

# Press release: Whisky galore! Bid to make UK exports like Scottish tippie flow freely

The UK government has set its sights on reducing high tariffs as part of a drive to boost overseas trade in world-renowned UK products such as Scotch whisky, International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said today.

Work is underway at the Department for International Trade (DIT) to make it easier for UK companies to benefit from further trading opportunities across the world post-Brexit.

The announcement comes as Scottish Secretary David Mundell meets with representatives of the Scotch Whisky Association and Diageo at the iconic Caol Ila distillery in Islay today, to discuss how the UK government is laying the groundwork to reduce export tariffs on unique Scottish produce.

Tariffs – which trading partners can impose on exports – can be particularly high in some markets, hindering businesses from making the most of the overseas demand for UK products.

Now DIT officials are looking to see where future trade agreements and stronger trade ties with key trading partners around the world could reduce export tariffs for iconic Scottish goods such as Scotch whisky, smoked salmon and gin.

For Scotch whisky, these tariffs can be over 150% of the value of the product. Tariffs on gin can reach similar levels, whilst smoked salmon tariffs average 13%.

DIT is also investigating how reductions in non-tariff barriers to trade – such as complex regulation and licensing rules – could form part of future negotiations in key markets, providing a further boost to British exports.

The UK exported over £300 billion of goods in 2016, with the majority of these sent to non-EU countries, while 7 of the UK's top 10 whisky export markets lie outside of the EU.

With whisky worth over £5 billion to the UK economy and accounting for 20% of our total food and drink exports, the UK government is ensuring that as we leave the European Union the industry is able to tackle the tariffs and boost overseas sales.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:

With the recent uplift in trade, we should raise a glass to our exporting success and further help UK businesses make the most of an ever-growing demand for top-selling British products such as

Scotch whisky as part of a Global Britain.

Reducing the costs for companies to sell overseas will become one way of further opening up free trade routes and boosting sales, and that's why I've tasked my international economic department to look at how we can support more businesses to build their brands abroad.

Speaking ahead of his visit, Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

Scotch whisky is a world-class product, globally recognised for its quality and heritage, and the industry employs thousands of people in Scotland and around the rest of the UK.

We are determined to open up new markets around the world for the very best whisky our distillers have to offer – and to drive down any tariffs they face.

By strengthening ties with key partners, identifying new markets and tackling tariffs, the UK government is paving the way towards an even brighter future for Scotland's whisky industry.

Whilst the UK is still within the EU, any changes to export tariffs would require lengthy negotiations involving all EU member states, so early work is now being carried out to assess markets with the most potential for growth for UK exports once we leave the EU.

The Department for International Trade has already established 11 working groups to strengthen trade and commercial ties with key trading partners around the world, including:

- the United States
- Australia
- China
- India
- Mexico
- South Korea
- the Gulf Cooperation Council

Ministerial trade dialogues have also been established with:

- Taiwan
- Vietnam
- India
- Kazakhstan
- Brazil

## **Notes to editors**

The Scotch Whisky Association published a report at the beginning of this year on its economic impact in the UK, estimating that:

- Scotch whisky adds £3.2 billion of value to the UK economy and a further £1.7 billion through indirect and induced impacts
- 10,800 people are directly employed in the industry with a further 29,300 indirect and induced jobs

The UK exported £547.6 billion of goods and services in 2016, an increase of 5.8% on the previous year.

Exports to non-EU countries now represent 56.1% of all exports, a 34.6% increase from 2010. The UK exported £157.2 billion of goods to non-EU countries in 2016, up 25.8% from 2010.

## Further information

Contact Charlotte Bowyer on 020 7008 6574.

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## [News story: Removing key skills criteria](#)

Ofqual announces intention to withdraw redundant regulations for key skills criteria

Today, 3 August 2017, we are announcing our intention to withdraw our [Criteria for Key Skills Qualifications](#).

The criteria were originally developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in 2000, and set out rules and regulations for Key Skills qualifications.

From 2012, the government introduced Functional Skills qualifications, which largely replaced Key Skills. There are currently just [9 Key Skills qualifications](#) available to new learners in England, all offered by a single awarding organisation.

We have reviewed the criteria in detail, and set out our analysis in the table below.

Our view is that none of these rules are needed, and we can continue to regulate the remaining Key Skills qualifications effectively using our [General Conditions of Recognition](#).

As a result, we think retaining the criteria would impose an unnecessary regulatory burden. We intend to formally withdraw them on 31 August 2017.

## Detailed analysis of current criteria

### Current rule

Qualifications that use any of the following terms in their titles must be based on the specifications developed by the regulators:

- Key Skills
- Key Skills qualifications
- application of number
- communication
- information technology
- improving own learning and performance
- problem solving
- working with others

Qualifications in Key Skills must use the assessment model specified by the regulators.

If the assessment method includes tests, awarding organisations must use the agreed national tests and allow candidates to take the tests as many times as they want. If the tests do not have pre-set pass marks, the awarding organisations must agree the pass marks at meetings that include all of the awarding organisations involved in the relevant assessment series.

Awarding organisations must:

- participate in cross-awarding organisation moderation activities for internal assessment
- carry out random checks, after the final date of completion, where nearly completed portfolios were included in the Moderation process

### Our view

Rule not needed

Developing qualification specifications is outside Ofqual's remit. We do not think it is appropriate to require awarding organisations to continue using a specification developed by a predecessor organisation many years ago.

Rule not needed

Our General Conditions of Recognition already require qualifications to use the most appropriate assessment methods (Condition D1), and assessments to be fit for purpose (Condition E4.2).

Rule not needed

This requirement is redundant because it could conflict with, for example, General Conditions D1 and G1 – and awarding organisations must comply with the Conditions where they conflict with the criteria.

In addition, it is not currently possible to comply with this rule, because there is no longer a bank of "agreed national tests".

Rule not needed

Our General Conditions of Recognition already require awarding organisations to carry out effective moderation (Condition H2)

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## [News story: Financing growth in innovative firms: have your say](#)

New consultation will explore investment options to help fund innovation 'unicorns' in the UK.

UK start-ups and entrepreneurs are invited to have their say in the setting up of a new national investment fund for innovation.

The consultation will look at financial support for innovative businesses with the potential to scale-up at pace and become 'unicorns'. These are businesses valued at more than \$1 billion USD and are so-called because of their rarity. In addition, it will explore how the UK could better commercialise ideas from research.

As part of the consultation, there will be a review into how businesses might benefit from investment originating from pension funds. There is also the option that it could be set up as a public-private partnership or placed fully on government's balance sheet to be sold off once established.

## **Why the consultation is being held**

Start-ups often rely on external sources of funding.

Innovate UK provides early stage grants to test the feasibility of an idea or use research and development to create innovative products, processes or services. Where many businesses struggle is in attracting longer-term growth capital: [fewer than one in 10 businesses that receive seed funding in the UK go on to get fourth-round investment](#).

The new fund will ensure UK businesses can access the finance they need as they grow to be successful. It is part of the [Patient Capital Review](#). This aims to strengthen the UK as a place for innovation by providing businesses with long-term patient finance.

## **How to get involved**

You have until 22 September to input to the consultation. You should read all information before responding to [financing.growth@hmtreasury.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:financing.growth@hmtreasury.gsi.gov.uk).

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## **[Speech: Remarks by ambassador at the prayer service for Kenya's 2017 elections](#)**

Dear Friends,

I'm grateful to the Provost for allowing me to address this gathering on behalf of the international community. I'd like to acknowledge the presence of my fellow Ambassadors in the congregation today.

We are here as friends of Kenya – friends of this great and beautiful

country. As friends, we strive to support and strengthen Kenya; to walk alongside our Kenyan brothers and sisters in good times and in tough times.

The approaching elections are your elections, not ours; the choices are for Kenyans alone. But the elections are a time for all of us to stand together and to work together, and we will do so with you.

On 8 August, Kenyans will exercise one of their most important rights: to choose their leaders. It is a moment of great significance.

It has been a privilege, as a member of the congregation here at All Saints, to listen to and reflect on the sermons which have been preached on the theme of leadership over the past weeks.

Democracy is the best way to choose our political leaders. We know this in the United Kingdom, and we know it in Kenya.

But democracy is hard work. It involves real competition, debate, argument. Feelings are strongly held. The stakes are often high.

If democracy is to work for all of us, each of us bears a responsibility.

We must support and pray for those who are organizing these elections. It is not easy to be the referee, often under attack from both sides. It is vital that the IEBC be given the space to fulfil its role.

We stand in sorrow and in prayer with the family and friends of Chris Msando, a member of staff at the IEBC who was murdered this weekend, and with Maryanne Wairimu. As Kenya's leaders have said, his killers must be brought to justice and face the full force of the law; and his colleagues at the IEBC must be protected from harm as they go about their vital tasks.

We must all reject violence in this election, and reject words which may inspire violence. We must speak of what unites us as brothers and sisters, and hold to account those who seek to divide us or to provoke hatred.

We must support and pray for those working to keep the election safe; for those observing the polls to help make them free and fair; for the media who inform all of us and help us reflect on the choices we can make.

And we must support and pray for the candidates aspiring for the great responsibility of political leadership.

Those who win will need to do so with generosity of spirit, working, once the democratic competition is over, to heal divisions and bring people together.

Those who lose will need to accept their loss, or where they feel moved to do so, to contest it peacefully under the rule of law.

Both winners and losers must remember that Kenya and Kenyans are far more important than any candidate or any election. They will need to accept the decisions of the people with grace and humility, and move onward. No-one must allow political competition to turn to bloodshed. No-one should

die because of an election.

Friends,

We pray and work for peace, but let us not go into this election with fear in our hearts. This is a great country, in which people of many tribes and many faiths work together for the good of all. Its achievements have been and remain remarkable. Its democracy is a beacon and an inspiration for Africa. It attracts people from every part of the world to visit, live, work, and to play a part in Kenya's future.

My prayer is that Kenya goes into these elections with a commitment to peace, yes; but also with pride in what this country is, what it has achieved, and what it will continue to achieve in the future.

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## **Press release: 34,000 households previously capped have moved into work**

Since the introduction of the cap in April 2013, 150,000 households have had their benefits capped. Around 81,000 of these are no longer capped, with 34,000 households having moved into work.

Work and Pensions Secretary David Gauke said:

It is right that people who are out of work are faced with the same choices as those who are in work and these figures show that the benefit cap has been a real success. But behind these figures are thousands of people who are now better off in work and enjoying the benefits of a regular wage.

With record levels of employment and over three quarters of a million vacancies at any one time, even more people have the opportunity to change their lives for the better.

The benefit cap incentivises work, including part-time work, as anyone eligible for Working Tax Credit (or the equivalent under Universal Credit) is exempt.

The benefit cap is set at £20,000 a year outside London and £23,000 in Greater London to reflect higher rent costs.

Anyone working and receiving Working Tax Credit is exempt from the cap, as are households where someone receives Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal Independence Payment (PIP), or the support component of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). Those claiming Carer's Allowance or Guardian's

Allowance are exempt from the cap.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

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