

SMEs across UK voice support for easier transatlantic trade

Opportunities to help small businesses across the UK overcome barriers to transatlantic trade and growth have been outlined in a new report produced by leading US-UK trade association BritishAmerican Business (BAB).

BAB, in partnership with the Department for International Trade, hosted four virtual roundtables bringing together leaders from over 60 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) across London and the South of England, the Midlands, the North of England and Scotland, to hear their success stories and help address the challenges they face.

The resulting report, entitled 'Making a Difference', today reveals three priority areas where the government can work with SMEs to encourage greater transatlantic trade and investment as part of its ongoing work to support SMEs across the UK:

- Lower barriers to trade and investment by aligning standards and regulations.
- Resolve trade disputes and enable easier business travel across the Atlantic.
- Boost on-the-ground, practical support to businesses, such as sourcing trusted suppliers or navigating complex tax requirements.

Making up 99% of all businesses in the UK, generating £2.2 trillion of income and employing 16.6 million people, SMEs are the backbone of the UK economy. As the report shows, however, they are often hit the hardest by red tape and high operating costs.

For example, Stoke-on-Trent-based ceramics manufacturer Steelite International currently faces 25.5% tariffs on its US exports, despite facing little domestic competition in the US. TradingHub, a data analytics firm in London, revealed completing tax registration was excessively complex, time-consuming and expensive, especially when operating in more than one US state.

The UK government is committed to creating more opportunities for SMEs to trade with partners around the world as it moves forward with its independent trade policy agenda, and negotiations are already underway with the US, Australia and New Zealand. In addition to ongoing trade negotiations, DIT has a system of support ready to help SMEs access the advice they need:

- A network of around 300 International Trade Advisors supports UK businesses to export and grow their business internationally.
- In December 2020 DIT set up a £38m Internationalisation Fund for SMEs in England to help 7,600 businesses grow their overseas trading.
- UK Export Finance also has a network across the UK who provide specialist support on trade and export finance, particularly SMEs.

Negotiations on a trade deal with the US are ongoing, and both sides have now reached broad agreement on a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) chapter. A UK-US SME chapter will provide additional support by boosting transparency and making it easier for SMEs to trade, for example by establishing new measures on information sharing.

SMEs could also benefit from measures across the rest of a UK-US FTA, on customs and trade facilitation, business mobility, and digital trade, for example, and we are now focusing on SME-friendly provisions throughout the agreement.

Minister of State for Trade Policy Greg Hands said:

Small businesses are at the heart of the government's trade agenda as it moves forward as an independent trading nation. We've already made good progress on a UK-US trade deal, – the dedicated SME chapter will make it easier for them to sell goods to the US and make the most of transatlantic opportunities.

From Stoke-on-Trent Ceramics, through world leading medical treatment technology from Huddersfield, to Isle of Wight lifejackets – we are committed to a deal that works for UK producers and consumers, and ensuring it works to the advantage of SMEs long into the future.

After a challenging 2020 I want to thank the SMEs who took part in this research and gave us such valuable insight into how we can use our independent trade policy to ensure we build back better from the economic impact of Coronavirus.

BritishAmerican Business Chief Executive Duncan Edwards said:

BAB is proud to be working closely in partnership with Minister Hands and our colleagues at the Department for International Trade to deliver this roadshow and the Making a Difference report. The feedback we received from small businesses across the UK on what they would like to see from a future UK-U.S. Free Trade Agreement reflects the opportunities the transatlantic economic corridor offers, and the deep rooted strength of UK-US relations.

BritishAmerican Business Project Lead Emanuel Adam said:

This initiative represents a continuation of yearlong efforts made by BAB and policy makers to place the needs and interests of growing businesses at the heart of trade policy. The report not only showcases how government can put this into action; it also reflects that the UK Government has already embraced the 'triangle of action and support' that the report recommends. We congratulate

the UK Government in its approach and look forward to doing our part so that more businesses can turn their transatlantic ambitions into reality.

Notes to editors:

- You can view the full report here: [Making a Difference](#)
- The UK and US have concluded five rounds of negotiations, having agreed a significant proportion of the legal text across multiple chapters of the trade agreement.
- While 230,000 SMEs export goods and services globally, only 13% currently export to the US.

[Debenhams PLC: information for creditors and interested parties](#)

News story

Information for creditors and interested parties of Debenhams PLC in liquidation.



On 25 January 2021, a winding up order was made against Debenhams PLC (Company number: 05448421) and the court appointed the Official Receiver as liquidator.

Debenhams PLC was formerly the holding company for the Debenhams retail group but at the date of liquidation it had no active operations or employees.

The trading arms of the retailer, Debenhams Retail Limited (00083395) and Debenhams Properties Limited (00344823), remain in administration. The administrators for both companies are Geoffrey Paul Rowley and Alastair Rex Massey of FRP Advisory and they can be contacted via:

cp.london@frpadvisory.com; 020 3005 4000.

Information for creditors

You will need to [register as a creditor](#) in the liquidation if:

- you have not been paid for goods or services you've supplied to Debenhams PLC (in liquidation)
- you have paid Debenhams PLC (in liquidation) for goods or services that you have not received

To register as a creditor you will need to complete a [Proof of Debt form](#) which you should then email ORLondonSouthend@insolvency.gov.uk

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[Alister Jack responds to January Labour Market Statistics](#)

News story

Scottish Secretary responds to the latest ONS employment figures



Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

Today's figures show signs of resilience in Scotland during the Autumn months, however we continue to live in challenging times.

Throughout the pandemic, the UK Government has taken quick and decisive action to protect jobs and support businesses, providing more than £280 billion in support including the furlough scheme, business loans and self-employed income support.

For those looking for work our Plan for Jobs is delivering skills development and creating new jobs through Kickstart for young

people, sector work programmes and recruitment of thousands of work coaches.

This direct support is on top of £8.6 billion additional funding given to the Scottish Government.

We are also looking ahead to a way out of the pandemic, securing and paying for vaccines and taking steps to kick start economic recovery and create new jobs. In Scotland this includes City and Region Growth Deals, Freeports, a new Shared Prosperity Fund and investing in our broadband, research and defence sectors.

Background

- The UK Government furlough scheme, paying 80 per cent of wages, will run until the end of April. The self-employed support scheme has also been extended to the end of March and will increase from 55% to 80% of average profits – up to £7,500. At their peak in the summer our furlough and self-employed support schemes were supporting more than 930,000 jobs in Scotland.
- More than 90,000 businesses in Scotland have been supported from UK Government business loans worth £3.4 billion.
- The UK Government is investing billions to help people of all ages back into work, including our £2 billion Kickstart scheme for young people, expansion of sector work experience programmes and recruitment of thousands of Work Coaches in Jobcentres.
- The UK Government has provided billions in extra funding for the welfare system for those unable to access other forms of support.
- The UK Government continues to provide the bulk of covid testing in Scotland and has moved quickly to buy vaccines, securing 367 million doses from seven developers with Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines currently being rolled out across the UK.
- This support is on top of an additional £8.6 billion upfront funding given to the Scottish Government this financial year for their covid response.

UK in Cameroon COVID-19 Relief Caravan

World news story

The British High Commission Yaounde leads the British Business Community in Cameroon to reach out to vulnerable communities with COVID-19 preventive equipment.



In solidarity with the Government of Cameroon's efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic in the country, the British High Commission in Yaounde led the British Business Community in Cameroon on a distribution campaign dubbed, "UK in Cameroon COVID-19 Relief Caravan". The purpose was to handover personal protective equipment (PPE), to over 10,000 persons within semi-urban and rural populations, with focus on vulnerable communities, women and persons living with disability.

This outreach aimed at building resilience in communities through an inclusive strategy of community mobilisation, donation of personal preventive equipment and sensitising/ educating communities in an effort to support the national strategy to combat the spread of COVID-19 in Cameroon.

The British High Commissioner to Cameroon, Rowan Laxton said:

The coronavirus pandemic is a global public health emergency. The disease is life-threatening for people of all ages everywhere in the world. To help save lives and provide support, the UK Government and the British Business Community in Cameroon, together with our implementation partner, Local Youth Corner (LOYOC), is organising a nationwide COVID-19 Relief Caravan.

The Caravan will reach out to some semi-urban and rural areas in the country and touch persons with disabilities. Women and girls will be particularly targeted. We hope the Caravan will also raise awareness on the importance of inclusion and solidarity towards those experiencing great difficulty in these trying times. Please stay safe!

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[Somalia: call for bids for UK Climate Diplomacy Fund](#)

Somalia is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change. The negative effects of climate change are already being felt across the country and are expected to get worse in the future. In the past 30 years, Somalia has suffered 8 major droughts that have caused huge human and economic losses. The Drought Impact Needs Assessment (DINA) in 2018, conducted by the Somali government, found more than USD 3 billion damages or losses, equivalent to 50% of Somalia's GDP. These impacts have been particularly felt by the poorest and most vulnerable. It is therefore imperative that Somalia takes concerted action to address climate change.

The Climate Diplomacy Fund is a new centrally-managed UK government fund with the aim of building the conditions for an ambitious negotiated outcome at COP26 and delivering Country Implementation Plans. In Somalia, this will support either one or both of the two projects detailed below, to address climate change-related challenges facing Somalia.

Requirements

We will consider applications for funding for either one or both of the below proposals. Grants requested under this call must be for a maximum of US\$15,000 (fifteen thousand US dollars).

Applications must be submitted in English. The project proposals will be shortlisted and approved by the British Embassy. To apply for funding,

interested organisations must submit a project proposal, activity based budget form and due diligence form (please see attached) to the British Embassy. This will provide the basic information required to enable the Embassy to make an assessment on whether or not the proposal will be shortlisted.

All project proposals must clearly demonstrate how they:

- support the programme priorities;
- deliver value for money (VfM).

The British Embassy Mogadishu will be responsible for supervision and monitoring of this project to ensure it meets its intended objectives.

Assessment

Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Alignment with the below project description and priorities
- Outcomes are achievable within the funding period
- Project design includes clear monitoring and evaluation procedures
- Risk and financial accountability procedures (and ability to meet strict due diligence requirements)
- Overall value for money (VfM)

Process:

1. Project proposals must be received by midnight on Sunday, 7 February 2021. Late proposals will not be considered.
2. Proposals must be submitted using the attached forms only (Project Proposal, Activity Based Budget and Due Diligence Forms). The Project Proposal Form must not exceed 5 pages in length.
3. Proposals must be submitted to [Juliet Field](#) and [Charlotte Dixon](#).
4. Only project proposals selected for further consideration will be notified by Friday, 12 February 2021.
5. The British Embassy aims to sign grant agreements with successful project implementers by the end of February.

Documents

[Project Proposal Form](#) (ODT, 45.4KB)

[Activity Based Budget Template](#) (ODS, 10.3KB)

[Due Diligence Assessment Questions](#) (ODT, 10.4KB)

Deadline for submitting project bids: Sunday, 7 February 2021.

Only successful bidders will be contacted.