

# Speech: British High Commissioner's speech at the Enterprise Africa Summit

Honourable Ministers, Members of Parliament and other dignitaries present, particularly our colleagues from the British Council who have put together this wonderful and so necessary event. Ladies and Gentlemen.

Economic development is a major priority for the UK government, domestically, here in Ghana and across the world.

We recognise the fundamental importance of economic growth in enabling lower and middle income countries to develop and eradicate poverty; and the importance to millions of individual citizens of having the means to earn income to meet their and their families' needs. And that of course means jobs.

I start this morning from the premise that governments do not create jobs, the private sector does. And that within the private sector, MSMEs – Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, or ones that employ between one person and 250 people, are central to that. Together these entrepreneurs are the real job creators.

But governments do set and police the rules, including incentives and disincentives, and ensuring a level playing field or otherwise. Government should focus on creating the right macro-economic environment for business to flourish; and on building the infrastructure and policy environment needed to facilitate the provision of credit and services.

We believe that enabling governments are actually acting in their own strong self-interest and that of their populace: boosting the private sector helps generate not only growth in the economy but the taxes that companies pay on their profits when they're successful. And those taxes allow the government to fund the sort of public infrastructure and other investments that help the economy grow further. So, when governments help small businesses to flourish they create a virtuous circle.

We know too that today's global economy is increasingly competitive. That means that governments should not be propping up failing ideas or those that are not economically viable and should welcome responsible Foreign Direct Investment too.

In other words, governments can be either an enabler or an obstacle. In the UK, our government's aim – obviously – is to be such an enabler so that businesses grow and flourish. We know that is a declared aim of the new government here in Ghana too; and we are impressed by their early measures and plans in this regard.

Entrepreneurs and the companies they create are so economy vital. In the UK around 40% of tax is from SMEs. SME's generate around 80% of employment.

There are over 5 million companies in the UK, the vast majority of them SMEs, employing over 15.5 million people and with a combined annual turnover of £1.8 trillion or over 2 trillion US dollars. In Ghana, the comparative figures are currently so very much smaller. So, the potential of Ghana's SME industry is therefore still significantly that – potential.

But self-dependent small businesses have the potential to grow into major new industries for Ghana. Industries that aren't necessarily tied to fluctuating commodity prices. Industries that create jobs. Jobs that could transform the lives of the growing number of highly educated people in Ghana who have access to too few employment opportunities.

Across the British High Commission we work with government, private industry and civil society to create mutual opportunities for the UK and Ghana to flourish. Our aim is to support Small and Medium scale Enterprises and Ghanaian entrepreneurs in general to overcome barriers to growth and build competitive businesses in Ghana.

The UK is supporting enterprise growth in Ghana in many ways. Our Department for International Development – or DFID – run a range of economic development programmes including ENGINE, a £4 million programme which offers advisory and financial services to over 1,000 Ghanaian businesses. This is done in a transparent and market led way where only the most competitive are supported. And we've had some stunning successes already, such as Boomers Bikes, producing bamboo bikes in Mampong near Kumasi and employing 40 people. Now these Ghanaian bamboo bicycles already being exported to the European market.

And there are many other success stories under this ENGINE programme: Mansuki Ghana Limited and Tiwajo Industry Ltd both manufacture cosmetic products using agriculture biomass and other raw materials such cocoa husk and shea butter here in Accra and now employ 40 people between them, having employed only a third of that number when they joined our programme.

Ritadams Ventures in Tamale similarly manufactures cosmetic products for the local market but has just secured export orders from Europe and other African countries, employing 46 people, compared to just 3 when it joined the DFID programme in 2014. And: America Continental Automobile Ltd joined the ENGINE programme in 2015, with a sales revenue of GHC 167,000 and employing 13 people. Now just 18 months later its revenue is GHC1,400,000 and it employs 28 people right here in Accra.

So, real success and genuine new employment here in Ghana thanks to British Government seed money.

We are also helping to increase the incomes of poor farmers and small-scale rural entrepreneurs with a focus on improving how agriculture markets work; and we recently launched an investment fund which will provide much needed long term finance and hands-on management support for small agricultural businesses in the north of Ghana.

DFID's Business Enabling Environment Programme (BEEP) is providing £10 million during the period 2015-2018 to help improve the business enabling environment in Ghana. It also directly complements the Government's ambitious

export strategy. This funding supports targeted institutions within the Government of Ghana to enact reforms, while building an evidence base for such reform through independent analysis and research.

And we support a Public-Private Dialogue to enhance the demand for and the effectiveness of reform, focusing on supporting reforms to reduce red tape, promote competition, strengthen security of land and other property rights, improve access to commercial justice, and strengthen the functioning of institutions charged with regulating markets and maintaining professional standards. This is an important issue for all businesses but in particular for small businesses who should not have to wait for long periods of times to obtain permits or certificates. Small businesses simply cannot afford to have their small and expensive capital locked up at ports or idle because a license has not been granted. The cost is that they either fold up, reduce in size or at least stop expanding their businesses, meaning fewer jobs; or that they operate informally, meaning less tax revenue for government.

Separately, our CapitalSME project helps support Ghanaian SMEs who are ready to scale up raise capital by providing them with information about Ghana's alternative stock market and support to those ready to list.

Meanwhile, the British Council Young Creative Entrepreneurs programme celebrates entrepreneurial leaders in the creative and cultural industries. And their Blazing Trails project supports young entrepreneurs interested in developing social enterprises, including through their new skills hub at the British Council office here in Accra.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Foreign Direct Investment is a very important part of the equation as no country in the world has all the capital to grow and stimulate its economy alone. In continuing to welcome FDI, we know that Government of Ghana is well aware that investors have a wide and competitive global choice as to where they invest. UK and other companies will invest here if the conditions are favourable. If they are not, they will invest elsewhere instead. But, in investing here, we will also always encourage UK firms operating in Ghana also to create opportunities for Ghanaian entrepreneurs in their supply chains by creating jobs, and by raising local skills and training opportunities for professionals and ancillary workers.

And that already happens. British entrepreneurs, such as Anthony Pile, founder of Blue Skies, are providing thousands of direct jobs here in Ghana. Indeed, by some measures, Blue Skies, which exports several tons of fruit products to the UK from Ghana every day, is already the single largest private sector employer in the whole of Ghana. However, the fact that a company like Blue Skies can be the largest private sector employer with under 3,000 direct employees in a country of 28 million people also shows how far there still is to go here in terms of private sector business expansion.

You can expect the UK High Commission here and our diplomatic missions throughout this continent to continue being a key advocate with the national governments to improve the investment climate for the private sector. We know

that entrepreneurs here still face many challenges in establishing thriving businesses. That is true everywhere of course.

To put things in perspective: around 400,000 new businesses start-up in the UK annually, but one-third of start-ups cease trading within three years. It's not a lack of customers or products that typically destroys a business – most often it's a simple lack of cash. But there are also normal competitive factors which mean that only the best can survive – those with the best ideas and who most understand their markets: that is normal economics. But where the obstacles entrepreneurs face are the results of bureaucracy or poor public policy, it is the duty of governments to do something about it, starting by managing the macro-economy as optimally as possible so that the overall economic environment is as favourable as it can be.

When we look at the problems which entrepreneurs face here in Ghana, credit is obviously a major problem with commercial interest rates currently amongst the world's highest, at often well over 20%. And that's if you have any access to credit in the first place of course. At the same time, inflation remains stubbornly high, though finally falling and at around 13% now. Hence the importance of good overall stewardship of the national economy, so that these key indicators fall as low as possible.

But we know there are other plenty of other obstacles too: unstable, sometimes unpredictable power supply; over-regulation; inconsistently applied legislation and tax rules; and of course corruption.

Corruption is often posited as a moral issue – and it should be. After all, corruption is a long, sophisticated word for which a much shorter, clearer word more than adequately substitutes – namely, theft. If someone steals from the state budget, or uses their state position to enrich themselves, then it is the wider population that loses out, as money meant to benefit the whole society ends up benefitting just a few.

But corruption is also a matter of simple economic efficiency: if an entrepreneur has to pay government officials more than officially published rates to obtain licenses; to settle a land dispute or another issue in the courts; or to win a public sector tender – assuming of course that those state tenders are not single sourced to “friends” – then that entrepreneur will have less to invest in his or her own business expansion and personnel. Put another way, entrepreneurs who have to contend with engrained corruption end up employing fewer people, so someone who could have been employed remains unemployed, while someone employed by the State or in a position of political influence grows rich at their expense. Corruption is a serious issue which merits more open public discussion and disclosure, rather than being placed in the ‘too difficult’ tray of allegedly intractable issues. In that regard, we are greatly encouraged by the determination of HE The President to tackle this entrenched curse in the economy and in wider society.

Ladies and Gentlemen The UK's vision is to work in partnership with African countries and institutions to achieve a secure, self-financed and timely exit from poverty that put them beyond aid. But we also know that no poor country

ever became prosperous through aid. What made previously poor countries rich is a private sector set free to invest, employ people and expand. Look at South Korea, Singapore or where I was previously posted in Chile. The examples are numerous. It is an expanding private sector, backed by sensible public investment, most particularly in education and infrastructure – and based on the rule of law, and on efficient and clean government – that best promotes economic growth and prosperity for all. In that regard, I am pleased to say that we are having positive engagement with the Government – in particular the Minister of Trade and Minister of Business Development who are here – with credible steps already in place by Government to address some of these issues in the short to medium term.

In conclusion, I hope I have managed to make the case this morning that the UK's goal is to help African countries develop and for their people, especially young people, to meet their aspirations for security, opportunity, accountability and prosperity. Inclusive economic growth is core to achieving this vision, as no country in history has ever been able to eradicate poverty without sustained economic growth.

Within that, we firmly believe in the importance of entrepreneurship as a motor of growth and employment creation in both developed and developing economies alike; and in the role of governments in enabling entrepreneurs to succeed by promoting a business-friendly environment both domestically and through the export market.

Sometimes, however, the very best thing governments can do for entrepreneurs like you is – to simply to get out of their way.

In the UK, as a government, we are supporting our entrepreneurs domestically and internationally, and we are delighted to also be able to support entrepreneurs here in Ghana and throughout this continent. Entrepreneurs – you gathered here today – represent the best hope for a bright, prosperous, economically stable future: we wish you well in developing your own companies for the social good of all your compatriots.

Thank you.

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## **Press release: More than 100 housing estates receive regeneration cash boost**

More than 100 housing estates across the country are set to benefit from a significant investment to kick-start their regeneration, the Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has announced today (24 March 2017).

From Gateshead to Plymouth, the £32 million Estate Regeneration Fund will be

distributed to local authorities and housing associations across England to speed up the building of thousands of new homes.

After successful engagement with local communities, a total of 105 estates will benefit from the funding, to be used to speed up regeneration schemes in their early stages. It will also help address problems that hold up projects and give local authorities access to skills to ensure high-quality regeneration.

In Birmingham, the money will be used to start discussions with local communities and ensure the Meadway regeneration creates a place local residents are proud of. In Milton Keynes it will be used to kick start the regeneration of 6 estates to provide thousands of new homes.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

For too long a number of housing estates across the country have been areas characterised by low-quality homes and high social deprivation.

This government is determined to have a housing market that works for everyone. That's why we're turbocharging the regeneration of these rundown estates, so they can thrive as communities.

Housing and Planning Minister Gavin Barwell said:

Our housing white paper set out ambitious proposals to help fix the broken housing market and to encourage good design.

Estates regeneration must be locally-led, and this £32 million fund will help breathe new life into estates throughout the country. It will help more ordinary working people have the security of a decent place to live.

Reforms in the recently published [housing white paper](#) set out the government's bold new plans to build more homes across England. This funding will help provide thousands of new homes from the carefully planned redesign of estates.

Announced last year, the [Estate Regeneration Strategy](#) offered a blueprint for regenerating estates, providing advice and guidance to help improve and speed up development.

In addition to the £32 million released, £140 million in loan funding is available over the length of this Parliament to encourage investment in regeneration from the private sector to help build places that work for everyone.

Local authorities and housing associations submitted bids for the funding.

Bids were assessed by a joint panel of the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Homes and Communities Agency.

The £140 million loan fund was initially announced last year, and is designed to cover costs such as land assembly, leaseholder buy-outs, re-housing costs, demolition, and preparatory construction works.

The Estates Regeneration Advisory Panel, co-chaired by the Housing Minister and Lord Heseltine met 6 times during 2016 to help develop the [Estate Regeneration National Strategy](#).

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## **News story: Alcohol industry updating the health information on its labels**

The alcohol industry is updating the health information on its labels, to reflect the latest scientific evidence.

The Department of Health worked closely with industry on the [guidance for this labelling](#), to better reflect the latest advice on alcohol published by the UK Chief Medical Officers last year.

Public Health Minister Nicola Blackwood said:

The right to enjoy a drink responsibly is part of our national culture, and we want to ensure that adults have clear information in order to make informed choices.

This change is industry-led, and I welcome this commitment to giving clear and factual information to consumers.

[The UK Chief Medical Officers' low-risk alcohol guidelines](#), released in 2016, aim to help people understand the risks alcohol may pose to their health, as part of the Government's common sense approach to this issue.

They are based on the latest scientific information and represent the most comprehensive review of the evidence on alcohol in 20 years.

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# Press release: Oxford flood alleviation scheme uncovers a piece of the city's history

The findings include ancient road surfaces, culverts, pottery, and other objects which have helped date an ancient crossing point of the River Thames and its tributaries, at what is now known as Old Abingdon Road.

The Oxford flood alleviation scheme project team commissioned the archaeological study as part of the detailed design for the scheme. Part of the proposed scheme is to construct new culverts to carry flood water beneath the road. These investigations have enabled the team to carefully plan where the new culverts will go to minimise impact on the ancient structures lying beneath.

The route of the Old Abingdon Road is thought to be part of a stone or earth causeway known as Grandpont, which also includes Folly Bridge, built by Robert d'Oilly who built Oxford Castle in 1071. Grandpont had over 30 different arches or culverts which crossed the rivers, streams and marshes in the area, with over 7 of these thought to be beneath the Old Abingdon Road. The causeway may have dated from the Saxon period as there is evidence of 2 fords in this area from that time (source: [Historic England](#)).

From past investigations in this area it is believed that there were culverts beneath the road dating from Norman (1066 to 1154) and later medieval (12th to late 15th century) times. The culverts were designated 'scheduled monuments' in October 2012. Our findings suggest there are more culverts along this road.

Joanna Larmour, Project Director, said:

Our archaeologists found that as the ground was quite compacted beneath the various road surfaces, they had to use hand digging tools to complete their investigations.

We found some great pieces, including pottery shards from a medieval jug, a horseshoe from the late 17th Century to 18th century and most importantly for us, evidence of ancient culverts. These all help us understand just how long this has been a river crossing and a route into Oxford.

The investigation found a total of 6 pottery shards, 4 pieces of clay tobacco pipe, 2 pieces of ceramic building material, 6 iron finds including nails, a horseshoe, a connecting piece from a harness, 7 pieces of glass from a post-medieval bottle or flask, and a window pane.

These were all hidden amongst a series of medieval and post-medieval road



surfaces which the team had to break through to get to the oldest features underneath.

In addition, the investigations found some structural features including stone kerb, a roadside ditch likely to be from the 12th Century, and a culvert, now demolished, which is likely to be Norman or Medieval similar to the known, scheduled culverts.

From these finds and using existing historical knowledge, we can build up quite a picture of life in this area. The type of soils and gravels in this area suggest that it had firmer soil deposits than the rest of the floodplain, and indicate why it was chosen as a suitable crossing point of the River Thames. The medieval causeway was probably cambered, with drainage ditches either side carrying run off into the streams of the Thames that ran beneath the causeway in a stone culvert. The other culverts in this area have a raised roof, and if this culvert had the same, the causeway would have had a hump-back at this point. From the artefacts found, we know that the route has been used as a crossing from medieval times, up to the present day.

In the late 17th to 18th centuries, the route underwent a major rebuild, which we can tell from the deposits and material that we found. It is possible that this is when our culvert was demolished. The surfaces from this time lie within a series of kerb stones.

The Oxford flood alleviation scheme project team have shared these finds with Oxford City and County Archaeologists as well as Historic England (due to their responsibility for scheduled ancient monuments). They will follow this work up with more archaeological investigations in different locations in the scheme area, which will be completed over the coming months.

Catherine Grindey, Senior Archaeologist for the Environment Agency, said:

From our perspective, the archaeological evaluation was a great success. We have had many questions answered and have better information on which to base our plans.

This knowledge means that the team can finalise the scheme design in the Old Abingdon Road area, and ensure it has minimal impact on the history beneath the road.

The detailed design of the scheme will be shared at a public consultation from 5 May to 6 June 2017, which will be run both online and at a series of 4 events in the scheme area:

- 2pm to 8pm, Thursday 11 May 2017 at West Oxford Community Centre, OX2 0BT
- 2pm to 8pm, Friday 12 May 2017 at South Oxford Community Centre, OX1 4RP
- 2pm to 8pm, Monday 15 May 2017 at Oxford Deaf and Hard of Hearing Centre, OX1 1RL
- 2pm to 8pm, Thursday 18 May 2017 at St Luke's Church, OX1 4XB

The consultation will also give local communities the opportunity to give feedback about some of the scheme features they have told us they are most interested in, such as the new bridges we will be installing, footpath furniture and signage.

Keep up-to-date with the scheme via the [Oxford flood scheme webpage](#), via our [Facebook page](#), on [Twitter](#) and via our scheme newsletter. If you would like to sign up for our newsletter, please email [oxfordscheme@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:oxfordscheme@environment-agency.gov.uk).

The Oxford flood alleviation scheme is a partnership project involving the Environment Agency, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, Vale of White Horse Council, Oxford Flood Alliance, The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, University of Oxford, Thames Water and Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

The scheme will involve lowering parts of the floodplain and widening some of the rivers and streams that run through it, to create more space for floodwater, and reduce flood risk to the city. It is currently estimated to cost £120 million.

For media enquiries Mon-Friday 9am to 5pm please call 03708 506 506. After this time, please call the Duty Communications Officer on 0800 141 2743.

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## **Press release: Report 05/2017: Near miss between a train and a track worker at Shawford**

RAIB has today released its report into a near miss between a train and a track worker at Shawford on 24 June 2016.

### **Summary**

At 12:22 hrs on 24 June 2016, a train travelling at about 85 mph (137 km/h) narrowly missed striking a track worker near Shawford station, Hampshire. The track worker and a controller of site safety (COSS) had gone onto the railway to locate a reported rail defect. The track worker was not injured but was badly shaken by the incident. After making an emergency stop, the train driver reported the incident and was fit to continue his journey.

The immediate cause was that the track worker had become distracted while he was standing on a line on which trains were running. This happened because there was a breakdown in safety discipline and vigilance when the COSS and track worker went onto the railway. Firstly, they did not implement the

required safe system of work for going onto the railway at Shawford. Secondly, the track worker crossed the railway without the permission of the COSS. Thirdly, the track worker was distracted and stopped on an open line when crossing back. The RAIB found a similar breakdown in safety discipline and vigilance when it investigated a fatal accident at Newark North Gate (report 01/2015). It is probable that the track worker's alertness and decision making were affected by fatigue, because he had slept in his car all week to avoid making long journeys to and from home each day. A possible underlying factor was that the rail testing and lubrication section within the Network Rail delivery unit involved was not resilient to any loss of resources or sudden increase in workload. Although not causal to the incident, the RAIB also observed that the way in which the section carried out safe system of work planning for its staff was not compliant with Network Rail's processes, and neither the COSS nor the track worker reported their involvement in the incident at the time.

## **Recommendations**

In addition to a previous recommendation and learning point from the Newark North Gate accident, which also address the key issue of the breakdown in safety discipline and vigilance in this incident, the RAIB has made three new recommendations, addressed to Network Rail. The first relates to the management of fatigue for staff needing to make long journeys before and after a shift. The second relates to making the rail testing and lubrication section of the delivery unit more able to accommodate a short-term loss of resource and peaks in workload. The third recommendation calls for Network Rail to consider the reasons why its management arrangements on Wessex Route did not detect and rectify the non-compliances with the processes for managing the safety of people working on or near the line. The investigation also identified six learning points about: reminding staff of the importance of following existing rules and procedures; how the early use of the train's horn by drivers to give an urgent warning can avert an accident if track workers on their line do not acknowledge the first horn warning; and the timely reporting of operational incidents.

## **Notes to editors**

1. The sole purpose of RAIB investigations is to prevent future accidents and incidents and improve railway safety. RAIB does not establish blame, liability or carry out prosecutions.
2. RAIB operates, as far as possible, in an open and transparent manner. While our investigations are completely independent of the railway industry, we do maintain close liaison with railway companies and if we discover matters that may affect the safety of the railway, we make sure that information about them is circulated to the right people as soon as possible, and certainly long before publication of our final report.
3. For media enquiries, please call 01932 440015.

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