

Press release: PM marks £1.7bn funding to help businesses export post-Brexit

- PM visits Alexander Dennis factory that will see iconic red double-deckers built for historic Mexico City route
- deal supports more than 2,000 jobs across the UK, including around 1,000 in Falkirk and 320 at Guildford site
- total of £1.7 billion in financial support provided by the Department for International Trade to help 137 British businesses fulfil their export potential

Prime Minister Theresa May will today [Wednesday, 23 August] visit bus manufacturer Alexander Dennis as it secures a £44 million finance deal to export iconic red double-decker buses to Mexico City.

She will tour the company's Guildford factory and meet staff constructing 90 low-emission buses that will reduce congestion and pollution on the Paseo de la Reforma, Mexico City's answer to The Mall. The buses will begin transporting passengers along the historic route from the end of this year.

Alexander Dennis' financial funding is part of £1.7 billion provided to businesses to help them win overseas contracts by UK Export Finance since it became part of the Department for International Trade. The financial support has helped 137 British companies expand their businesses, provide jobs and secure major global contracts since the department was created.

The figures, announced for the first time today, shows British business are making the most of opportunities outside of the EU and making their mark on the global stage.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

We are building a truly global Britain by helping UK companies win multi-million pound contracts to export their products across the globe, and supporting high value jobs here in this country.

Since last summer, the government has provided over £1.7 billion of backing for contracts for goods and services and will continue to maximise investment in the UK and seek exciting new opportunities ahead.

From exporting iconic red double-decker buses to Mexico, cutting-edge MRI systems to Australia or rail equipment to Bangkok, each one is an example of a great British success story and shows the UK is leading the way as a great, global trading nation.

The contract announced today was secured with a 1 billion Mexican Pesos (£44 million) agreement by UK Export Finance (UKEF) to guarantee the deal. It was the first contract that UKEF has supported in Mexican Pesos after expanding its range of currencies to 40 last year – ensuring foreign buyers choose UK companies and products.

The deal helps support 320 jobs at the Alexander Dennis factory in Guildford, and an additional 1,000 at their Falkirk site, as well as throughout the supply chain and sites in Scarborough, Anston and Skelmersdale.

International Trade Secretary, Liam Fox, said:

As an international economic department, the Department for International Trade is putting export finance at the heart of trade promotion. The £1.7 billion in financial support since last summer has helped 137 companies secure deals around the world, in 40 local currencies including the Mexican Peso. This has made buying from the UK more attractive than ever.

There is global appetite for British goods and expertise, and UK firms such as Alexander Dennis are taking advantage of the opportunities in fast growing markets like Mexico, securing deals that will boost the UK's exports and safeguard jobs back home.

Colin Robertson, Chief Executive, ADL, said:

It is hugely exciting to know that ADL's signature red double-decker buses will soon be transporting Mexico City's residents in style and comfort. As a global double-decker leader with fleets of our vehicles across the world, we see the positive impact these vehicles can have in improving the transport infrastructure, congestion and air quality in the world's busiest cities.

Our ability to offer finance from UK Export Finance in Mexican Pesos was a significant benefit to our buyer, helping us win this major contract.

Background information:

- Mexico is currently the 15th largest market in the world and has a growing interest in a number of sectors of UK expertise such as energy, financial services and retail
- UKEF provided a “buyer credit” guarantee on a loan from Santander to the Mexican buyer, a private company operating a new route for the City of Mexico’s bus transport system. This government-backed guarantee ensures the buyer can access the finance to buy the buses, allowing Alexander Dennis to secure the contract
- the 90 low-emission “Enviro500” buses are being made at Alexander Dennis’s sites in Falkirk and Guildford. The buses are lightweight, fuel-efficient, cleaner and offer twice as many seats as the buses currently used, easing overcrowding in the city of 20 million people
- alongside this support, UKEF is doubling government support available to UK businesses looking to export to Mexico, meaning up to £5 billion will now be available
- following announcement in July of a new partnership with the five biggest high street banks, accessing finance from UKEF will now be even easier for exporters and companies in their supply chains
- 80% of companies supported by UKEF are small and medium-sized enterprises

Examples of other companies benefiting from UK Export Finance support

- iconic British motorcycle brand Norton Motorcycle was founded in 1898 and now employs 120 staff in the UK selling 1,000 motorcycles a year to Australia, North America, Japan and Europe. UKEF has provided Norton with bespoke working capital support to finance its export activity. The company is an Export Champion for the East Midlands, and has recently launched an ambitious apprentice programme
- based in Guildford, MR Solutions is world-leading developer of cutting-edge MRI systems and products. In 2017, it won a £1.2 million contract for the export of one of its MRI scanners to Sydney University thanks to UKEF providing a guarantee to secure the deal
- Hampshire engineering company Design and Projects received trade finance support from UKEF to export €12 million of rail equipment for a metro line in Bangkok

- burntIsland Fabrications Ltd (BiFab) is a Scottish manufacturer of high-quality steel fabrications for the oil and gas and renewable energy sectors. BiFab recently won a contract in excess of £100 million, backed by UKEF, to support an offshore wind farm
- distinction is a London-based company selling bespoke furniture to hotels all over the world. In 2016, Distinction won a \$7 million contract with the Palm Jumeirah hotel in Dubai. UKEF provided support worth \$1.2 million to enable Distinction to secure the finance it needed to fulfil the contract as well as almost doubling its UK office headcount

Press release: CMA removes immunity from fines for mobility scooter supplier

It comes as the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) announced it has decided to withdraw immunity from fines from a mobility scooter supplier it has found is likely to have broken competition law.

Mobility Limited and 2DS & TGA Holdings Limited (TGA), a mobility scooter supplier, has been under investigation since April for potentially breaking competition law by restricting its retailers from advertising prices online.

This follows a warning letter sent by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) (one of the CMA's predecessor bodies) to several companies in the sector, including TGA, in March 2013 warning of the unlawfulness of such behaviour.

The CMA's [current investigation](#) examined TGA's agreements with 3 online retailers. It found the agreements either prevented retailers from advertising prices of TGA branded mobility scooters online or from advertising them below specified prices.

Firms that make certain agreements with other companies where their combined turnover is no more than £20 million are immune from fines under UK law. However, if as a result of its investigation the CMA considers that any such agreement is likely to break competition law, it may withdraw this immunity.

Following the withdrawal of its immunity from fines, TGA risks a penalty of up to 10% of its worldwide turnover if it restricts the freedom of retailers to advertise prices online in the future.

This is the first time immunity has been withdrawn at this early stage of an investigation.

TGA has now taken action to bring to an end the online price advertising restrictions in question. It stated it is in the process of confirming to all its retailers that they are free to advertise prices online and to decide for themselves the level of those prices. In addition, it is instituting a wide-ranging competition compliance and training programme across its business.

Ann Pope, Senior Director for antitrust enforcement, said:

The internet is an increasingly important distribution channel and people are held back from finding the best deal if retailers are prevented from advertising their prices online.

Businesses of all sizes need to take competition law seriously. We will withdraw immunity from small businesses, exposing them to the risk of fines, if we think it is necessary – particularly where previous warnings have been ignored.

Notes

1. Section 39 of the Competition Act 1998 (CA98) provides that a party to a 'small agreement' is immune from financial penalties for an infringement of the Chapter I prohibition of CA98. Chapter I covers (among other matters) anti-competitive agreements and concerted practices between undertakings (for example, businesses) which may affect trade within the UK or a part of it and which have as their object or effect the prevention, restriction or distortion of competition within the UK or a part of it, unless they are excluded or exempt in accordance with CA98.
2. A 'small agreement' is an agreement between undertakings whose combined turnover did not exceed £20 million in the business year ending in the calendar year preceding one during which the infringement occurred and which is not a price fixing agreement. Under section 39(4), if the CMA has investigated a 'small agreement', it may make a decision withdrawing the limited immunity from penalty given by section 39(3) if, as a result of its investigation, it considers that the agreement is likely to infringe the Chapter I prohibition.
3. On 27 March 2014, the OFT issued an infringement decision finding that Pride Mobility Products Limited and certain of its retailers infringed the Chapter I prohibition of the CA98 – [see press release](#).
4. On 5 August 2013, the OFT issued an infringement decision finding that Roma Medical Aids Limited and certain of its retailers infringed the Chapter I prohibition of the Competition Act 1998 – [see press release](#).

5. The CMA is considering its next steps in the on-going investigation in light of TGA taking action to bring the restrictions to an end and to comply with competition law going forward.

Press release: Residents to learn more about ancient villages lost at sea

Evidence of communities on the Humber dating back 8,000 years will be discussed at a free community drop-in event at Welwick Village Hall on Monday 4 September.

Archaeologists will be on hand between 2-7pm to talk through the early findings from a geophysical study and small scale excavation between Outstrays and Skeffling last autumn.

The study found that the area contains a long and interesting history, with evidence of storm surge deposits, ancient river channels and areas of peat from as far back as the Middle and New Stone Age (approximately 3,000 to 8,000 years ago), which suggests that landscapes occupied and exploited by prehistoric people survive beneath the current farmland.

Across the higher parts of the site evidence was also found of Roman settlement activity which evolved into the medieval period as communities settled closer to the shore as the land was drained.

The initial archaeological assessment formed part of the design for the Outstrays to Skeffling Managed Realignment Scheme, a new habitat creation project on the Humber Estuary working in partnership between the Environment Agency and Associated British Ports.

Stephen Kemp, senior archaeologist at the Environment Agency, said:

Our initial assessment begins to tell the stories of communities by the Humber that learnt to adapt to environmental changes, like rising sea levels.

When many of these ancient communities lived here the coast was much further away and the surrounding land was significantly less populated, enabling people and the ecology to thrive.

The stories of the, now lost, villages provide interesting insight

into environmental changes in today's contexts and why, when providing managed realignment schemes like this, it is vital to ensure we are working with nature to make good long-term choices that will maintain our modern communities.

The Outstrays to Skeffling Managed Realignment Scheme will see a new inter-tidal environment created that offsets habitat losses from future coastal development and 'coastal squeeze'.

Coastal squeeze occurs when fixed hard flood defence structures, built to protect people and properties along the coast, reduce the inter-tidal land between low and high tide as a result of rising sea levels. It is a legal obligation for the Environment Agency to rebalance this coastal squeeze by creating a compensatory habitat.

As part of the proposed scheme a 900 acre natural habitat site will be created for estuarine and terrestrial wildlife and an improved landscaped flood defence will surround this area to help reduce the risk of flooding to the local community. Once complete, managed realignment sites like the Outstrays to Skeffling Managed Realignment Scheme are typically colonised with invertebrates and wading birds.

Environment Agency project manager Tim Cobb said:

With higher tides and changes in weather, we cannot avoid changes to our environment as we know it. But the results from our archaeological survey show that these changes have been happening for millennia and they stress the importance of addressing coastal squeeze in key locations on Britain's coastline.

While the Outstrays to Skeffling Managed Realignment Scheme is still in public consultation stage we are keen to present our initial findings to the community. Perhaps more importantly though, we'd like to learn more about the local community's understanding of the site to ensure they help us shape and maintain the important parts of the area's history.

A planning application for the Skeffling Managed Realignment Scheme is expected to be submitted at the end of 2017. Subject to planning approval, the Environment Agency says it anticipates starting work for the western site in 2018.

Further archaeological excavations are anticipated in advance of the main scheme construction and regular updates on the findings will be communicated to the community on a regular basis.

Partners involved in the Outstrays to Skeffling Managed Realignment Scheme excavation include: the Environment Agency, Historic England and York

News story: British Minister reaffirms UK's commitment to peace process

Minister for the Middle East Alistair Burt visits Israel and the OPTs for discussions on peace process and to celebrate strong business and tech relations with Israel.

Alistair Burt MP, Britain's Minister of State for the Middle East at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, today concluded a three day visit to Israel and the OPTs.

During the Israel leg of the visit, Minister Burt met a number of government officials and political figures to discuss wide-ranging issues affecting the UK's relations with Israel. He emphasised the UK's strong relationship with Israel and its commitment to the Middle East Peace Process.

Mr Burt also attended the launch ceremony of El Al Airlines' first Boeing 787 Dreamliner plane Ben Gurion Airport. El Al's new fleet of Dreamliners is equipped with British-made Rolls Royce engines, a result of the biggest-ever trade deal between the two countries, signed in 2016.

Minister Burt said:

The UK is a great friend of Israel and during this visit I have reaffirmed the UK's commitment to peace and stability in the Middle East. We will continue to work with and support those in Israel and beyond who want to achieve a viable solution.

We have a longstanding relationship with Israel and I have witnessed first-hand the strength of this partnership in many areas from trade and investment to technology and innovation. This relationship will continue to grow and benefit both of our nations.

In a series of meetings in Jerusalem, Minister Burt met Tzachi Hanegbi MK, Minister for Regional Cooperation; Michael Oren MK, Deputy Minister at the Prime Minister's Office; Ayman Odeh MK, head of the Joint List party; and Yuval Rotem, Director General of the Ministry of foreign Affairs.

During a meeting with young tech developers, he witnessed how a London-based initiative, the free coding school Founders & Coders, is expanding to Israel through a successful branch in the city of Nazareth.

Press release: Competition concerns found in adult mental health care merger

Universal Health Services, Inc. – through its subsidiary Cygnet Health Care Limited (Cygnet) – acquired Cambian Adult Services (CAS) in December 2016. Both companies operate hospitals that provide inpatient rehabilitation services to patients suffering from long-term mental illness.

Rehabilitation services provide patients suffering from a variety of mental illnesses with ongoing support as they recover. Ultimately they aim to help patients re-gain their independence and re-integrate into the community.

After the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) initial investigation into the merger, it was referred for a more in-depth, phase 2, investigation in May 2017.

In the [summary of provisional findings](#) published today, 2 local areas in England have been identified where the 2 companies' hospitals are close competitors, such that the merger would be expected to result in a substantial lessening of competition (SLC).

The inquiry group conducting the phase 2 investigation found that clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), as the main customers of these types of hospitals, would face a reduction in choice, quality or value as a result of the merger when seeking to refer male patients in the East Midlands and female patients in the West Midlands suffering from long-term mental illness.

As well as the provisional findings, a notice of possible remedies has been published which outlines ways the companies could address these competition concerns, including the sale of hospitals in the local areas where an SLC has been provisionally found.

Simon Polito, Chair of the inquiry group, said:

Mental health hospitals are a vital part of our healthcare system, caring for some of the most vulnerable in our society. The needs of patients are complex and varied and NHS trusts and CCGs need access to a range of facilities and treatment options to help ensure they can deliver the best outcomes for each individual patient.

Factors such as how close the hospital is to a patient's home and family, the quality of the hospital and its track record, all play into making the right referral decision for a given patient.

NHS budgets are under ever-increasing strain. Having a variety of hospitals to choose from when referring patients in the local area is key to ensure quality, service and the best value possible.

We have provisionally concluded that the merger may mean there is not enough choice for NHS customers to help them get the best outcomes for patients suffering from long-term mental health issues in the East and West Midlands. We now await the companies' views on our provisional findings and what action they will take to address our concerns.

Notes for editors

1. Cygnet Health Care Limited operates 20 mental health hospitals in the UK.
2. CAS operates 61 mental health hospitals in the UK.
3. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law.
4. The summary of provisional findings can be found on the [case page](#). The CMA is required to publish its final decision by 17 October 2017.
5. On 22 February 2017 the CMA started its initial investigation and on 3 May 2017 the CMA referred it for a phase 2 investigation.
6. All the CMA's functions in phase 2 merger inquiries are performed by independent inquiry groups chosen from the CMA's panel members, and supported by CMA staff. The appointed inquiry group are the decision-makers on phase 2 inquiries.
7. The members of the inquiry group are: [Simon Polito](#) (Inquiry Chair), [Thomas Hoehn](#), [Jill May](#) and [Andrew Popham](#).
8. The CMA's panel members come from a variety of backgrounds, including economics, law, accountancy and/or business; the membership of an inquiry group usually reflects a mix of expertise and experience.
9. For more information on the CMA see our [homepage](#) or follow us on Twitter [@CMAgovuk](#), [Facebook](#), [Flickr](#) and [LinkedIn](#). Sign up to our [email alerts](#) to receive updates on merger cases.

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