield SuperTram. So let me reassure the Senior Warden, this government is committed agreeing local industrial strategies to spur innovation in communities around the country.

The motto of the Cutlers is Pour Y Parvenir a Bonne Foi – To Succeed through Honest Endeavour. And that is exactly what we aim to do. To create a fairer, fitter economy for the UK, that will succeed through hard work and the innovative spirit of its people.

The pressure might seem immense. But out of this crucible, we will forge an economy for Britain that is bold, strong and ready to face the future.

Press release: RT Hon Dr Liam Fox MP champions UK digital economy at Paris meeting

Speaking at the international meeting alongside ministers from across the world, he spoke about the potential power of digital technologies to grow and transform our economies and to create accessibility to trade and commerce to groups currently unrepresented, such as women and people living in emerging economies.

The annual meeting saw ministers and officials from 36 member states come together, along with key partner and accession countries to discuss the theme of ‘harnessing digital transition for sustainable development: opportunities and challenges’.

Dr Fox, representing the UK, spoke of the importance of innovation and competition in modernising economies, and of recognising the value in world-leading digital hubs such as the UK, where last year artificial intelligence firms raised \$1.3 billion, almost as much as the whole of the rest of Europe put together.

He also spoke of the necessity of strengthening the international, rules-based, multi-lateral trading system. And identified 3 priorities:

- Connectivity and access to technology; improving access to the digital marketplace for unrepresented groups and small businesses by aligning trade and development policies.

- The flow of data; across borders, in the way goods and services move as opposed to the localisation of data storage which can stifle connectivity and growth.
- Regulation; necessary regulation for trade and consumer protection must protect people and businesses online and offline, however, restrictions must not be used to stifle competition.

The Secretary of State for International Trade also spoke of the need to protect intellectual property, of the importance of transparency between governments and online companies and the need to end the giving of illegal subsidies and disruptions to data flows, all of which can hinder growth and innovation.

Dr Fox also attended 2 bi-lateral meetings; one with Director General of the World Trade Organisation, Roberto Azevedo and one with Japanese Trade Minister, Mr Hiroshige Seko and his delegation.

RT Hon Dr Liam Fox MP, Secretary of State for International Trade said:

We need to have greater openness to world leading digital hubs and recognise they are an opportunity, not a threat.

We're lucky in the United Kingdom, our start-up tech sector is attracting record levels of investment, last year our artificial intelligence firms raised 1.3 billion dollars. Almost as much as the rest of Europe put together.

Realising the potential of World-leading digital hubs like the UK and others is vital and reforming the rules-based trading system is essential in reflecting the developing needs of digital trade.

Notes to editors

1. The Department for International Trade (DIT) secures UK and global prosperity by promoting and financing international trade and investment and championing free trade. We are an international economic department, responsible for:
 - Bringing together policy, promotion and financial expertise to break down barriers to trade and investment, and help businesses succeed
 - Delivering a new trade policy framework for the UK as we leave the EU
 - Promoting British trade and investment across the world
 - Building the global appetite for British goods and services
1. Latest statistics from the ONS show UK firms sold more overseas in the 2018/19 financial year, £639.9 billion, than at any time since records began

2. The UK has now achieved 36 consecutive months of export growth on an annual rolling basis
 3. Separate OECD data shows UK exports grew faster than Germany, France and Italy between 2016 and 2018
 4. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is an intergovernmental economic organisation with 36 member countries, founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade. OECD is an official United Nations observer.
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Speech: John Glen's speech at the Building Societies Association Annual Conference

Thank you, Stephen [Stephen Mitcham, Chairman].

It's a pleasure to be asked to speak at your Annual Conference, particularly in this 150th Anniversary year.

A century-and-a-half is quite an achievement for any organisation.

Throughout this time the Building Societies Association has been keeper of the flame, for the movement and its members.

Over the years you've weathered all sorts of economic storms and existential threats. In more recent times, you survived de-mutualisation in the 1990s and the Global Crash of 2008, and today you represent almost a quarter of the mortgage market.

And I think it's worth taking a moment to consider why it is that the building society movement has endured.

In answering that question, it's perhaps fitting if I start by quoting the man who was Prime Minister back at the time of your founding.

It was Benjamin Disraeli who said that "the secret of success is constancy of purpose."

For all the changes we've seen in our society and our economy, the building society movement has remained true to its original values.

In 2019, as in 1869, building societies continue to put the interests of

their members first.

They continue to be rooted in the communities they serve.

And they continue to ensure our financial service sector caters for everyone in our society.

This is borne out by the strength of the sector today, with more than 40 different organisations, serving 25 million members in 1,500 branches across the United Kingdom.

As I will explain in a moment, this diversity and competition in high street lending has never been more necessary than it is today.

But first I should also add a special word on credit unions.

It's good to see so many represented here today, including BSA's newest member, Scotwest.

I know how vital credit unions are to the people and communities you serve.

This was reflected in the Parliamentary debate I responded to on Tuesday this week, with many members from across the House speaking up for credit unions.

As some of you know, the government is developing a prize-linked savings scheme to encourage individual savers, and help raise awareness of credit unions more widely.

It's a first step...because whether you can trace your pedigree back to 1869 or not, I want to see mutuals of all types prosper and grow.

I'd like to use my remarks to set out why I think it's so vital that building societies and credit unions keep on innovating and adapting...

...so they can continue to apply their values and principles in a changing society.

Of course, given the changes we've seen over the past 150 years, who can predict with any certainty what the next 150 may bring?

Here in Westminster it's difficult to see past next week...

And yet despite the short-term political uncertainty, I'm in no doubt of the forces that will shape the future of our financial sector.

I refer to the 'three Ts' – Trust, Technology and Talent.

Let's take each of them in order, starting with Trust.

A decade on from the financial crash, I know how hard the sector has worked to rebuild public trust.

But the task of making our financial services work in a way that is sustainable and responsible is an unending one.

And we must never stop working to ensure our economy is sufficiently broad and inclusive to serve everyone in our society.

This challenge is particularly acute when you consider the demographic pressures we face as a country.

We have a generation of young people starting out in life, for whom the traditional expectations about job security, home ownership and pensions seem to be slipping further into the distance.

At the other end of the financial journey, we have more people living longer. One in 3 children born today will live to see their 100th Birthday, with all that entails in terms of financial security and social care.

Balancing the two is not easy – but balance them we must.

Because if we are to maintain people's faith in our financial system, then it must evolve to serve their changing needs and expectations.

I know the building society movement is in the vanguard of these efforts.

Take housing.

In November, I was pleased to speak at the launch of BSA's report on Intergenerational Mortgages.

I know that Saffron has launched a guarantor mortgage, while Marsden is the latest building society to offer a 'joint borrower, sole proprietor' mortgage.

These two schemes take into account the financial circumstances of family members in order to give first time buyers a leg up onto the property ladder.

I recently met the Ecology Building Society, which offers Green Mortgages for self-build properties and discounted borrowing for home improvements.

That's another great example of how the mortgage market can respond to the needs of society, and of the generations to come.

As for retirement lending, it's hugely encouraging to see regional building societies like Leeds, Nottingham and Loughborough offering retirement interest-only mortgages.

And we're starting to see this on a national level, with Nationwide offering a retirement interest-only mortgage alongside traditional equity release and capital repayment products – all backed by a joined-up advice service.

These examples are proof that regulation and innovation are not mutually exclusive.

It is possible to be a responsible lender while remaining accessible to people at every stage of their financial lives.

And fresh thinking can transform even the most traditional areas of business.

The subject of fresh thinking naturally leads to the second 'T' – Technology.

You don't need me to remind you of the extent to which technology is changing the market, particularly for high street lenders.

But the question is – Do we sit back and let technology do its work? Or do we seize the opportunity to meld and align this revolution in a way that works for society?

It probably won't surprise you to hear me say I choose the second option.

Yes, technology can provide more sophisticated and more convenient services, to the benefit of customers and businesses alike.

But it's true financial potential is to be found in being a catalyst for a smarter, more resilient and inclusive system.

And that requires us to come together, roll-up our sleeves and get to work.

First, to ensure that the benefits of technology can be harnessed across the sector, from the big national institutions to the smallest community cooperative.

And second, to ensure that the benefits are felt throughout society: not just the wealthy or comfortable, but those who struggle with complex financial circumstances.

I'm really pleased that you have Conference sessions planned for tomorrow under the theme of 'Digital Mutual'.

Meanwhile, our Financial Inclusion Forum brings government, business and civil society together to help find new solutions.

Nationwide is one of the institutions that have picked up the baton.

It's 'Open Banking for Good' Challenge offers £3 million to FinTech companies that can come up with new apps and services to help financially squeezed households in this country.

Fifty applications have been whittled down to 7 start-ups, which are now taking their ideas forward.

At a time when many see Open Banking solely through a commercial lens, this is a much-needed demonstration that it can offer a social purpose too.

The third and final 'T' is Talent.

The single most critical element in the future of financial services – and our wider economy – is the availability of skills in the sector.

We need people with the courage to think differently; the agility to move with the times; and the ambition to grasp the opportunities before us.

To find these people, we must look to society in all its breadth and

diversity.

All the research shows that a more inclusive workforce is better for employees, better for businesses and better for customers.

But across the financial sector – including building societies – there are sadly too few women represented in senior leadership roles.

As some of you know, HM Treasury published the Women in Finance Charter three years ago.

It asked financial service companies to commit to greater representation of women in senior leadership roles in the near term, with the long-term goal of an equal gender balance.

BSA has shown real leadership by signing the charter.

It sends a signal to the rest of the sector that this is the right thing to do.

Twelve individual building societies have also signed up and I would encourage the 35 BSA members who haven't yet done so to do likewise.

The next step for everyone is to turn that public commitment into tough, tangible, action.

I congratulate those who have met their first round of targets for increasing female representation in senior management this year –

...Capital Credit Union...

...and Leeds, Market Harborough, Nottingham, Progressive and West Bromwich Building Societies.

It's good to see progress.

But we still have a long way to go.

And I do intend to hold your feet to the fire on this matter.

As a sector, you pride yourself on being locally-focused and community-minded.

In so many areas, your ethos is in line with public frustration and sentiment.

So, frankly, I find it difficult to understand why this matter should be any different.

Gender balance is a business imperative as well as a moral one.

It's not about displacing current leaders – it's about creating a talent pipeline by thinking about who you recruit and how you nurture them over the course of a career.

Because in a world that is increasingly global, increasingly competitive and increasingly digital, we simply cannot afford for people with the talent and skills we need to pass the sector by.

Nor can we afford for experienced and capable individuals to be prevented from rising to the top.

Let me begin to draw this together.

I've highlighted some of the ways the Building Societies Association is leading the sector to innovate and adapt.

Of course, there are plenty of other examples I could have chosen.

Like Yorkshire Building Society's workplace saving scheme.

Or Nationwide's not-for-profit house building programme.

Or Newcastle's leadership in signing up to the alternative dormant assets scheme for smaller building societies and banks.

All of which represent the innovation that is found across the sector.

So my closing message to you today is to keep on doing all the things you do.

Keep on serving local communities.

Keep on bringing forward new ideas for greater collaboration – building trust, harnessing technology and sharpening talent.

And, most importantly, keep on putting people first.

Because like Disraeli said, constancy of purpose is the key to success.

So, to end, I'd like to congratulate the Building Societies Association for all that you have achieved, and all that you will achieve.

Because I have confidence that you have as much to contribute to our country in your next 150 years as you have in your first.

[News story: Government Chemist – meetings in Northern Ireland](#)

Since his appointment as [Government Chemist](#) Julian has been active in building relationships nationally and in the devolved nations to focus Government Chemist advice on policy on food, feed and on wider topics where the expertise of the Government Chemist and the [National Measurement](#)

[Laboratory](#) can assist other government departments and national and devolved institutions.

Julian was accompanied by [Dr Michael Walker](#), Head of the Office of the Government Chemist, who is based in Northern Ireland.

Their itinerary included a tour of the [Precision Medicine Centre of Excellence \(PMC\)](#) at Queen's University Belfast, a meeting with Professor Ian Young, and a meeting with senior officials of the Food Standards Agency.

The PMC is a new clinical laboratory bringing together high-throughput genomics, digital pathology and big data analytics in a fully integrated fashion. Dr Braybrook's meeting with Dr Matt Humphries of PMC discussed the application of metrology to digital pathology.

Professor Ian Young is Professor of Medicine, Queen's University Belfast and Chief Scientific Advisor to the Department of Health in Northern Ireland. Discussions with Julian and Michael were wide ranging over food safety and authenticity, and the application of metrology to molecular medicine.

Julian Braybrook with Professor Ian Young

At the FSA in NI, Julian and Michael met Maria Jennings, Director for Regulatory Compliance, People and Northern Ireland and Michael Jackson, leading on the [FSA Regulating our Future](#) programme. Discussions ranged over the technical appeal service offered by the Government Chemist, food standards, including food authenticity, food allergy and food surveillance.

For more information about the Government Chemist's role or enquiries about food and feed analytical testing contact:

[Press release: FCO Minister Field attends OECD annual Ministerial meeting](#)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister for Asia and the Pacific, Mark Field, attended the OECD's annual Ministerial Council Meeting (22 – 23 May) to discuss the opportunities and challenges of digital transition for sustainable development.

Speaking after the visit, Minister Mark Field said:

The UK was one of the founding members of the OECD in 1961 and the organisation has played a major role in the enormous growth in living standards in all regions of the world since it was formed.

This year's annual meeting in Paris, which I was delighted to attend on behalf of the government, has been an opportunity for members to explore how the digital transition can support sustainable growth in the world's emerging as well as developed economies.

During his visit to the OECD headquarters in Paris, Minister Field underlined the UK's support for the OECD's important place in the system of international cooperation, its key role in supporting global growth, and the value of its analysis in continuing to make the case for free trade and open markets.

He also held discussions with French Parliamentarians on UK's continued commitment to working with ASEAN and joined the Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ernesto Araújo, in signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the OECD to formalise UK support for work in Brazil through the Prosperity Fund to help the country align even more closely with OECD standards.

Further information