

Press release: Asia-UK collaboration awards winners announced

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox MP has today announced the winners of the inaugural [GREAT Innovation in Action Awards](#) which celebrate the best partnerships between UK and Asia-Pacific companies.

The winners have been taken from a shortlist of 12 trade projects which demonstrated how powerful new ideas can transform the way we work, live, play or learn – the 4 themes of the successful [GREAT Festival of Innovation](#) which took place in Hong Kong last month.

The festival was a key focus of the UK government's mission to boost trade and seize the opportunities of global growth, with the IMF predicting 90% of growth will come from outside the EU in the coming year

The awards, provide a snapshot of international trade at its most ambitious and innovative, celebrating a variety of brilliant partnerships between UK and Asia Pacific companies of every kind, from large corporates to new start-ups.

Shortlisted projects ranged from cutting-edge UK robotics making construction work safer for engineers in Hong Kong, to Chinese automotive technology cleaning the air we breathe in the UK's cities.

The full winners include:

Learn: INDE (UK) and AIA Carnival (Hong Kong SAR)

A giant augmented reality screen using high quality 3D visuals that allows children to get up-close with fascinating extinct creatures, from the T-Rex to the pterodactyl.

Live: Foster + Partners (UK) and Harbour City Estates (Hong Kong SAR)

A new public plaza extending the Ocean Terminal in Hong Kong – providing an outdoor space for the people of Hong Kong and a distinctive getaway to the city for its visitors.

Play: Arts Council England (UK) and Arts Council Korea (South Korea)

Three UK based artists were commissioned to produce an array of site specific artworks as part of an urban regeneration project connecting Busan and Sheffield.

Work: Medopad (UK) and China Resources (China)

Health-tech pioneers developed a data-capture platform that allows doctors to remotely track and monitor patients in real time thanks to wearables like the Fitbit.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox said:

It is a great honour to announce the winners of the GREAT Innovation in Action Awards following the success of the GREAT Festival of Innovation in Hong Kong.

The winners, like the festival itself, highlight the brilliant cutting-edge collaborations between UK and Asian companies that will help create the products and services which will change the way work, live, play or learn in the future.

I want more UK companies to develop ambitious business partnerships across the Asian Pacific region. That's why, as an international economic department, we are helping UK companies forge new business ties that will boost exports and investment to every part of the country.

Over 1,600 people attended the GREAT Festival of Innovation, including nearly 300 UK businesses and seven universities, to hear from 160 world leading experts and enjoy over 25 showcases of innovative new businesses, ideas and ground-breaking technologies from the UK and across Asia.

The festival celebrated collaboration and support between British and Asian businesses, governments, cultural and educational institutions.

Highlights included the signing of a joint statement by the UK and Hong Kong setting the agenda for future collaboration on innovation, creative industries and Belt and Road Initiatives.

Attendees also had a first look at record breaking British TV exports BBC's Top Gear and Blue Planet; an exploration into new robot technologies showing how scaled-down machinery could transform food production by doing away with the need for big farm machinery; and menus from celebrity chefs Tom Kerridge, Tom Aikens, Issac McHale and Andrew Wong.

The GREAT Festival of Innovation is part of the UK government's GREAT Britain campaign which aims to generate jobs and growth by promoting Britain as a world-class destination for trade, tourism, investment and education

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.

About the GREAT International Trade Campaign

The [GREAT International Trade Campaign](#) works to promote the strength of UK industries to overseas buyers, forging new business partnerships through DIT Trade experts across the globe.

Whether its celebrating close UK-US ties in the creative industries, or the use of UK technology across the world, the campaign creates an online presence through which exceptional UK companies are promoted on a global stage.

Press release: More support for disabled people plus other welfare and pension reforms start in April

An increase in the State Pension rate and extra financial support for disabled people in the workplace are among a number of welfare reforms that have come into effect from April 2018.

1 April

Access to Work grants

Delivering on the government's commitment to support disabled people into work, Access to Work grants have increased by over £15,000 so people can now claim up to £57,200 a year. Access to Work can cover workplace adaptations, assistive technology, transport and interpreters and is one of the ways the government is helping disabled people to enter and thrive in employment.

The increase ensures that more disabled people, particularly from the deaf community, are able to benefit from the grant and achieve their career aspirations.

2 April

Funeral Expenses Payment

For people on qualifying benefits, Funeral Expenses Payments contribute towards the cost of arranging a funeral. From 2 April, it has been made simpler for people to claim a Funeral Expenses Payment. Changes include extending the period in which a claim can be made and allowing recipients to receive contributions from friends and family without them being deducted from the payment.

6 April

Sure Start Maternity Grants

Sure Start Maternity Grants are a one-off payment of £500 for people on certain income-related benefits to help with costs when they have their first child, for example to buy baby equipment. Sure Start Maternity Grants are now available to kinship carers, foster carers and adoptive parents who then have their own first-born child.

Automatic enrolment into a workplace pension

To help workers to save for their future, the automatic enrolment pension contribution rates also increased from 2% to 5% on 6 April 2018.

Automatic enrolment was created to help people with their long-term pension savings and works by requiring employers to enrol all eligible staff into a workplace pension. An estimated 10 million people will be newly saving or saving more later this year and the increase in minimum contribution rates will build on this success.

Support for Mortgage Interest

People on certain benefits can get help towards the interest on their mortgage through Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI). To make the system fairer and ensure a safety net remains for the future, from 6 April this has been replaced with an interest-bearing loan that is only repayable after the property is sold if there is enough equity after the mortgage is paid off. The loan is optional and claimants who accept the loan will see no change in SMI payments.

9 April

Universal Credit work allowances

The amount which families with children and disabled people can earn before their Universal Credit is gradually reduced (work allowances) has been increased by 3%, helping families keep more of what they earn.

State Pension

The State Pension has also increased from 9 April, in line with the 'triple lock'. The full basic State Pension was put up by 3% to £125.95 a week. This means that the government will have raised the full basic State Pension by £1,450 a year since 2010. The full rate of the new State Pension also increased by 3%, to £164.35 a week.

Other changes from April

Housing costs and Universal Credit

People in receipt of Housing Benefit will receive an extra 2 weeks' support with their rent when they move onto Universal Credit.

In addition, new Universal Credit claimants will be able to claim Housing Benefit for support with their temporary accommodation costs. This will enable local councils to recoup more money they spend on temporary accommodation directly from DWP, protecting more than £70 million in 2018 to 2019.

Disability and carers' benefit rates

Benefits for the additional costs of disability and benefits for carers have been increased by 3% in line with prices. The main rates for most working-age benefits in addition to Child Benefit, and certain elements of Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, will remain the same.

National Living Wage

The National Living Wage increased by 4.4% to £7.83 an hour from 1 April, benefitting over a million workers.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

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[Press release: Foreign Secretary call with French counterpart on Syria: 9 April 2018](#)

Foreign Secretary call with French counterpart on Syria: 9 April 2018 – GOV.UK

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson spoke to the French Minister for Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian about Saturday's attack in Douma, Syria.



A Foreign & Commonwealth Office spokesperson said:

The Foreign Secretary has this morning spoken to his French counterpart, Jean-Yves Le Drian, about the horrific attack in Douma, Syria on Saturday and ahead of an emergency session of the United Nations later today, which was called for by the UK alongside allies.

Speaking to Le Drian, the Foreign Secretary underlined the urgent need to investigate what had happened in Douma and to ensure a strong and robust international response. They noted that international investigators mandated by the UN Security Council had found the Asad regime responsible for using poison gas in at least 4 separate attacks since 2014 and agreed that those responsible for this attack must be held to account.

They both condemned the use of chemical weapons by anyone anywhere and they agreed to work together to stand up for the Chemical Weapons Convention and to ensure that there was no impunity for those that use such barbaric weapons. They agreed that today's meeting of the United Nations Security Council in New York would be an important next step in determining the international response and that a full range of options should be on the table.

Published 9 April 2018

Thank you for your feedback