

News story: Scottish economy returning to growth

Responding to the Scottish GDP figures published today, which show 0.8 per cent growth in the Scottish Economy in 2017's first quarter, the Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell said:

These are very encouraging figures. The Scottish economy is returning to growth and I am pleased to see that the manufacturing sector in particular is making the most of export opportunities.

But, over the year, Scotland has continued to lag behind the UK as a whole – so there is still a lot of work to do.

The Scottish Government has extensive powers at their disposal to grow and support the economy and these figures underline the need for our two governments to work together as we prepare to leave the EU.

Brexit will bring new opportunities. We need to ensure Scottish business can take full advantage.

The UK Government is taking concerted action to build a strong economy across all parts of the UK. This includes work on our modern Industrial Strategy, City Deals and supporting businesses beyond the UK market to reach markets around the world through our global network of embassy-based trade experts.

The Scottish Government have the powers to support the country's economy, including powers over economic development, taxation, skills, as well as additional borrowing powers to allow them to invest where Scotland needs it.

The Scottish Government should be using these to grow the economy alongside the UK, rather than creating huge business uncertainty with the threat of another independence referendum.

Over the past year the UK Government has added over £1 billion to the Scottish Government's Budget through extra Barnett consequential. There was an extra £820m in the 2016 Autumn Statement and a further £350m in the 2017 Spring Budget.

The Department for International Trade (DIT) is working to promote shared UK prosperity by financing international trade and investment, and championing free trade across the world.

DIT has worked with Scottish Development International and Highlands & Islands Enterprise on two Exporting is Great tours of Scotland. We will continue to work together helping companies to potentially expand from London into Scotland and across the United Kingdom.

In 2015/16 Scotland benefitted from 108 new Foreign Direct Investment projects, creating 4,178 jobs.

The UK Government has loaned start-up companies in Scotland millions to help businesses.

Press release: Top British Diplomat Visits Tanzania

Sir Simon McDonald, Permanent Under Secretary and Head of Her Majesty's British Diplomatic Service is on a visit to Dar es Salaam helping to cement the close relationship between Tanzania and the UK, Tanzania's number one foreign direct investor.

During his 2 day visit, the top diplomat will meet Tanzania's Foreign Minister Dr Augustine Mahiga and the Permanent Secretary for Trade, Industry and Investment, Prof Mkenda to discuss bilateral issues, investment opportunities and how the UK can further partner with Tanzania. He will visit the Dar es Salaam port to see the port improvement programme funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) through Trade Mark East Africa and the World Bank, and UK Border Force security assistance with UNODC .

He will meet representatives from the private sector including Ali Mufuruki, head of the Tanzania CEO Round Table, as well as academia and civil society. He will also have the opportunity to listen to the views of some of Tanzania's young people when he meets DFID's Youth Panel, a group of young Tanzanian volunteers who advise DFID on policy.

Sir Simon's visit is part of a regional tour to Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania.

Speaking ahead of Sir Simon's visit, British High Commissioner Sarah Cooke said:

This is Sir Simon's first visit to Tanzania and a chance for him to see, first hand, the strength of the UK/Tanzania partnership across a range of areas. I am delighted he is able to visit Tanzania at this time.

Sir Simon joined the British Diplomatic Service in 1982 and has served in Berlin, Jeddah, Riyadh, Bonn, Washington and Tel Aviv, and in a wide range of jobs in London. Before taking up the role of PUS, Sir Simon served as the British Ambassador to Berlin from 2010 to 2015, the Prime Minister's Foreign Policy Adviser and Head of Foreign and Defence Policy in the Cabinet Office

from 2007 to 2010. From 2003 to 2006 he was British Ambassador to Israel. He was appointed Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George in 2014.

News story: Government launches transport investment plan for Britain

- new strategy sets how transport investment can deliver a stronger, fairer Britain
- in good news for motorists, plans include the creation of the 'Major Road Network' with access to a multi-billion pound road fund, funded by Vehicle Excise Duty (VED), for improvements such as bypasses
- strategy sets out the need for future projects to show how they contribute to creating a more balanced economy

Local roads are set to benefit from a share in a multi-billion pound improvement fund as part of a landmark [investment strategy unveiled by Transport Secretary Chris Grayling](#).

The [Transport investment strategy](#) sets out a new long-term approach for government infrastructure spending – meaning cash will be targeted at projects that help rebalance the economy.

And it features the proposed creation of a new major road network, which would see a share of the annual National Road Fund, funded by VED, given to local authorities to improve or replace the most important A roads under their management.

The plans aim to improve productivity and connectivity of towns and cities across the country – tackling bottlenecks and traffic jams for road users, and taking away the misery of lorries and through-traffic thundering through rural villages on main roads.

The scheme will also aim to help people get to work or school by better connecting towns and cities, unlock land for new homes, and improve business links – forming a crucial strand of the government's strategy to rebalance the economy by ensuring wealth is spread across the UK and not just concentrated in the south-east of England.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Getting transport spending right is crucial for the country's future.

The transport investment strategy sets out a blueprint for how we

can harness the power of transport investment to drive balanced economic growth, unlock new housing projects, and support the government's modern industrial strategy.

This government is taking the big transport decisions for Britain's future like HS2 and Heathrow, while delivering the biggest investment in roads and rail for a generation.

At the heart of our approach is a plan to make transport work for the people who use it and for the wider economy.

The strategy sets out how investment can deliver a stronger, fairer Britain – with priority for projects which cut congestion, support growth, boost Britain's global competitiveness or unlock new housing.

The proposals for the major road network respond to the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund study last year, which highlighted the disparity between the funding and planning of Britain's motorways – the strategic road network – and local authority A roads.

The new plans mean that main roads currently overseen by local authorities would share the VED funded National Roads Fund which was previously envisaged to be ring-fenced for national routes. UK VED was £5.8 billion for 2016-17.

The 'Transport investment strategy' also plans for a new 'rebalancing' measure, which will judge how investment programmes contribute to a more balanced economy, and prioritises investment that increases productivity or growth, supports new housing, improves reliability and tackles congestion. Investment should support every part of the country, and, where needed, fast track smaller schemes that are proven solutions so passengers and drivers get the benefits more quickly.

It is set to form a vital part of the modern industrial strategy and builds on the progress made in recent years of upgrading the road and rail network. The government is investing more than £61 billion over the 5 years to 2020-21 and has already taken big decisions on transformational projects like HS2 and announced our preference for a new runway at Heathrow.

The transport investment strategy sets out why investing in transport infrastructure matters and the priorities for future investment. Under 4 separate themes, it sets out propositions to guide future transport investment decision making.

Ensuring our investment consistently meets the needs of users and helps to create a balanced economy

- we will prioritise:
 - reliability and congestion
 - economic growth

- UK competitiveness
- housing
- investment should support every part of the country, including taking account of the balance of spending between different regions

Getting best value out of the network and our investment

- prioritising value for money
- getting the most from existing assets
- continuing to seek contributions from those who stand to benefit to support transport funding
- attracting more private finance

Maintaining a resolute focus on delivery

- prioritising predictable funding and a stable long-term pipeline of projects
- ensuring all schemes considered for funding take a pragmatic approach to delivery challenges
- where appropriate, prioritising smaller schemes which deliver quickly

Adaptability in the face of change

- where there is uncertainty, we will prioritise projects that are adaptable to change
- putting the UK at the forefront of new transport technology

Statement to Parliament: Transport investment strategy

We have made significant progress in realising our ambitious plans for transport infrastructure, built on the investment of over £61 billion in the 5 year period to 2021. We have taken big decisions on transformational projects like HS2 and our preferred option for a new runway at Heathrow, and are part way through delivering major investment programmes to maintain and upgrade our road and rail networks.

I am today (5 July 2017) publishing a [Transport investment strategy](#), setting out how we will build on that progress and – through the investment decisions we go on to take – how we will respond realistically and pragmatically to today's challenges and deliver a transport network that works for everyone.

The decisions we take now will shape the transport network for decades to

come and help to determine the contribution that transport can make to our national success and wellbeing. The 'Transport investment strategy' describes:

- what we are trying to achieve through our investment in transport infrastructure
- the priorities and propositions that will guide future investment decisions
- the institutional frameworks within which those decisions will be taken
- the actions we are taking to help meet our ambitions

I want our investment to:

- create a more reliable, less congested and better connected transport network that works for the users that rely on it
- build a stronger, more balanced economy by enhancing productivity and responding to local growth priorities
- enhance our global competitiveness by making Britain a more attractive place to trade and invest
- support the creation of new housing

As we shape and deliver the balanced investment programmes that deliver these objectives, we will be guided by a set of priorities and propositions that put the needs of transport users at the heart of decision making, whilst getting the best value out of the network and our investment, retaining a resolute focus on delivery and remaining adaptable in the face of change.

As part of the strategy I am announcing my intention to launch a consultation on the creation of a new Major Road Network (MRN) for the most important local authority A roads. This would mirror the success of the Strategic Road Network which has created planning and funding certainty for motorways and major dual carriageways, and would mean our most important local authority A roads were actively planned and managed to deliver a better service for drivers. As part of this consultation, we will make proposals to allocate a proportion of the National Roads Fund to the MRN.

I am also determined that, through our investment, we should go further in helping to raise prosperity and productivity across the country. In the [Industrial strategy green paper](#), the government committed to taking account of the balance of spending per head between different regions. In addition, we will develop a new assessment standard that will require transport investment programmes to be judged on how they contribute towards the creation of a more balanced economy, as part of the assessment of their strategic case.

I have placed copies of the document in the libraries of both Houses.

[Government launches transport investment plan for Britain](#) press release, 5 July 2017.

Press release: Welsh Secretary: Heathrow expansion is the right move for Wales

Now is the time for Wales to seize the opportunities Heathrow expansion presents and to show the world that Britain is open for business.

This will be the clarion call from the Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns during a keynote speech to an audience of Welsh SMEs in Cardiff today (5 July).

The UK Government's preferred location for airport expansion was announced in October last year, signalling its commitment to supporting infrastructure projects for the next generation.

A new runway will improve connectivity in the UK itself and crucially boost Wales' connections with the rest of the world, supporting exports, trade and job opportunities.

Speaking at the Heathrow Business Summit at the Cardiff City Stadium, Alun Cairns will call for Wales to be at the "heart of the action" in the delivery of the £16billion project.

He will say "The close proximity of the majority of the Welsh population to Heathrow means that we will be able to maximise the commercial opportunities presented by this investment". He will add "it is of utmost importance that we provide support to such projects to strengthen the Welsh economy."

SMEs already play a crucial role in Heathrow's supply chain – with the airport spending over £1.5 billion annually with more than 1,200 suppliers from around the UK – and their role is set to grow with the expansion.

The Summit will give Welsh businesses a chance to cement relationships and forge new connections with some of the UK's largest suppliers which could also be leveraged for further work outside of Heathrow's expansion project.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns added:

From the commitment to cut the Severn Tolls to the construction of HMP Berwyn in Wrexham, the UK Government is committed to opening the infrastructure support channels to boost the Welsh economy. By supporting the construction of a new runway at Heathrow, we are sending a clear message to the world that the whole of Britain is open for business.

The airport's supply chain are in Cardiff in great force today, ready to build networks and partnerships with Welsh businesses.

I am confident that Wales will not disappoint. Expansion of Heathrow Airport is the right move for Welsh companies, for Welsh passengers and for our communities. Let's take full ownership of the opportunities this exciting project presents.

The Secretary of State will also take the opportunity to underline the importance of both UK and Welsh Governments working together to "address the issues that matter most to businesses in Wales" and that only a "joined up approach can drive forward our opportunity to take ownership of the opportunities presented by Heathrow. That process starts today."