

# [Press release: UK to lead call for free trade at WTO's biggest conference](#)

The UK will join the biggest ever conference on trade this week, joining 163 other members of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox will attend the WTO Ministerial Conference in Argentina, the final one the UK will attend as a member of the EU.

## **UK's trade objectives**

During the conference the government will call for an open and inclusive trading system, prioritising progress on digital trade, services and support for SMEs, as well as helping developing countries benefit from trade.

As the UK moves onto trade discussions with the EU, it will continue its work at the WTO as it sets its own independent trade policy.

As the UK prepares to leave the EU it will play a leading role in the WTO, championing trade to be more open and accessible.

At the conference the UK will push for agreements to make it easier for businesses to export digital services and information without costly customs duties and make domestic regulations in other countries more transparent for SMEs. Agreements at the last WTO conference in 2015 led to zero tariffs on £6 billion of annual UK technology exports.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox will also support a joint declaration on women's economic empowerment, agreeing to promote gender inclusive trade initiatives directed at improving women's access to trading opportunities. Research has found that closing the global gender gap could boost the global economy by [\\$12 trillion by 2025](#).

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:

As we leave the EU, we will set out an independent trade policy which spreads the benefits of trade among our own businesses and consumers, as well as the world's poorest. As a founding member of the WTO, we are committed to a rules-based trading system and I'll be making the case for that this week.

The case for global open and inclusive trade has never been stronger and as an international economic department, we remain a firm supporter of the WTO and will be one of the world's strongest advocates for further trade liberalisation and modernisation.

## Trade and developing countries

The UK will also set out its future role as a world-leading supporter of free trade, as Dr Fox and Trade Minister Greg Hands host meetings with African and Commonwealth trade ministers, to promote a free and fair global trade policy which supports developing countries to trade their way to prosperity.

This will be a central focus when the UK hosts the 52 Commonwealth Heads of Government in London next April.

## Trade supporting UK business

Agreements made at the WTO have a real impact on British businesses and consumers. Past agreements have helped spread free trade in services (the UK's largest export), enforce companies' intellectual property rights worldwide and reduce customs burdens.

The latest major agreement, secured after the last WTO conference in 2015, removed tariffs on £1 trillion worth of trade in IT products like computer games consoles, worth £6 billion in UK exports.

The UK has worked hard to push for future WTO agreement on issues like supporting digital trade and creating more transparency for domestic regulation in member countries. UK digital exports are already worth £50 billion a year and Dr Fox will address global business leaders at the summit on the benefits that digital trade liberalisation can bring to developed and developing countries.

## Notes to Editors

- the UK is currently represented at the World Trade Organisation through the EU. However, once it leaves the EU it will become an independent member in its own right, able to negotiate according to its own interests
  - according to the WTO, workers at export-focused companies in Western Europe earn 10 to 20% more than the average wage in their country
  - the next WTO summit will take place in 2019, after the UK has left the EU. This year's summit is the biggest ever, after Afghanistan joined the WTO in 2016
  - at the last WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi in 2015, members concluded an agreement to ban export subsidies and similar protectionist measures, as well as an agreement to update the [Information Technology Agreement \(ITA-II\)](#)
  - the ITA-II was the largest tariff elimination agreement since the creation of the WTO, resulting in zero tariffs on £1 trillion of global trade in IT equipment and guaranteeing that no tariffs are paid on £6 billion of British technology exports
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# News story: UK and Gibraltar continue engagement on Rock's Brexit interests

The fifth meeting of the Joint Ministerial Council (Gibraltar EU Negotiations) took place in London today, with ministers in full agreement that Gibraltar's specific interests must continue to be fully taken into account as the UK exits the EU.

The discussions centred around areas such as financial services, taxation, and the implementation period.

Robin Walker also updated the Deputy Chief Minister on progress in the first phase of negotiations. On Friday the UK Government and EU Commission published a joint report setting out its agreement on citizens' rights, Ireland and Northern Ireland, and the financial settlement.

Speaking after the meeting, Minister for Exiting the European Union Robin Walker said:

Today's meeting was very productive. I outlined our commitment to fully representing Gibraltar's interests in the negotiations, including our firm intention to ensure continued market access from Gibraltar into the UK.

I also updated the Deputy Minister on the progress of the negotiations, outlining the positive agreement we have struck with the European Commission to guarantee citizens' rights – including for frontier workers – ensure there will be no hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, and agreement on a fair financial settlement.

The UK Government remains absolutely committed to securing a Brexit deal that works for the entire UK family, including our friends on the Rock.

Deputy Chief Minister of the Government of Gibraltar, Dr. Joseph Garcia said:

The detailed work on Brexit between the UK and Gibraltar Governments continues to progress very well. Working groups have engaged on financial services, on-line gaming, the environment and the border since the last JMC. The first meeting of the transport group is scheduled to take place in Gibraltar this week.

We discussed recent developments in the Brexit negotiations following the end of phase one. We also considered how to make the most of Gibraltar's new opportunities, following our exit from the EU.

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## Press release: South Yorkshire historic military bridge makes final journey

The Inglis Bridge, which is believed to be the only known surviving Mark 1 version, has been removed from over a 7m wide watercourse to the north of the M180 in South Yorkshire.

The bridge, which has not been used since the end of the Second World War, was the responsibility of Highways England and will be renovated by the Royal Engineers Association at the army base in Nottingham. A partial segment of the bridge will be sent to the Royal Engineers Museum in Gillingham, Kent when renovations are completed.

Highways England project manager Russell Mclean said:

This has been a fascinating project to be involved in. We were approached by the Royal Engineers Association earlier this year who were interested in renovating a segment of the bridge for their museum.

We were only too happy to help them with their request although the removal of the bridge did prove to be difficult as the bridge has been there for a long time so we weren't sure how the structure was going to hold when we removed it. Luckily we were able to remove a large enough segment which can now be put proudly on display in the Royal Engineers Museum in Gillingham, Kent.

The 50 feet bridge was removed by a cradle that was bolted to the roadway of the structure and lifted by a 400 tonne crane. The bridge was then split into 2 so it could be transported to the army base.

Members of the Royal Engineers Association were invited to the removal of the bridge.

Jim Johnstone of Doncaster Royal Engineers Association said:

The members of the Doncaster Branch of the Royal Engineers Association have never been involved in a project of this magnitude. In collaboration with Mr James Brooke, the farmer, who kindly donated the bridge to us we feel that we are saving a piece of Corps history that otherwise would have been lost. From the members of the Branch we must also thank Highways England for the tremendous assistance given in the recovery of the bridge.

Inglis bridges were the first modular bridges (that is a bridge which could be built, used, dismantled and built elsewhere) provided for access across rivers and gaps during the war as they could be constructed in a short space of time and could take a large amount of weight. They were usually assembled by a team of 12 men and a turntable.

Counterweight was attached to the home bank side of the pre-erected structure which was then swung across the river to the far banking area.

## **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

## **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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# **[News story: Metal theft falls after introduction of Scrap Metal Dealers Act](#)**

Metal theft has fallen by more than three quarters in 4 years following action by government to tackle a spike in these crimes.

A review into the Scrap Metal Dealers Act, which brought in tough measures to crack down on the trade in stolen metal, has revealed the number of thefts has dropped from nearly 62,000 per year in 2012/13 to around 16,000 in 2015/16, potentially saving the UK economy hundreds of millions of pounds.

[Recent figures](#) from the Office for National Statistics showed police-recorded metal thefts in England and Wales fell to fewer than 13,000 in 2016/17.

At its peak, metal theft was estimated to cost the economy more than £220 million per year, prompting the introduction of strict new licensing requirements for scrap metal dealers, identity checks for those selling scrap metal and the creation of a new offence for dealers to purchase scrap metal for cash.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Victoria Atkins, said:

Metal thefts can have a hugely negative impact on victims and the wider community, particularly when items which form part of our

nation's heritage such as war memorials, the statues in our parks and town centres, or other sites of religious, community or cultural value are callously targeted.

I am pleased the Act continues to be a powerful weapon against this form of criminality and the robust measures put in place in 2013 are working to regulate the industry and deter people from stealing metal or dealing with stolen scrap metal.

We will continue to work with a range of partners to identify whether more can be done to prevent these crimes from occurring and ensure that those involved are brought to justice.

The Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 was a response to an increase in metal theft between 2009 and 2011. The sectors severely affected by this crime included, power, transport and telecommunications – and the security of our national infrastructure was under threat – but religious sites and churches were also frequently targeted with metal stolen from rooves and altars.

The purpose of the Act was to enforce stricter regulations of the metal recycling sector to make it more difficult to dispose of stolen metal and reverse the upward trend in thefts.

The Act:

- requires a scrap metal dealer to hold and display a licence, issued by the relevant local authority. This can be either a site licence or a mobile collector's licence
- permits local authorities to charge a licence fee, set locally, at cost recovery
- allows for the closure of unlicensed sites
- requires local authorities to provide appropriate information to enable the Environment Agency in England and the Natural Resources Body for Wales to maintain national registers of licences
- requires scrap metal dealers to verify the identity and address of persons from whom they receive metal makes it an offence for a scrap metal dealer to purchase scrap metal for cash
- sets out the record-keeping requirements in respect of any scrap metal received or disposed of by scrap metal dealers
- provides the police and local authorities with a right to enter and inspect scrap metal dealers' premises

[Read the report.](#)

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# News story: Business set to benefit from new Insurance Linked Securities rules

Insurance Linked Securities (ILS) enable insurers to transfer large and complex risks to capital market investors. A UK regime will help to strengthen the sector's contribution to the UK economy and enhance the UK's position as a leader in this global industry. Increased capacity in the market should help reduce costs for insurers, which is good for business and consumers.

Currently UK insurers use ILS to help manage the risks of their business by arranging deals with off-shore vehicles. These rule changes ensure the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) can apply a fit-for-purpose regulatory approach to Insurance Linked Securities vehicles, bringing the UK's expertise and influence to a growing market.

Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Stephen Barclay said:

London is the largest global hub for commercial and specialty insurance and reinsurance, and can offer a wide range of expertise unmatched in the global market. By bringing Insurance Linked Securities deals to the UK, not only can we open up a valuable new market, but we can also ensure its world-class regulation, bringing benefits to the economy, UK businesses, and consumers.

Insurance Linked Securities are a form of alternative risk transfer which gives protection buyers new options to transfer risk to the capital markets. They are commonly used to mitigate catastrophic risk arising from natural disasters where the human and economic costs are high – new research commissioned by the Department for International Development shows that disasters cost \$30 billion a year across 77 of the poorest countries.

Use of Insurance Linked Securities has grown very significantly in recent years and is now an established part of the global reinsurance market. Capital backing Insurance Linked Securities stands at around \$90 billion. Consultancy firm EY has estimated that this market could grow to a value of \$224 billion by 2021.

Insurance Linked Securities use a range of specialist skills and services to arrange the deals, including underwriting, risk modelling, brokerage, legal and capital markets expertise.