

Speech: Fullerton Lecture

Check against delivery

Good afternoon.

It is a privilege to be speaking to you all here today.

And as the Secretary of State for Scotland, it brings me particular pleasure.

Because over 200 years ago, it was in fact a Scot who led the way to founding modern Singapore.

William Farquhar, who hailed from the beautiful area of Aberdeenshire on the east coast of Scotland, was tasked by Stamford Raffles to help found a trading post on the island of Singapore.

He was appointed the first Resident of Singapore on 6 February 1819, and was integral to the negotiation and signing of the Singapore Treaty itself.

We can only imagine how amazed he would be to know that his modest venture has developed into the second largest port in the world – the vibrant and dynamic country that Singapore is today.

And his legacy stretches still further – to the other side of the world. Because in a twist of fate, his fifth great grandson is none other than the current Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau.

Working with another Scot, albeit one born in Wales, Alfred Russel Wallace, Farquhar commissioned men to go into the forests, rivers and seas to collect specimens and, unusually, he commissioned Chinese artists to paint them.

Thanks to him, the western world was able to discover exotics such as the Durian and Malayan Tapir. I am very much looking forward to seeing that collection myself, displayed as they are in the National Museum.

Farquhar marked the start of an enduring relationship, visible today in the very fabric of the city.

Take Lau Pa Sat, for example. A beautiful gem in the heart of the business district, intricately constructed using cast iron made by MacFarlane in Glasgow.

Scotland, and the rest of the UK, has always looked to the rest of the world and the opportunities it holds.

And a positive, outward-facing approach is what guides the UK as we work with our friends and partners around the world today.

As we strengthen those relationships, reinvigorate our partnerships and forge stronger friendships.

And few friendships have deeper cultural and historic roots than those shared by Scotland and Singapore.

Much has changed over the past almost 200 years, but the friendship between our two countries has not only endured, but flourished.

As President Tan said during his 2014 State Visit, 'Old Ties, New Links, More Opportunities'.

We are now bound by much more than a shared history, and a common language and legal system.

In 2015, Singapore was ranked fifth globally in terms of food & drink exports from Scotland, worth £202 million.

We have seen growth in exports of Scotch whisky, Scottish salmon, seafood, beef and other premium high-end products.

Scottish exports to Singapore increased by 15% from 2015 to 2016, and Scotland exports more to Singapore than it does to its closer geographical neighbour, Sweden.

In the UK we currently export over £500bn of goods and services to the rest of the world. But our export to GDP ratio is just 27.3% compared to an EU average of 47.3%. And only 11% of British companies are exporters.

We can, and should, be doing so much more.

That is why we have set ourselves the goal of encouraging 100,000 additional companies to export by 2020.

Singapore also features as one of the top 10 international markets for Scottish oil & gas companies in terms of supply chain sales, and it is an important launch pad into other markets across South-East Asia.

Over 7000 Singaporeans study every year in the UK. And 50,000 pupils study for UK qualifications here in Singapore. This goes to create deep ties, real understanding and future prosperity for both of our countries.

And this is why I am especially delighted to announce today that on 12th of May 2017, my alma mater, the University of Edinburgh, will launch a Representative Office in Singapore.

The office will support the University in building a deeper presence in Singapore and an ever-stronger understanding of the South-East Asia region.

This is significant news for the University of Edinburgh. In expanding in Singapore, the University is joining others from Scotland.

The University of Glasgow Singapore launched its first subsidiary outside of Scotland in 2011, and it now delivers courses in engineering, computer science and nursing.

The Glasgow School of Art Singapore has been active in this country since

2012 and I look forward to visiting their campus in Singapore later today. And of course the Universities of Stirling and Strathclyde have both been offering courses in Singapore for some time, Strathclyde's MBA programme since 1988.

These roots have grown into the strong, open, and valued relationship between our two countries today.

Another area we share is our longstanding and firm commitment to the Commonwealth and to the values it upholds, of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The UK is hosting the Commonwealth Summit next year. Both our Governments are committed to working with all members not only to reaffirm these shared values, but also to re-energise and revitalise the Commonwealth to cement its relevance to this and future generations.

The deep partnerships that we share through a 21st century Commonwealth can help us strengthen the prosperity and security of UK and Singaporean citizens, as well as those of our many friends and allies across the world.

And the strength of this relationship has never been more important.

As you will know, the people of the UK have voted to leave the European Union.

It is a significant turning point in our national story. The choices we make now will define who we are as a country for generations to come.

Just last week, the Prime Minister triggered Article 50, which is the formal notification to the European Union of the UK's wish to leave.

Her letter marked the start of a two year period of negotiation between the UK and the EU on the terms of our exit.

We are entering into the negotiations with the EU with a clear determination to build a stronger, fairer, more united and more outward-looking country than ever before.

As the Prime Minister said last week, we will we approach the talks constructively, respectfully, and in a spirit of sincere cooperation. We will continue to play our part in promoting and supporting the values we share with our EU neighbours – during the negotiations and once they are done.

We are a global nation, a committed member of NATO and with a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

We will continue to play our part to ensure that Europe is able to defend itself from security threats. And we will do all that we can to help the European Union prosper and succeed.

In Europe, we are pursuing a bold and ambitious free trade agreement with the EU.

An agreement that allows for the freest possible trade in goods and services

between Britain and the member states of the EU – so that we see British companies able to trade and operate with the maximum freedom within European markets, and vice versa.

And with the rest of the world, we want to trade freely and openly.

At a time when there are signs that protectionist instincts are on the rise, we will be a beacon for free trade.

Our priority is to minimise disruption for companies that do business between our countries – both here and at home.

So we will seek to continue and strengthen the relationship we currently have as we forge ahead outside the EU.

And I am optimistic.

Most Free Trade Agreements try to bring two parties closer together. In the case of our departure from the EU, we start from a position of full conformity.

So the task of establishing new trade agreements to replace those we currently enjoy through our membership with the EU is one that we look forward to with confidence.

There are new opportunities too that we will be able to seize as digitalisation now gives us access to a far wider group of potential trading partners.

Singapore is Scotland's largest trading partner in South East Asia. And it's not hard to see why. Those people to people links mean we understand and can build trust. I'm sure that you know of the stereotype of the canny Scot – prudent and careful. Singapore with a robust legal system, excellent infrastructure and education systems, just the partner for a canny Scot!

Singapore is home to around 60 Scottish companies which have established a presence here – from global companies to digital and technology players who see Singapore as a gate-way to the rest of Asia.

Just this morning I attended a business breakfast where I heard from Singaporean investors putting their money into Scotland, and how Scottish companies specialising in fintech, robotics and data analytics are thriving here in Singapore.

Around the city there are double decker buses built by Falkirk's Alexander Dennis for the MRT.

Scottish industries are ideally placed to take advantage of the opportunities here.

Industries like videogames, now with over 85 companies based in Scotland.

Or Financial Services, which contribute around £8 billion to the Scottish

economy, will be able to take advantage of the digital revolution to reach new markets with their products instantaneously.

Or Scotland's cultural sector. Led by the Edinburgh festivals, Scotland now has a reputation for excellence in the arts which has created a worldwide audience. The recent Edinburgh International Culture Summit included delegates from around the world, all of whom had been drawn by that incredible reputation.

For these sectors, the only barriers to entry into overseas markets should be the limits on their own innovation.

But we must recognise that there is always more that we can do to support companies to export directly. It's something that businesses have told us time and again.

Underpinning all this is a shared belief in openness and free trade, and a world founded on justice, fairness and international law.

If we are bold, the prize is a more prosperous future for Britain and stronger trade around the world.

An entirely new government department to do this has been established – the Department for International Trade – headed up by fellow Scot Liam Fox.

He will be banging the drum for British trade loud and clear.

Yes, the British people voted to leave the EU – and we are delivering on that verdict.

But they did not vote to turn inwards, to turn away from the world.

Quite the opposite.

Out of the European Union, we look outwards to a future as a trading powerhouse – a truly Global Britain.

To agree these deals and seize the opportunities on offer, we need to make sure that our own house is in order.

The United Kingdom is, of course, a union of four nations: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Scotland has its own legal system, which is distinct from English law.

It has two governments with different responsibilities: the UK Government, of which I am a part – and the Scottish Government.

It also has two Parliaments: the UK Parliament in London and the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh.

MPs like myself represent Scotland at Westminster, and Members of the Scottish Parliament, MSPs, represent Scotland at Holyrood.

When the Scottish Parliament was formed in the late 1990s, the newly formed Scottish Government took control over a range of domestic policy areas in Scotland including health and education.

Powers over other areas, such as foreign affairs, defence and pensions, remain dealt with at Westminster by the UK government.

Both parliaments have both been a huge part of my own life in public service.

I was originally elected as a Member for the Scottish Parliament in the first ever Scottish Parliament elections in 1999, and I remained a member until my election as an MP to the UK Parliament in 2005.

Since those early days of the Scottish Parliament, its powers have grown substantially. It is a real source of pride to me that today, after successive pieces of legislation, the Scottish Parliament is one of the most powerful devolved parliaments anywhere in the world.

Key decisions are taken in Scotland to address Scottish priorities and needs, while Scotland benefits from the pooling of risk and resources that comes from being part of the United Kingdom.

The devolution settlement is a real success story for Scotland – and Brexit will only strengthen this.

Because as we leave the EU, all the powers and frameworks currently held and run by the EU will be transferred back to the UK.

I talked about the choices we make now shaping the country we will become.

For me, one of the most important set of choices will be to ensure that these returning powers are held at the right level of government and that the right common frameworks are in place.

Now I am very clear that no decisions currently made by the Scottish Government will be removed.

In fact we expect the outcome will mean a significant increase in decision making powers for the devolved administrations.

But getting it right is vital for our future prosperity.

These powers and frameworks will determine the functioning of the UK's own domestic market.

And this market is hugely valuable to the nations of the UK.

For Scotland, it is worth four times more than its trade with the EU.

So on behalf of businesses operating within the UK, we must ensure that no new barriers to living or doing business are created across our own market.

It also matters for the bold ambitions I spoke about earlier that we have on the international stage.

Because we need the right common frameworks in place at home to be able to sign and deliver on international trade agreements abroad.

But this cuts across a renewed debate about Scotland becoming an independent country.

A renewed debate that I find deeply depressing.

The minority government at Holyrood, the Scottish Nationalist Party, wishes for Scotland to become an independent nation.

This was an issue put to a vote as recently as 2014. The people of Scotland voted decisively then to remain part of the United Kingdom.

I was one of them – because I believe wholeheartedly in the precious Union that binds us together.

The UK's vote to leave the EU does not change that decision.

The outcome of both votes should be respected.

Despite no public appetite for yet another referendum, and despite the Brexit process meaning there could be no fair choice between two clear alternatives – the Scottish Government are calling for a second independence referendum.

We have said clearly in response: no, now is not the time.

We should be working together, not pulling apart.

When this constitutional debate dominates, the frustration for me is that it mask the many areas where the UK and Scottish Governments can work together and agree.

There is much that we can agree on.

The freest possible trade with the EU.

Protecting workers' rights in our new arrangements.

Securing the status of EU citizens living in the UK and UK citizens who live in the EU.

Continuing the vital work and collaboration with our partners in the EU to protect us from crime and terrorism.

And, of course, seizing new trade opportunities around the world.

So I am hopeful that we will see a constructive approach in the months ahead, as negotiations with the EU proceed.

I am hopeful, because the prize on offer will benefit both the whole of the UK and our partners around the world.

It's a huge opportunity.

Being here this week has only confirmed that the ties that bind us now are those of friendship, partnership and respect.

52 years on from the creation of the Republic of Singapore, the relationship between us is stronger than ever.

The energy and talent I have seen here on my visit fills me with confidence.

Confidence that Singapore will go from strength to strength.

And confidence that together, we will forge a stronger, more prosperous partnership for many years to come.

Press release: New charity investigation: Believe in Magic

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has today (6 April 2017) confirmed that it opened a statutory inquiry into [Believe in Magic, registered charity number 1145557](#) on 7 February 2017, and has frozen its bank account.

The charity has objects to relieve the needs of children and young people up to the age of 18 in the UK suffering from serious or terminal illness and their family and carers as the trustees shall determine.

The Commission engaged with the charity's trustees in August 2016 about a number of regulatory concerns identified from multiple complaints about the charity and from the Commission's own scrutiny of the charity.

An investigation has now been opened as the Commission has been unable to adequately address any of its concerns with the trustees and because there are indications of misconduct or mismanagement. The investigation will:

1. Consider whether, and to what extent, the charity is operating in furtherance of its charitable objects and for the public benefit.
2. Examine the administration, governance and management of the charity by the trustees, in particular the extent to which the trustees have:
 - acted in the charity's best interests and acted in accordance with their legal duties
 - responsibly managed the charity's resources and financial affairs
 - ensured that conflicts of interest in the charity have been adequately avoided or managed
 - properly authorised benefits to trustees and connected persons
3. Examine the trustees' non-compliance with their reporting duties, specifically the non-submission of the charity's annual accounts and reports.

To protect the assets of the charity, the Commission has frozen the charity's bank account under section 76(3)(d) of the Charities Act 2011 which will prohibit the charity from making payments or withdrawing money from the account unless they have the Commission's prior authorisation. The Commission has also directed the charity under section 47 of the Charities Act to provide information and documentation that will assist the inquiry.

It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and what the outcomes were. [Reports of previous inquiries](#) by the Commission are available on GOV.UK.

The charity's details can be viewed on the Commission's [online charity search tool](#).

Ends

PR 31/17

Notes to editors

1. [The Charity Commission](#) is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our [annual report](#).
 2. Search for charities on our [online register](#).
 3. Details of how the Commission reports on its regulatory work can be found on [GOV.UK](#).
 4. Section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 gives the Commission the power to institute inquiries. The opening of an inquiry gives the Commission access to a range of investigative, protective and remedial legal powers.
 5. The Commission's decision to announce the opening of a statutory inquiry is based on whether it is in the public interest to do so and with consideration of our objective to increase public trust and confidence in charities.
 6. An order was made on 10 March 2017 to restrict the charity's bank account under section 76(3)(d) of the Charities Act 2011.
 7. A direction was made under section 47 of the Charities Act on 10 March 2017.
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[News story: Perceptions of A levels and GCSEs in England: wave 15](#)

Highlights from the survey:

Perceptions of GCSEs, AS and A levels

1. Confidence in the GCSE, AS and A level systems is significantly higher than in previous years. Levels of trust and confidence in the maintenance of standards have also improved.
2. Overall figures show that, compared to last year and previous waves, significantly higher proportions of stakeholders agreed that GCSEs “are a trusted qualification” (65% to 72%), that “standards are maintained year on year” (30% to 40%), and that “marking of GCSEs is accurate” (26% to 38%).
3. A significantly higher proportion of stakeholders also agreed that “AS and A level standards are maintained year on year” (37% to 47%), and that “the marking of AS and A levels is accurate” (31% to 41%).
4. Around twice as many young people agreed than disagreed that GCSE and AS and A level marking was accurate. The net proportion of teachers in agreement was also larger for both sets of qualifications than in previous years.

Perceptions of GCSE reform

1. The proportion of stakeholders who, in autumn 2016, were aware of the new 9 to 1 grading system was significantly higher than in wave 14. However, this improving picture of understanding is unlikely to reflect current levels of awareness, as Ofqual has since undertaken a wide-ranging communications and engagement campaign to raise awareness and understanding of the new grading system.

National Reference Test

1. The first National Reference Test was undertaken in England in February and March this year. The data suggest that in November last year about half of surveyed head teachers were aware of the test. Ofqual, and its delivery partner NFER, have since provided more information to schools, so these results are unlikely to be a true reflection of the current picture. Awareness and familiarity of the test is expected to improve as more schools are engaged with it over coming years.

Review of marking and appeals

1. Parents, young people and the general public strongly agreed that the systems used by schools and colleges to challenge GCSE, AS and A level results in England are fair. Teachers were also more likely to agree

than disagree.

2. There was no change in the proportion of stakeholders who were aware of the review of marking, moderation and appeals systems compared with last year, and head teachers remained the group with the highest claimed awareness, at 75%.
3. When asked about whether they felt that they had adequate information about exam boards' review of marking, moderation and appeals systems, overall more stakeholders disagreed (45%) than agreed (28%).
4. Awareness of the systems for appealing vocational qualification results was much lower, with only half of head teachers and a quarter of teachers responding that they knew about the process.

Special consideration, reasonable adjustments and malpractice

1. Head teachers and teachers agreed by significant margins that they have adequate information about the arrangements and adjustments available for eligible GCSE, AS and A level students. They also agreed that it is fair, and that the right adjustments are made for the right students.
2. They also strongly agreed that they have adequate information about what constitutes malpractice and to whom it should be reported and that allegations are fairly investigated.

Commenting on today's release, Michelle Meadows, Deputy Chief Regulator, Ofqual, said:

We are pleased that confidence in GCSEs, AS and A levels is improving. This bears out anecdotal feedback we have had from stakeholders about how we have engaged the sector with the reform programme and other changes we have introduced.

This is one of many positives reflected in the report.

We continue to be in period of major reform and many of the systems and processes surveyed in this report are currently changing. There will inevitably be a period of bedding in as teachers and schools become more familiar with the changes. This is certainly true of the National Reference Test.

We also know that since this research was carried out we have done even more work around the new 9 to 1 grading structure, so the

current position is likely to be better than reported here, but it still encouraging to see the figures increasing from this time last year.

Read the [full Official Statistics](#).

[Speech: Malaysia and Britain: Partners in a post-Brexit world](#)

Good afternoon, and thank you all for that welcome. It is a pleasure to be here in Malaysia, and a privilege to be able to address the representatives of some of this country's leading firms.

Before I begin, I must start by thanking all of those who have made today's event possible.

Firstly, I am grateful to my Malaysian counterparts – the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, for hosting today's event and providing such an excellent venue.

The Malaysian External Trade Development Council and the Malaysian Investment Development Authority have also been instrumental in helping to deliver this event.

And, of course, The National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia, and their counterpart the British Malaysia Chamber of Commerce, must be thanked for marketing this event, and ensuring such a distinguished audience.

A huge variety of industries are represented here today, from business services to infrastructure to aviation and everything in between.

Your presence here today is not only a gesture of commercial interest, but it is also an act of friendship, a signal of your desire to enhance Malaysia's trading relationship with the United Kingdom, as we open a new chapter in our nation's history.

As I'm sure many of you will be aware, last week the UK triggered Article 50, formally initiating our departure from the EU.

We are at the beginning of a 2 year-process, and over the next 24 months, Britain will not only negotiate a new relationship with the European Union, but will fundamentally recast our place in the world.

The UK government's ambition is to build a Global Britain – a nation that is outward-looking and internationalist, rejecting insularity and continuing to play a prominent role in global affairs.

Trade is central to this ambition.

We want Britain to become a global champion of free trade, a nation at the heart of world commerce, working with our international allies and partners to remove barriers and liberalise trading practices.

The UK is looking to agree a comprehensive new trading relationship with the European Union, but at the same time renew our commitment to our oldest and closest international partnerships, as we seek to embrace the wider world.

Our relationship with Malaysia is very important to the UK.

Our 2 countries have always enjoyed a close commercial, political and diplomatic partnership.

At an individual level, the relationship between the British and Malaysian peoples has never been stronger. There are over 17,000 Malaysians currently studying in the UK.

In addition, there are nearly 80,000 more studying for UK qualifications in Malaysia – a figure second only to China. We are very lucky to count Prime Minister Najib as a former student – one of half a million Malaysian alumni of British institutions.

Internationally, our co-operation remains as strong as ever. This is reflected not only in our membership of the Commonwealth, but also in the Five Powers Defence Arrangements.

Your economy is consistently ranked among the most competitive in the world, and like the UK, you are one of the top nations in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index.

Malaysia and the UK share a common attitude to trade and investment and a welcoming commercial environment.

At a time when protectionism and barriers to trade are going up across the world, Malaysia has a respect for trading freedoms that welcomes international investors.

This is exemplified by ASEAN, a network that is a world leader in economic growth and commercial opportunity. As a prominent member, Malaysia is an increasingly important partner not just for the UK, but the whole world.

I need hardly remind those here today of the fundamental strengths of the Malaysian economy.

It is because of this energy, drive and dynamism that I am here today, strengthening the economic and commercial ties that unite our nations.

Our partnership has already delivered much for both our countries.

A recent survey by the High Commission found that the UK's 24 leading investors in Malaysia, many of whom are represented here today, employ over

80,000 Malaysians and are responsible for investments worth over 90 billion ringgit.

These British companies have a unique confidence in Malaysia and her booming economy, and other UK investors are also helping to develop new industries and commercial sectors.

Dyson, for example, employ over 1,000 local engineers, and BAE Systems employs 400 highly skilled people here in Kuala Lumpur working in its Cyber Security Global Engineering Centre, including a graduate recruitment programme working in conjunction with local universities.

Such jobs are harnessing the talent and ambition of young Malaysians, and spreading the experience, knowledge and expertise of leading UK firms to the next generation.

They are investing in Malaysia's future.

International trade is, of course, a 2 way process, and the United Kingdom has in turn benefitted hugely from Malaysian investors in recent years.

As the Malaysian economy has boomed, so has your investment in the UK. In the 5 years to 2016, it grew by an astonishing 200%, and was valued at £28.5 billion Ringgit, approximately £5.2 billion.

Among the most visible investment projects in the UK is the £10 billion regeneration of Battersea Power Station.

This iconic London landmark has been given a new lease of life by our partnership with Malaysia.

This country's investment has advanced a huge variety of the UK's industries, from healthcare to leisure to automotive engineering. It has become part of the fabric of British life.

Yet, for all these successes, there is more to be done.

Although we in the UK have been buying ever more Malaysian goods and services, our exports to your country have suffered a decline.

Overall, the value of our mutual trade has shrunk by 2.7% since 2013. It is a disappointing statistic for 2 such complementary economies.

There is no reason why this should be so. Both of our economies are experiencing remarkable growth.

The UK and Malaysia are both business friendly, outward-looking nations, brimming with commercial and investment opportunities.

I am here today to open a new chapter, to further promote our joint commerce and stimulate our mutual trading relationship.

In recognition of the substantial bilateral trade and investment

opportunities that exist, the Prime Minister last year appointed a [Trade Envoy](#) to Malaysia, Richard Graham MP.

He is here with me today and has, with the support of our partner, the British Malaysia Chamber of Commerce, been busy scoping new opportunities for British and Malaysian companies to work together in Johor.

You can expect to see a lot more of him in the future!

My own Department for International Trade has been working to promote opportunities across key sectors.

Last year, DIT signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation, a move that has led to 2 UK visits, and significant interest from the UK technology and research sector in the huge opportunities available here.

Later this year, a 'mega-mission', of 50 of the UK's leading tech companies will visit Malaysia, looking to cement this relationship.

In 2016, the Education is GREAT campaign was officially launched, aiming to expand a sector that has been at the heart of our bilateral relationship for 2 centuries, since the first English international school opened in Penang in 1816.

Today, there are over 100 international schools teaching the British curriculum in Malaysia, 5 university branch campuses, and over 125 institutions that offer UK degrees.

This is a truly remarkable achievement, and will form the basis of a cultural, political and commercial partnership that will stretch far into the future.

The [GREAT campaign](#) is the largest of its kind in the world, a global drive to promote the UK as a destination for trade, investment, tourism and study.

Yet it is also about working with our partners to spread UK knowledge and expertise across the globe.

This Formula One season, [McLaren will become our official GREAT partners](#), working to promote British research and development strength and education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

Look out for their GREAT branded cars at your own Grand Prix in October!

McLaren's involvement in the GREAT campaign illustrates a wider point that I wish to leave you with today.

Our government will do everything it can to promote trade and investment, but we cannot do it without you, our leading companies, to capitalise on these opportunities and expand that relationship.

You are the wealth creators. You are the ones who generate jobs, stimulate

economic growth, and spread prosperity between our countries.

Our businesses matter. Not for nothing is Malaysia ranked among the best places in the world to do business.

Events like today are crucial if we are to build those business-to-business relationships, and seize the opportunities of the future.

My department is listening, and our team at the British High Commission will do everything they can to help you on that journey. But we cannot make it for you.

Malaysia is important to us, and our 2 countries have a long and prosperous history together.

But I firmly believe that the best days of our partnership lie ahead.

Our economies are complementary, we share the same values, and the connection between our nations, at every level, is stronger than ever.

As the UK leaves the European Union, we have an unprecedented opportunity to work with our partners across the world to drive prosperity, champion free trade, and deliver a better future for all our citizens.

Malaysia, and Malaysian companies, are our partners on this journey.

Thank you.

Press release: Government helps dementia sufferers in fight against nuisance calls

- elderly and vulnerable – including dementia sufferers – to be given hi-tech devices which block all nuisance calls
- project is latest government move to tackle the blight of rogue traders
- PM: We want to create a fairer society by cracking down on unscrupulous practices which target the most vulnerable

Rogue traders who bombard the elderly and vulnerable with nuisance phone calls are to be stopped in their tracks by a targeted government scheme designed to protect those with dementia.

Every year, thousands of complaints are made about nuisance phone calls and in February last year, one firm alone was fined £350,000 for making more than 46 million automated calls.

To help tackle the problem, Prime Minister Theresa May, has today announced the launch of a half-a-million-pound project which will see hi-tech call blocking devices installed in the homes of some of the most vulnerable people across the UK who have been identified by doctors, Trading Standards officials and local councils as being at risk from nuisance callers.

The trueCall devices will completely block all recorded messages, silent calls and calls from numbers not already pre-identified by the home owner – offering particular protection to those with dementia.

The Prime Minister said:

We want to create a fairer society by cracking down on unscrupulous practices which target the most vulnerable.

This new, targeted scheme is the latest step in the government's fight against nuisance calls, protecting those who are most at risk, including those with dementia.

We have seen people tricked out of thousands of pounds by scam callers and this government is determined to clamp down on their activities once and for all.

The project, which is being co-ordinated by the National Trading Standards Scams Team and supported by local Trading Standards departments, is the latest of a series of government crackdowns on nuisance callers

A similar trial scheme run by the National Trading Standards Scams Team last year resulted in 93% of participants feeling safer in their homes. This included one person who had previously paid £150,000 to a scam caller.

The chief executive of Dementia UK, Hilda Hayo, said:

We welcome this project as some people living with dementia are vulnerable to nuisance callers who offer bogus services and financial schemes.

These calls can not only have a negative financial impact but can also lead to psychological affects such as anxiety, depression and a loss of self-esteem. We frequently receive calls to our national helpline from family members who are concerned that their relative with dementia has fallen prey to rogue traders.

The special devices will screen calls and can either ask callers to enter a security code which only genuine callers will know, or direct them to instead call a friend or relative of the home owner.

Lord Toby Harris, the Chair of National Trading Standards, said:

The impact of nuisance calls – both emotional and financial – cannot be underestimated. We know that these call blockers can make a real difference to people's lives and give those in vulnerable situations, such as those with dementia, and their families a greater sense of protection and security.

Working with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the government has already forced companies to display their caller ID when cold calling and given out a series of hefty fines – totalling almost £7 million.

The government will shortly implement plans to slap company bosses and firms with fines of up to £1 million if they are found to be in breach of Privacy and Electronics Communications Regulations.

- the funding for this scheme includes £300,000 to supply call blocking machines with the remaining budget spent on the management of the service and raising public awareness of scam and nuisance calls
- plans to make company bosses liable follows previous legislation where only businesses were liable for fines. Many of the businesses tried to escape paying nuisance call penalties by declaring bankruptcy – only to open up again under a different name
- the ICO has issued fines totalling almost £7 million since 2012
- on 2015, the ICO received almost 170,000 complaints about nuisance calls
- to report a nuisance call visit: www.ico.org.uk
- see what else government is doing to combat nuisance calls by searching for: #NoNuisance on social media