

Press release: UK and Saudi Arabia sign memorandum of understanding on clean energy

- UK and Saudi Arabia pledge to share technical knowledge and expertise on clean energy
- both nations pledge to collaborate closely to develop world-leading renewable energy technologies
- UK-Saudi Energy and Industry Dialogue to be held every year

The Business Secretary Greg Clark has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Clean Energy with Saudi Arabia's Minister of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources Khalid A Al-Falih.

The MoU, signed at the Cabinet Office on Wednesday (7 March), commits the UK and Saudi Arabia to work closer than ever before on developing technologies that will reduce harmful carbon emissions while growing their respective economies.

As part of the agreement, the 2 countries will share technical knowledge and expertise on clean energy, including smart grids, electric vehicles and Carbon Capture Usage and Storage – a technique that traps, stores and use carbon emissions as feedstock.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

Our Industrial Strategy sets out a long-term plan to build a Britain fit for the future. This means equipping our economy to take advantage of new opportunities and build resilience to new risks.

The global shift to cleangrowth is one of the most foreseeable and significant global economic trends and will transform many sectors of the economy, including power, transport, construction, energy-intensive industries and agriculture.

This Memorandum of Understanding will help both the UK and Saudi Arabia make the most of this shift.

Saudi Arabia's Minister for Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources, Khalid A Al-Falih said:

Through our Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia has a blueprint to guide its future development through diversifying our energy mix, expanding on key industries and mining opportunities, as well as investing on science and innovation to meet current challenges.

The UK is a world leader in cutting carbon emissions to combat climate change while driving economic growth. Since 1990, the UK's carbon emissions have fallen by more than a third while the economy has grown by two-thirds.

As the government's [Industrial Strategy](#) sets out, the UK aims to pioneer the development, creation and use of clean technologies, systems and service that cost less than the high carbon alternatives.

Saudi Arabia's blueprint for its future, [Vision 2030](#), also outlines plans to grow the country's renewable technologies sector, improve its energy efficiency and diversify its energy mix. Both countries' ambitious plans are best achieved by working closely together.

On industry, Saudi Arabia is expanding and localising in key industries, such as defence, automotive and pharmaceuticals, as part of its strategy.

Business Secretary Greg Clark hosted Saudi Energy Minister Khalid A Al-Falih for an exchange of views on the UK's Industrial Strategy and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 on Wednesday.

The 2 countries have agreed to have an annual Energy and Industry Dialogue to identify future areas of collaboration, with further collaboration between the UK and Saudi Arabia on energy matters later this year when Business Secretary Greg Clark visits Riyadh.

The ministers discussed opportunities to work together on some of the Grand Challenges of the Industrial Strategy:

- Artificial Intelligence and the data revolution
- the global shift to clean growth
- the future of mobility

The UK will be inviting government ministers from across the world to its global Zero Emission Vehicle Summit in the autumn.

1. Today's Memorandum of Understanding is one of several being signed as part of the UK-Saudi Strategic Partnership Council.
2. The government's ambitious, modern [Industrial Strategy](#) sets out a long term plan to boost the productivity and earning power of people throughout the UK.
3. The government's [Clean Growth Strategy](#) is an ambitious blueprint for a low carbon future.
4. Find out more about [Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030](#).

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[News story: UK hosts first joint](#)

executive committee on healthcare with Saudi Arabia

Delegates from the UK have met with delegates from Saudi Arabia for the first joint executive committee on healthcare. The meeting was headed by Minister of State for Care Caroline Dinenage and Saudi Minister of Health Dr Tawfiq Al Rabiah.

The inaugural meeting was held at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London. It provided an opportunity for the 2 ministers to open discussions on a future healthcare partnership between the countries, particularly in relation to:

- patient safety
- digital innovation
- public-private partnerships

Two commercial partnerships were also signed at the meeting:

- Babylon – memorandum of understanding highlighting the future delivery of health solutions for the Saudi Ministry of Health through their local partner Thiqah using Babylon's artificial intelligence application
- Datix, HealthMatrix and Saudi Patient Safety Center – contractual agreement covering the terms and conditions for the delivery of a nationwide patient safety software to the Saudi Ministry of Health and other healthcare sectors

Saudi Arabia has one of the largest and fastest-growing populations in the Gulf region, and healthcare is a crucial sector. Like the UK, Saudi Arabia is seeking an exchange of healthcare expertise that will deliver world-class sustainable healthcare in the future.

Minister of State for Care Caroline Dinenage said:

Our partnership with Saudi Arabia will have an important impact on the prosperity of our nations and our citizens – paving the way for new approaches to healthcare that can both benefit and improve patient safety.

Today's signings are also a measure of the confidence industry has in long-term UK-Saudi economic partnerships that will help us to diversify and transform services.

His Excellency Tawfiq Al Rabiah of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia said:

These partnerships will provide the health sector with a greater opportunity to develop and improve upon the services provided to the beneficiaries within the Kingdom, through sharing experiences with the United Kingdom and utilising the latest technologies for a better and more efficient healthcare for all.

[News story: Class of 2018 celebrated across the country](#)

At events held in London, Brighton, Weston-Super-Mare, Leeds and Cambridge apprentices from across a number of sectors and job roles were recognised for successfully completing their apprenticeship in the last 12 months.

The 'class of 2018' graduation ceremonies were held as part of the 'Apprenticeships Work' themed week bringing employers and apprentices from across England together to celebrate the success of apprenticeships, whilst encouraging even more people to choose apprenticeships as a pathway to a great career.

Sue Husband, director, National Apprenticeship Service added:

Apprenticeships hold the same prestige as university and events like these graduation ceremonies taking place across England today have given apprentice graduates the recognition they deserve for completing their apprenticeship.

Whether apprentices are moving onto the next level of their apprenticeship or if they are now in full time positions with their employer, they have shown that apprenticeships truly do work to get individuals onto their chosen career path and on the road to success.

As an apprentice myself I know the hard work that goes in to completing an apprenticeship. I take my hat off to the class of 2018 and thank them and their employers for supporting apprenticeships and the benefits they bring to individuals, employers, local communities and the wider economy.

Apprentices at today's graduation ceremonies come from wide ranging sectors, representing dedicated apprentice employers, including BT, Lloyds Bank, Troup, Bywaters + Anders, HMRC, the Royal Navy, Channel 4, the NHS, MOD and Halifax – amongst others.

Graduating Charlotte Brandom, IT Support Engineer and former BT Higher

Apprentice said:

“I am so pleased that I did my apprenticeship. I had started off on the university route, studying Psychology, but I realised it wasn't working for me and switched paths to do an IT and Networks apprenticeship with BT. I have been able to rotate roles, so have experience from several parts of the business. I now work in a job I really enjoy – technical support for cloud services – and it's all thanks to the skills my apprenticeship gave me.”

Young Apprenticeship Ambassador Networks from across England supported the National Apprenticeship Service in encouraging apprentices to attend a ceremony today.

Charlotte Hughes, Chair of the Young Apprenticeships Ambassador Network in the East of England added:

The apprentice graduation ceremonies have created quite a buzz amongst the apprentice community and it's great that they are happening during National Apprenticeship Week.

Graduation ceremonies are an amazing opportunity to celebrate all the apprentices and their achievements. It's also a great time to talk to those graduating to build a greater network of apprentice ambassadors in England. I hope that everyone attending the events enjoys their moment in the limelight – it's well deserved.

You can find images from the 'class of 2018' event on the [National Apprenticeships Service Flickr page](#).

News story: New Payment Plans for Licence Fee to be trialled

Customers on the new plan will still pay the same amount of licence fee (£150.50 per year) as everyone else, however instead of paying the cost of the licence fee in full at the start customers will be able to pay-as-you-go each month with the cost split evenly over the course of the year. Currently weekly and monthly payment plans require higher initial payments over the first six months to protect against a risk of non-payment.

This more flexible payment plan will help manage the cost of living for those who might struggle to pay the licence fee, and was one of the key recommendations from the 2015 independent review on TV licence fee enforcement carried out by David Perry QC. He recommended that the government should make available simple and flexible payment plans for those facing

difficulty in paying the licence fee, and the government is committed to delivering this.

DCMS Secretary of State, Matt Hancock said:

The licence fee enables the BBC to produce fantastic programmes that we want everyone to enjoy and be entertained and informed by. But we know that sometimes households may struggle to pay the licence fee, which is why we've worked with the BBC to develop a simpler and more flexible payment plan to help those on low incomes.

It is expected that simplifying the payment plans will have the added benefit of reducing the amount of prosecutions for licence fee evasion. There were 159,637 convictions for evasion in 2016 and currently the BBC estimate that 6-7% households evade the fee.

The six month sign up period for the new plan, will run from 1 April 2018 to the end of September 2018. The trial plan will only be available to certain groups of customers:

- people who have sought debt advice from certain charities
- those who have previously held a licence which was recently cancelled because of missed payments
- people who have been questioned under caution for TV licence fee evasion

Eligible customers will be invited to join the scheme through via three different recruitment methods:

- Referral through specified debt reduction charities
- Via a letter from TV Licensing
- During a visit from a TV Licensing enquiry officer

Pipa Doubtfire, Head of Revenue Management at the BBC said:

The BBC has worked with DCMS on the best way to implement David Perry Q.C.'s recommendation and we welcome government legislation enabling us to run the Simple Payment Plan trial, which has been designed to help those most in need.

Jane Tully, director of external affairs at the Money Advice Trust, the charity that runs National Debtline, said:

The increased flexibility to pay for a TV licence that the Simple Payment Plan provides is an important step forward in improving support for people in financial difficulty in this area. Five percent of the people we help at National Debtline have a TV licence debt. We look forward to working with TV Licensing on this

trial and to see how it helps those people we hear from who are struggling to pay the licence fee.

Dawn Stobart, Director of External Affairs for debt counselling charity Christians Against Poverty said:

For those on a very low income, the cost of a new TV licence can be very difficult to meet so this new arrangement looks set to be a great help.

Customers joining the scheme will be compared with other customer groups to see how well they keep up with the payments and if they renew their licence. This assessment period will conclude in September 2019 after which the BBC will evaluate whether the trial has been successful.