

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.”

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.

Press release: New partnership aims to strengthen conventional arms control in the Commonwealth

The UK's Counter Proliferation and Arms Control Centre and the Commonwealth Secretariat have agreed a new partnership to strengthen cooperation, coordination and information-sharing on conventional arms control among Commonwealth countries. The Conventional Arms Control in the Commonwealth Initiative will provide unique tools to Commonwealth countries to support national and regional implementation of measures to tackle the illicit arms trade, in line with international obligations and standards.

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Patricia Scotland, commented on the timeliness of the initiative:

Our member countries have expressed the need for assistance to help implement international obligations in relation to arms control, and the Conventional Arms Control in the Commonwealth Initiative will certainly be welcome. Member countries have stressed the devastating consequences of illegal arms trade on development, by prolonging violence and undermining human rights. Cooperation between Commonwealth countries can make an important difference in tackling illicit arms trade.

The Rt Hon Sir Alan Duncan, the Foreign Office Minister with responsibility for defence and international security said:

The effective control of arms is a goal that unites us all because the potential consequences of their misuse are so grave. The UK is

committed to playing a leading role in global efforts to regulate the arms trade in order to stop these weapons from falling into the hands of terrorists and criminals, who use them to undermine international peace and security and drive the illegal wildlife trade.

We are delighted to provide nearly half a million pounds to fund this initiative and to join together with other Commonwealth countries in the fight against illicit arms trafficking.

This is in line with one of the four main goals for the Commonwealth Heads of Government summit taking place in the UK this week, to build a more secure future through increased multilateral action and cooperation.

The Conventional Arms Control in the Commonwealth Initiative will be delivered by the Commonwealth Secretariat, in conjunction with the Small Arms Survey, a Geneva based global centre of excellence on small arms and armed violence. It will facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise on measures to address the illicit arms trade, take stock of progress achieved in implementing international and regional arms control instruments and provide assistance on legal reform and legislative drafting.

News story: The Royal Parks appoint Richard Hamilton

Richard is Director, Digital Land strategy programme at Ordnance Survey, prior to which he was Director of Strategy at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. He began his career at Barclays where he spent ten years, followed by eight at KPMG.

Richard has variously been Strategy Advisor to the British Council, Business in the Community and The Prince's Charities. He was an elected local authority member (Dartford Borough Council) from 1998 until 2003, and a non-executive Director of Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust from 2003 until 2007. He holds an MBA from the University of Oxford.

The role is not remunerated. This appointment has been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's [Governance Code on Public Appointment](#). The appointments process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Under the Code, any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years must be declared. This is defined as

including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation, or candidature for election. Richard has declared that he delivered leaflets at the 2017 election for conservative candidates.

Press release: UK House Price Index for February 2018

The February data shows:

- on average, house prices have fallen by 0.1% since January 2018
- an annual price rise of 4.4%, which makes the average property in the UK valued at £225,047

England

In England, the February data shows on average, house prices have risen by 0.2% since January 2018.

The annual price rise of 4.1% takes the average property value to £242,176.

The regional data for England indicates that:

- the North East experienced the greatest monthly price rise, up by 3.1%
- London saw the most significant monthly price fall, down by 2.1%

Price change by region for England

Region	Average price February 2018	Monthly change % since January 2018
East Midlands	£186,071	0.5
East of England	£288,468	-0.4
London	£471,986	-2.1
North East	£128,218	3.1
North West	£158,152	1.6
South East	£322,489	-0.1
South West	£250,816	-1.1
West Midlands	£192,648	2.2
Yorkshire and the Humber	£155,385	-0.1

Repossession sales by volume for England

The lowest number of repossession sales in December 2017 was in the East of England.

The highest number of repossession sales in December 2017 was in the North West.

Repossession sales	December 2017
East Midlands	57
East of England	14
London	27
North East	90
North West	127
South East	48
South West	37
West Midlands	53
Yorkshire and the Humber	78
England	531

Average price by property type for England

Property type	February 2018	February 2017	Difference %
Detached	£368,478	£349,569	5.4
Semi-detached	£224,171	£213,593	5.0
Terraced	£195,406	£186,974	4.5
Flat/maisonette	£225,498	£223,873	0.7
All	£242,176	£232,696	4.1

Funding and buyer status for England

Transaction type	Average price February 2018	Annual price change % since February 2017	Monthly price change % since December 2017
Cash	£228,036	3.9	0.3
Mortgage	£249,299	4.2	0.2
First-time buyer	£203,417	3.7	0.3
Former owner occupier	£274,567	4.4	0.1

Building status for England

Building status*	Average price December 2017	Annual price change % since December 2016	Monthly price change % since November 2017
New build	£307,378	8.5	3.3
Existing resold property	£239,015	4.6	0.5

*Figures for the 2 most recent months are not being published because there are not enough new build transactions to give a meaningful result.

Sales volumes for England

The most up-to-date HM Land Registry sales figures available for England show

the number of completed house sales in December 2017 fell by 21.2% to 62,697 compared with 79,605 in December 2016.

Month	Sales 2017	Sales 2016	Difference %
November	69,963	74,097	-5.6
December	62,697	79,605	-21.2

London

London shows, on average, house prices have fallen by 2.1% since January 2018. An annual price fall of 1% takes the average property value to £471,986.

Average price by property type for London

Property type	February 2018	February 2017	Difference %
Detached	£915,162	£887,959	3.1
Semi-detached	£578,708	£563,242	2.7
Terraced	£489,639	£482,631	1.5
Flat/maisonette	£412,902	£427,256	-3.4
All	£471,986	£476,717	-1.0

Funding and buyer status for London

Transaction type	Average price February 2018	Annual price change % since February 2017	Monthly price change % since January 2018
Cash	£494,312	-2.2	-3.2
Mortgage	£465,147	-0.6	-1.7
First-time buyer	£412,482	-1.5	-2.2
Former owner occupier	£533,159	-0.4	-2.0

Building status for London

Building status*	Average price December 2017	Annual price change % since December 2016	Monthly price change % since November 2017
New build	£505,112	5.2	3.1
Existing resold property	£479,296	1.6	0.5

*Figures for the 2 most recent months are not being published because there are not enough new build transactions to give a meaningful result.

Sales volumes for London

The most up-to-date HM Land Registry sales figures available for London show the number of completed house sales in December 2017 fell by 25% to 6,344 compared with 8,460 in December 2016.

Month	Sales 2017	Sales 2016	Difference %
November	6,834	8,178	-16.4
December	6,344	8,460	-25.0

Wales

Wales shows, on average, house prices have fallen by 0.4% since January 2018. An annual price rise of 4.8% takes the average property value to £152,891.

Average price by property type for Wales

Property type	February 2018	February 2017	Difference %
Detached	£232,078	£220,848	5.1
Semi-detached	£146,772	£139,526	5.2
Terraced	£117,459	£112,204	4.7
Flat/maisonette	£111,880	£108,273	3.3
All	£152,891	£145,837	4.8

Funding and buyer status for Wales

Transaction type	Average price February 2018	Annual price change % since February 2017	Monthly price change % since January 2018
Cash	£149,073	4.6	-0.1
Mortgage	£155,154	5.0	-0.5
First-time buyer	£131,805	4.7	-0.3
Former owner occupier	£177,546	5.0	-0.5

Building status for Wales

Building status*	Average price December 2017	Annual price change % since December 2016	Monthly price change % since November 2017
New build	£207,355	8.7	3.0
Existing resold property	£150,326	4.5	0.2

*Figures for the 2 most recent months are not being published because there are not enough new build transactions to give a meaningful result.

Sales volumes for Wales

The most up-to-date HM Land Registry sales figures available for Wales show:

- the number of completed house sales in December 2017 fell by 14.3% to 3,927 compared with 4,581 in December 2016
- there were 50 repossession sales in December 2017

Month	Sales 2017	Sales 2016	Difference %
November	4,112	4,084	0.7
December	3,927	4,581	-14.3

UK house prices grew by 4.4% in the year to February 2018, down from 4.7% in the year to January 2018.

The [UK Property Transaction Statistics for February 2018](#) showed that on a seasonally adjusted basis, the number of transactions on residential properties with a value of £40,000 or greater is 0.7% lower compared to a year ago. Between January 2018 and February 2018, transactions decreased by 0.3%.

Looking at the regional level, the West Midlands showed the highest annual growth, with prices increasing by 7.3% in the year to February 2018. The lowest annual growth was in London, where prices decreased by 1.0% over the year. This is the lowest annual growth in London since September 2009 when it was negative 3.2%. London has shown a general slowdown in its annual growth rate since mid-2016.

See the [economic statement](#).

Notes to editors

1. The UK House Price Index (HPI) is published on the second or third Wednesday of each month with Northern Ireland figures updated quarterly. The March 2018 UK HPI will be published at 9.30am on 23 May 2018. See [calendar of release dates](#).
2. As from April 2018, this release will be published on Wednesdays.
3. We have made some changes to improve the accuracy of the UK HPI. We are not publishing average price and percentage change for new builds and existing resold property as done previously because there are not currently enough new build transactions to provide a reliable result. This means that in this month's UK HPI reports, new builds and existing resold property are reported in line with the sales volumes currently available.
4. The UK HPI revision period has been extended to 13 months, following a review of the revision policy (see [calculating the UK HPI](#) section 4.4). This ensures the data used is more comprehensive.
5. Sales volume data is also available by property status (new build and existing property) and funding status (cash and mortgage) in our [downloadable data tables](#). Transactions involving the creation of a new register, such as new builds, are more complex and require more time to process. Read [revisions to the UK HPI data](#).

6. Revision tables have been introduced for England and Wales within the downloadable data. Tables will be available in csv format. See [about the UK HPI](#) for more information.
7. Data for the UK HPI is provided by HM Land Registry, Registers of Scotland, Land & Property Services/Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and the Valuation Office Agency.
8. The UK HPI is calculated by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Land & Property Services/Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. It applies a hedonic regression model that uses the various sources of data on property price, in particular HM Land Registry's Price Paid Dataset, and attributes to produce estimates of the change in house prices each month. Find out more about the methodology used from the [ONS](#) and [Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency](#).
9. The [UK Property Transaction statistics](#) are taken from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) monthly estimates of the number of residential and non-residential property transactions in the UK and its constituent countries. The number of property transactions in the UK is highly seasonal, with more activity in the summer months and less in the winter. This regular annual pattern can sometimes mask the underlying movements and trends in the data series so HMRC also presents the UK aggregate transaction figures on a seasonally adjusted basis. Adjustments are made for both the time of year and the construction of the calendar, including corrections for the position of Easter and the number of trading days in a particular month.
10. UK HPI seasonally adjusted series are calculated at regional and national levels only. [See our data tables](#).
11. The first estimate for new build average price (April 2016 report) was based on a small sample which can cause volatility. A three-month moving average has been applied to the latest estimate to remove some of this volatility.
12. Work has been taking place since 2014 to develop a single, official HPI that reflects the final transaction price for sales of residential property in the UK. Using the geometric mean, it covers purchases at market value for owner-occupation and buy-to-let, excluding those purchases not at market value (such as re-mortgages), where the 'price' represents a valuation.
13. Information on residential property transactions for England and Wales, collected as part of the official registration process, is provided by HM Land Registry for properties that are sold for full market value.

14. The HM Land Registry dataset contains the sale price of the property, the date when the sale was completed, full address details, the type of property (detached, semi-detached, terraced or flat), if it is a newly built property or an established residential building and a variable to indicate if the property has been purchased as a financed transaction (using a mortgage) or as a non-financed transaction (cash purchase).
15. Repossession sales data is based on the number of transactions lodged with HM Land Registry by lenders exercising their power of sale.
16. For England, this is shown as volumes of repossession sales recorded by Government Office Region. For Wales, there is a headline figure for the number of repossession sales recorded in Wales.
17. The data can be downloaded as a .csv file. Repossession sales data prior to April 2016 is not available. Find out more information about [repossession sales](#).
18. Background tables of the raw and cleansed aggregated data, in Excel and CSV formats, are also published monthly although Northern Ireland is on a quarterly basis. They are available for free use and re-use under the Open Government Licence.
19. HM Land Registry's mission is to guarantee and protect property rights in England and Wales.
20. HM Land Registry is a government department created in 1862. It operates as an executive agency and a trading fund and its running costs are covered by the fees paid by the users of its services. Its ambition is to become the world's leading land registry for speed, simplicity and an open approach to data.
21. HM Land Registry safeguards land and property ownership worth in excess of £4 trillion, including around £1 trillion of mortgages. The Land Register contains more than 25 million titles showing evidence of ownership for some 85% of the land mass of England and Wales.
22. For further information about HM Land Registry visit www.gov.uk/land-registry.
23. Follow us on Twitter [@HMLandRegistry](#), our [blog](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).