

Speech: Where credit's due: helping our creators and innovators export

Thank you, Mark.

And thank you all for coming here today.

I'm here because we, as a country, have a challenge. But it's a good challenge!

Yes, we've had 5 consecutive years of economic growth.

Yes, unemployment is at its lowest for 40 years.

Yes, exports increased 10% last year.

We exported well over £600 billion last year – on the latest figures, these small islands are the 4th largest exporters in the entire world, and the second-largest exporter of services.

So what's the challenge?

You see, when it comes to exports we punch above our weight.

But we punch below our potential.

We are a great trading nation. Exporting is one of our strengths.

If we want to sustain jobs and prosperity across the country we must play to our strengths.

But with exporting we're not playing at full strength.

Exports make up 30% of UK GDP, compared to 46% Germany.

Less than 10% of our businesses export. Now, not all those should – it's not the government's job to tell people what's best for their own business.

But so many more of them could.

If we could get those businesses selling internationally, imagine the difference it would make!

I've seen that difference myself: before I went into politics, I spent a decade in the publishing industry as CEO of the Financial Times Group and CFO of Pearson.

Publishing is one of the most export-driven industries in the UK.

And I can tell you first-hand – I found that exporting and operating internationally didn't just raise our profits and let us access new

customers.

It also made us more competitive at home, letting us spread risk and achieve economies of scale, and exposing us to new ideas and practices from other countries.

That's backed by evidence – exporters are more profitable, more productive and more enduring.

So we need to get those non-exporters exporting – and get our existing exporters to sell more things to more markets.

If we do that, it will be a genuine step change for our economy.

And that's why our new Export Strategy will be so important.

It's not enough to just do more of what we're already doing.

We need to take a strategic look at our export support, starting from first principles; and we need to take an evidence-based approach, to allow us to solve our challenge.

That's what our Export Strategy is for.

Firstly, it will give us the rigorous analysis, so we know why we aren't exporting more, where our strengths and weaknesses lie, and where government intervention can make the most difference.

And secondly – it is a strategy. That might sound trivial, but it really is important – it allows us to look across the piece, to see the challenge, and solution, as a whole. That's the only way we'll get the step-change in exporting we need.

That means being strategic about how we work as a government, too.

Businesses shouldn't have to know how government works to get help from the government.

Most of you here today are from business – you wouldn't expect your customers to be familiar with your own internal structure. If you customers contact the wrong part of the business – you just redirect them.

Government shouldn't be any different. So one key principle of the Export Strategy will be a “no wrong door” policy – we will work better together as government, so we can work better with you, not the other way round.

It'll be joined up with the Industrial Strategy, and our drive for a more prosperous Britain – all targeted at creating the right environment and the best base for exporters.

And that leads us on to the second principle, which is that our Export Strategy must be business-led.

We need a strategy run for exporters. The government doesn't export.

Businesses export. Our job is simply to facilitate you exporting – so our export strategy must be designed around you.

It needs to be a strategy designed with exporters. We're using the Export Strategy is to give us the hard analysis and data to do that better.

We must focus on doing what only government can do – our USPs, if you like – rather than trying to replicate what business already does.

For example, the government has a role providing advice to exporters. But that should complement and not usurp the role of private-sector business advice services.

And the government has a role providing export finance – but that should complement the role of banks and insurers providing cashflow and managing risk.

And when the government does take action, we can work with and through the private sector. That's why, as of last year, SMEs can now get Export Finance directly from their bank.

We'll be publishing in the coming months, so let me give you a flavour.

We'll be focusing on key areas:

Firstly, we will inspire and catalyse companies to export.

Surveys suggest there's between three and four hundred thousand businesses who could export but aren't.

Many businesses that do export sell to just one market.

We need to persuade those businesses to look further afield, because people do want to buy British.

As a trade minister I regularly travel abroad – there is no question of the regard in which the UK is held. People are impressed by the quality of our goods and the professionalism of our services.

According to research by Barclays, 61% of people in China, for example, would actually pay more money for a product if it had a Union Jack on it – that's some reputation for quality.

This underpins our award-winning GREAT campaign, who advertise the benefits exporting can have for businesses across a range of sectors, from education to science to sport. To paraphrase: "if we can, you can".

And we will promote peer-to-peer learning, so potential exporters can learn from existing ones – as I said, this is about business first and foremost.

Secondly, it means supporting and guiding businesses to export.

Specific advice on our website.

Our network of regional trade advisers is already helping businesses across the country to export; and our network of trade advisers in 108 countries across the world can help companies navigate local markets.

Thirdly, it means working with private providers, using the Connecting power of government to connect businesses with opportunities.

We are appointing 9 Trade Commissioners to promote trade.

But export finance is at the heart.

Almost 1/5th of businesses report concerns about finance or getting paid as being their main barrier to exporting.

And research shows that exporters that have access to trade finance have export volumes as much as 60% higher.

We start from a strong base here – and that's our best kept secret. As you'll have heard today, UK Export Finance has the capacity to provide over £50 billion worth of support, in over 60 currencies.

This year, UK Export Finance (UKEF) has been named best export credit agency by both the Global Trade Review and Trade Finance.

We whisper: but we need to shout!

To give some recent examples, UKEF is providing a 270 million Euro loan to support the construction by Colas UK of a new international airport in Kabaale, Uganda.

And UKEF is helping secure at least \$250 million of UK exports for two power projects in Iraq, running a supplier fair with lead contractors Enka UK and GE to source suppliers for their projects.

So it's clear that in UK Export Finance, the UK's exporters, or would-be exporters, have a truly world-class export credit agency at their disposal.

But we recognise that we have more to do. 75% of SMEs report that they don't know how to access trade finance – we clearly need to fix this.

So in last year's Autumn Budget the Chancellor allocated funding to enhance marketing of UKEF services, putting export finance at the heart of trade promotion.

And our new Export Strategy will do even more.

We will encourage these smaller businesses to access UKEF support directly from their banks, giving them fast access to government backing to grow their international business.

We will also capture the value of UKEF's highly successful supplier fairs, as a draw to international companies to deepen their investment and engagement with the UK supply chain.

We want to use this to make it easier for SMEs to export, by providing a 'safe' channel for them to find and bid for contracts on major international projects that are backed by UK Export Finance.

And we are conducting a full review of our product suite – to ensure we can provide the best possible support even as market conditions change.

Step-by-step, we are making sure companies can access the finance they need to sell abroad – so no viable project fails for lack of finance.

This is not a straightforward task – but it is one that, if addressed, will reap invaluable benefits.

Remember – the reason this government prioritises trade and exports isn't because we start from a low base.

It's precisely because we start from a high base – exports are 30% of our GDP.

That inevitably makes the challenge more difficult – but it also makes it a challenge worth undertaking.

That's what the Export Strategy is for.

I can promise you that export finance will be front and centre of our Export Strategy.

But that will only work if you as businesses are front and centre of the Strategy, and if you help in creating the export strategy you need.

That's my call to you today.

We want to build our Export Strategy with you; and together with you, we can build a nation of exporters.

Thank you.

Speech: Ensuring those who commit human rights abuses in Libya do not evade justice for their crimes

Madam President,

I thank the Prosecutor for her very clear and concise fifteenth report and her briefing to the Security Council today. The work and focus of the International Criminal Court on Libya is extremely important in tackling

impunity and making accountable those responsible for serious crimes of international concern, and the Court's work has the full support of the United Kingdom.

The Prosecutor's latest report makes clear why the situation in Libya remains deeply troubling. The continued political divisions in Libya have only benefitted certain armed groups intent on criminality, groups which have created an environment of lawlessness, intimidation and fear. This situation underscores the urgent need to break the political deadlock and to bring peace to Libya and its people. It is vital that all parties engage in good faith with the United Nations-led political process.

Madam President,

We must ensure that those who have committed, and are still committing, human rights violations and abuses in Libya, including unlawful killings, do not evade justice for their crimes. The UK has strongly supported resolutions at the Human Rights Council aimed at increasing accountability, and we fully endorse the ICC's efforts in parallel. The UK also reiterates our call for all parties to cooperate with the ICC in relation to the arrest warrant for Mahmoud al-Werfalli, and for all those- committing acts amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity to be investigated and held accountable, no matter which side they are on.

The current cycle of violence and impunity must be stopped.

The recent Mission by the Office of the Prosecutor to Libya is an important step, strengthening the focus of scrutiny on those who have acted with impunity. In this regard, we welcome the co-operation of UNSMIL and the Office of the Prosecutor-General in Tripoli with the visiting OTP Mission. We also welcome the Office of the Prosecutor's work with Member States, national authorities and judiciaries, interested European institutions and the Libyan Prosecutor-General's Office, following the reports of the appalling mistreatment – and even enslavement – of migrants, to investigate and prosecute these crimes. At the same time, we appreciate the resource constraints under which they are operating in relation to these investigations.

We are grateful for the Prosecutor's update on the cases against Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, Abdullah Al-Senussi and Al-Tuhamy Mohamed Khaled. We fully support the Court's call for cooperation from members of the Council, Libya and all states, on the individuals who remain at large for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Libya in 2011.

It is crucial that Member States and relevant international organisations work to assist the Libyan authorities in their efforts to build the rule of law in Libya. We, along with our international partners, will continue to work with Libya to provide it with the support it needs to meet the challenges it faces. At the same time, the United Kingdom, as a strong principled supporter of the ICC, will continue to provide our full support to the Prosecutor and her team.

I thank you Madam President.

Speech: Launch of Beyond the Ice: UK policy towards the Arctic

Good morning everyone and thank you for joining us for the launch of the new iteration of UK policy towards the Arctic.

I'm sure it will be an absolute best seller.

This country's long history of exploration and endeavour in the Polar Regions is the stuff of legends.

With any luck that means you will not mind if I say a few words about ['Beyond the Ice'](#).

All of us understand that the Arctic region is of fundamental importance, not only to the people who live and work there but also to the health of the planet.

It is now 20 years since the UK became one of four original observers to the newly formed Arctic Council.

We remain as committed as ever to the Arctic States and the indigenous peoples of the Arctic and to securing a sustainable future for them that benefits us all.

That is what this new Policy Framework is all about.

It is five years since the last one, and as we are all too well aware, a great deal has changed in the Arctic region in that time – most significantly, the unprecedented decline in sea-ice cover and thickness, and the steady rise in average temperatures.

These rapid changes have drawn greater attention to the Arctic – in ways that can present both opportunities and challenges.

The UK takes seriously our responsibility to ensure the security and stability of the region and to work collaboratively to address them.

In 'Beyond the Ice', we set out the UK's three main commitments to the region.

The first is to bring our world-class science to bear in helping to understand the changing Arctic and to find solutions to the challenges that presents to us.

That means supporting our top scientists and their international collaboration on the Arctic – particularly as the new Agreement on Enhancing Scientific Cooperation in the Arctic is implemented.

Already, nearly two-thirds of the UK Arctic research papers have international co-authors. We think this is the right approach, and want to encourage more of it.

The UK Government is investing both manpower and finance in pioneering Arctic research.

Man and woman power in the form of our Science and Innovation Officers in our eight Arctic State Embassies and the Arctic Science Office.

Finance in the shape of £16 million in the 5-year Changing Arctic Ocean Programme and a further £2.3 million for UK-based scientists to take part in MOSAiC, which many of you will know, is a truly international study of the Arctic climate.

The second commitment we make in ‘Beyond the Ice’ is to help protect the fragile environment of the Arctic for the people who live and visit there.

The UK is already a global leader on addressing global climate change and tackling the accumulation of pollutants in the world’s oceans.

Our commitment to the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals is underpinned by our Clean Growth Strategy and we have consistently been at the forefront of international regulatory changes to reduce global greenhouse emissions on land and at sea.

We are also taking great strides to reduce the accumulation of plastic waste in the world’s oceans, including through our 25-year Environmental Plan, which commits us to achieve zero avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042.

Given that the nearly all of the litter found in the Arctic comes from elsewhere, it is essential that we all take action to stop it.

We will gain further insights into the impacts of climate and environmental change on the Arctic when the report ‘Polar Oceans: status and change’ – which was jointly commissioned by the UK and Norway – is published later this year.

Our third commitment in ‘Beyond the Ice’ is to support responsible and sustainable development of the region, and ensure that its people are the first to benefit from the increase in prosperity that a changing Arctic may bring.

Changes in the Arctic also present economic opportunities for the UK. Shrinking summer sea-ice could cut the travel time between Asia and Europe by 10 days, bringing benefits in terms of reduced costs, lower fuel consumption and less pollution.

However these potential benefits do not give us – or anyone else – the right

to run roughshod over the needs of the region and its people.

That is why our priority will be to encourage development that is both sustainable and responsible.

To sum up, the UK remains a global leader in supporting environmental protection, international cooperation and the rules-based system. We are home to world-leading research scientists and cutting edge business investment. 'Beyond the Ice' demonstrates our continued determination to harness and share these assets and to work together to understand, protect and improve the Arctic, for the benefit of all, for generations to come.

Further information

- Follow Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan on Twitter [@AlanDuncanMP](#)
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Press release: Baroness Fairhead commits to boosting uptake of government-backed finance

World-class export finance offer

Speaking at today's (Wednesday 9 May) [UK Trade and Export Finance Forum](#), Minister of State for Trade and Export Promotion, Baroness Fairhead set out the government's plans to put a world-class export finance offer at the heart of UK trade through UK Export Finance (UKEF).

Ahead of the publication of the Export Strategy, which will outline the government's vision to boost UK exports, Baroness Fairhead pledged to help more UK businesses access UKEF-backed finance, particularly SMEs and companies that supply to exporters but do not yet export themselves, in order to grow their business.

Baroness Fairhead, Minister of State for Trade and Export Promotion, said:

In UKEF, the UK's exporters have a world-class export credit agency that can provide innovative, flexible finance and insurance to help them realise their full exporting potential.

Our Export Strategy will specifically aim to make more businesses aware of UKEF's products and services, helping them to access new opportunities overseas and grow their businesses through exporting.

The draw of UKEF support

Baroness Fairhead also announced the government's ambitions to generate more business for UK companies through UKEF. Using the draw of UKEF support for major international projects, the government will significantly increase the contribution of UK goods and services suppliers to major projects around the world – an approach that is already creating hundreds of millions of pounds of opportunities for UK exporters.

Baroness Fairhead committed to a review of UKEF's product suite, to ensure UKEF's support remains comprehensive and relevant to market needs.

Baroness Fairhead said:

That's my call to you today. We want to build our Export Strategy with you; and together with you, we can build a nation of exporters.

Baroness Fairhead spoke at the day-long forum, following a speech from International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox MP, who earlier announced an agreement between UKEF and Atkins International, a world-leader in international project management and engineering projects, to grow its UK supply chain and boost UK exports, as well as UKEF support for the Dubai World Trade Centre.

The event included talks and panel discussions from John Mahon, the newly-appointed Director General for Exports at the Department for International Trade; Antonia Romeo, Permanent Secretary of the Department for International Trade; Louis Taylor, CEO of UK Export Finance; Baroness Northover, HM Trade Envoy for Angola and Zambia; and Baroness Nicholson, HM Trade Envoy for Iraq, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan; senior representatives from multinational companies General Electric and Bechtel; and the CEO of Scottish bus manufacturer and major UK exporter Alexander Dennis.

The Export Strategy will build on the government's Industrial Strategy, published last November, which set out a long-term plan to boost the productivity and earning power of people throughout the UK.

Background

This year UKEF has increased – and in many cases, doubled – its financial capacity to support exports to over 100 markets around the world, as the UK seeks to enforce its position as a leading player in the global market, and make world-leading UK expertise, products and services accessible to buyers around the world.

In 2017, UKEF was awarded 'best export credit agency' by Global Trade Review and Trade Finance magazines.

News story: Help make Companies House better: take part in our survey

If you've recently started a company, just filed your annual accounts or even searched for company information online, we'd like to hear from you. Tell us what you think about Companies House, our services and how we communicate with you.

The survey will take around 10 minutes to complete.

Your views and comments are important to us. The feedback you give will help us improve our products and services. It will also help us make better-informed decisions about how best to communicate with our customers and stakeholders.

As part of our [transformation programme](#), we're aiming to make all of our systems and services digital first, easy to use and developed entirely around our users' needs. To do this, we need your input.

Tell us what you think about our services – what's good, what's not so good and what needs improving.

This insight will help us to plan and prioritise our transformation activities over the next few years. It's your chance to tell us what you need, and help shape the future development of Companies House services.

At the end of the survey, you'll be able to enter a free draw to win an iPad Pro (read the [terms of the free draw](#)).

We'll only use your email address for the purposes you specify (read the [privacy notice](#)).