

[Press release: Welsh SMEs urged to seize new UK government backed export finance opportunity](#)

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns will call on Welsh SMEs to capitalise on new UK Government backed finance to help gain access to global growth markets when he attends the Fast Growth 50 awards this evening (20 October 2017).

Mr Cairns will deliver a keynote speech at the 19th Fast Growth 50 gala dinner in Cardiff, where the best of Welsh entrepreneurship and the fastest growing businesses in Wales will be showcased.

The Secretary of State will highlight a new £2million UK Export Finance (UKEF) partnership with five High Street banks designed to enable SMEs in Wales to access support directly from their bank in seconds, without the need to apply separately.

The fund will help businesses like those on the Fast Growth 50 list, become part of major export contracts around the world.

Since its inception in 1999, the 551 companies that have featured on the Fast Growth 50 lists have so far created over 34,000 jobs and generated an estimated £18 billion for the Welsh economy.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

The Fast Growth 50 ceremony is a key date in the Welsh business calendar. It presents a welcome opportunity to reflect over the year that has passed, and to celebrate the many successes that businesses have worked tirelessly to create.

So many of the companies that have decorated the FG50 rosters over the years are now delivering services and exporting their products right around the globe.

The UK Government wants to do more to ensure Welsh businesses take advantage of every opportunity available to them to grow and expand into new markets.

The support provided by UK Export Finance is a valuable resource for businesses throughout the whole of the UK, Wales included. Unleashing the potential of companies such as those we will celebrate this evening will be key to ensuring the Welsh economy continues to prosper.

Wales is already an exporting nation. There are currently more than 3,800

businesses in Wales that export, with a combined value of £13 billion in the first quarter of 2017. Wales is also an attractive place for inward investment, with latest figures showing that 85 foreign direct investment projects were secured in Wales, creating 2,581 new jobs and safeguarding almost 9,000 more.

The Secretary of State for Wales has recently written to over 26,000 Welsh businesses identified as potential exporters including a copy to the Wales Export Guide. The Wales specific guide sets out the full range of support available to Welsh businesses from the UK Government and contains inspiring stories of companies based in Wales that are successfully exporting. You can read the guide online [here](#).

Notes to editors

- For further information on the Fast Growth 50 awards, [visit their website](#)
- Read more about the UK Export Finance fund [here](#)

[News story: Government announces fund to revolutionise airport screening](#)

Holidaymakers could be spared the hassle of removing laptops and tablets from hand-luggage when passing through airport security, as government seeks to revolutionise aviation screening.

The government is today (20 October 2017) announcing a £3 million fund to support innovative research to develop new ways of detecting explosive devices concealed in electrical items.

Companies and universities are invited to bid for money by submitting proposals for original research in the field of concealed explosives. And new methods of detecting whether electrical items have been tampered with or appear irregular are also of interest.

The proposals can focus on either screening electrical items within bags at an airport's central search area, or the use of more portable technology to screen items at other points in the passenger journey.

Once ready for commercial use, the new technologies will enhance our ability to prevent terrorist attacks on aviation while improving the experience of passengers.

Security Minister, Ben Wallace said:

Aviation security is a government priority and one with an ever changing threat landscape.

We need to embrace and encourage the talent from industry that will allow us to stay several steps ahead of those who wish us harm.

Lord Callanan, Minister for Aviation said:

The UK has always been at the forefront of research and development in the field of aviation security.

The safety and security of the travelling public will always be our top priority but we understand that this can sometimes be inconvenient for passengers – especially families with young children.

As technology improves we want to make the aviation experience quicker and easier for all holidaymakers.

The fund is being run as part of a wider multi-million pound initiative to deliver a step change in aviation security through Future Aviation Security Solutions (FASS).

FASS, a joint Department for Transport and Home Office programme, is working closely with industry partners to stimulate and fund research into a broad range of potential security innovations from initial concepts through to commercial products.

The full criteria for this open fund can be found on the [Defence and Security Accelerator \(DASA\) website](#).

This is just one of the routes to funding that FASS is offering to the research and technology community. FASS also encourages applications for research funding via [DASA's Open Call for Innovation](#). This funding mechanism is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and evaluates ideas, products and services from anywhere in the UK or abroad.

FASS has already issued £1.64 million funding to projects aimed at improving the screening of passengers, their luggage and cargo.

Promising results were demonstrated at an event in September (2017), with phase 2 of this research due to commence shortly.

[Press release: The British army women's football team visits Kuwait](#)

The British army women's football team visited Kuwait on 16-19 October as part of a regional tour

The British army women's football team visited Kuwait on 16-19 October as part of a regional tour which also includes UAE, Bahrain and Qatar. They played a match with the Kuwaiti national women's football team. They also conducted a series of community outreach events, including football and fitness coaching sessions at schools to raise awareness of the benefits of sport and promote positive opportunities for women in sports related activities.

The British Ambassador held a Great branded reception in his house for the British and Kuwaiti teams as well as senior officials from Kuwait Football Association. The visit helped in strengthening sports and cultural ties between the youth in both countries. It also reflected UK's commitment to see more women in sport. The visit also helped to kick start Kuwaiti women's football . The media coverage of the visit both on social media and mainstream media was substantive with many positive comments .

[Speech: Nick Gibb: The importance of knowledge-based education](#)

It has been a pleasure to work with the Association of Schools and College Leaders (ASCL) over the years as Minister of State for Education. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Malcolm Trobe for all of the work he did as interim General Secretary, and Deputy General Secretary before that. It has been a pleasure to work with him and I look forward to working with Geoff Barton in the years ahead.

The way the curriculum is discussed in this country has changed dramatically over the last 10 years. In 2007, the previous government launched a national curriculum that had been stripped of knowledge content in favour of skills.

'[Could do Better](#)' – a review of the then National Curriculum carried out by Tim Oates in 2010 – found that the National Curriculum for England had been subjected to a protracted process of revision, with the 2007 reforms failing to adequately draw from emerging analysis of high-performing systems around the globe.

A change of government in 2010 prevented the [Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum](#) recommendations being brought in. This review argued that the primary national curriculum should place less emphasis on subject areas and a greater emphasis on so-called areas of learning and development:

- personal, social and emotional development
- communication, language and literacy
- problem solving, reasoning and numeracy
- knowledge and understanding of the world
- physical development
- creative development

This review of the primary curriculum drew on the example of Finland – still the doyenne of the international education circuit – which had moved away from emphasising knowledge just at the time it reached the summit of the international education league tables. The review described the Finnish position as follows:

Core content is described as activities and skills, rather than detailed subject-based content. This places the onus on the municipality, and more importantly on the school, to develop their curriculum to meet learners' needs as well as national expectations.

The Finnish curriculum also had seven cross-curricula themes:

- growth as a person
- cultural identity and internationalism
- media, skills and communication
- participatory citizenship and entrepreneurship
- responsibility for the environment, well-being and a sustainable future
- safety and traffic
- technology and the individual

The review drew on numerous other international examples of countries that have moved away from a traditional focus on knowledge and towards generic, cross-cutting skills. The romantic notion that teachers need not focus on knowledge and instead turn their attention to developing creativity or communication skills has gripped many countries around the world.

But as Gabriel Sahlgren argued in [Real Finnish Lessons](#), Finland's success – often a catalyst for skills-focused education reforms in other countries – is probably not explained by their more recent curriculum changes. These changes have been wrongly credited with education success, which is more likely to be due to Finland's traditional educational culture until that point at about the turn of the millennium when it changed.

Instead, Sahlgren argues persuasively that Finland's recent fall in performance – albeit from a very substantial height – is due to a movement away from this culture. In particular, the teacher-centred educational culture is being replaced by more pupil-led ways of working.

Thanks to the result of the 2010 general election, the English education system did not undergo further skills-focused reforms. Thanks to the work of Tim Oates and others, the new National Curriculum put knowledge back at the centre of schooling.

And knowledge is – rightly – back at the heart of discussions about the curriculum. '[The Question of Knowledge](#)' is an important pamphlet, making the case for a knowledge-rich curriculum with essays written by leading experts and headteachers. It is a significant contribution to our national education conversation.

In her foreword, Leora Cruddas describes the importance of E. D. Hirsch – someone who has deeply influenced my thinking on education:

The influence of E. D. Hirsch on educational thinking has been profound. At its heart is the idea that returning to a traditional, academic curriculum built on shared knowledge is the best way to achieve social justice in society. His work has also encouraged schools to focus on the concept of building cultural capital as a way to close the attainment gap.

A knowledge-based curriculum is too often tarred by opponents as entrenching social divisions, whereas a well taught knowledge-rich education is a driver of true meritocracy – as the headteachers who contributed to this pamphlet well know.

Dame Rachel De Souza – of the Parent and Teachers for Excellence (PTE) and the Inspiration Trust – understands the importance of knowledge as well as anyone:

Knowing those things – and not just recalling the bald facts but deeply understanding them – gives you an upper hand. It gives you the confidence to discuss a wide range of live topics with those around you, it gives you social status. It makes you part of the club that runs the world, and the inside track to change it.

And the pendulum swing towards knowledge and away from skills that has taken place over the past few years has been profound.

Academies and free schools have control over the curriculum they teach, and with the National Curriculum setting the standard high, innovative schools led by exceptional head teachers have developed world-class curricula. But shifting a school's focus towards a knowledge-based curriculum is not a short-term commitment, as Stuart Lock – the newly appointed headteacher of Bedford Free School – explains:

I think there is a real danger that developing a knowledge-based curriculum might be seen as “done” after a year or two. In reality,

we are just over one year into a long-term job. There is no moving on to another initiative; we are playing the long game. This is what is important in schools, and hence is our continued focus for development over the next few years. Everything is subservient to curricular questions. So pedagogy, assessment, tracking and qualifications must lead on from us developing further our understanding of what makes a pupil knowledgeable, and ensuring we get as close to that understanding as possible.

This view is shared by Luke Sparkes and Jenny Thompson of Dixons Trinity Academy, which achieved outstanding results this year. Their excellent free school serves a disadvantaged community in Bradford, and is one of a number of high performing free schools and academies that demonstrate that a stretching, knowledge-rich curriculum, a sensible approach to behaviour and evidence-informed teaching result in exceptional results for all pupils.

High performing free schools and academies are providing empirical evidence of what it is possible to achieve when teachers and headteachers – given freedom to innovate with their curriculum – pursue an evidence-based approach. The exceptional results achieved by schools such as King Solomon Academy, Mossbourne Community Academy and Harris Academy Battersea demonstrate that disadvantage need be no barrier to achieving academic excellence.

But the excuse-making has shifted. Increasingly, there is a chorus of nay-sayers who claim that only schools in London or the south east can achieve top results. Dixons Trinity Academy – along with the likes of the Tauheedul Education Trust – shows conclusively that geography need be no barrier to academic achievement.

According to Luke Sparkes and Jenny Thompson, the secret to success isn't the socio-economic make up of your cohort or the location of your school. For them:

A knowledge-based curriculum is about harnessing the power of cognitive science, identifying each marginal gain and acting upon it; having the humility to keep refining schemes of work, long term plans and generating better assessments.

Unlike the easy-sounding promise of generic skills, there is no doubt that developing a knowledge-rich curriculum is hard. But, unlike a skills-based curriculum, the rewards are worth it.

The West London Free School – run by Hywel Jones – is determined to provide a classical liberal education for all of its pupils. Too often, when considering what comprises a knowledge-rich curriculum, the arts are not given the prominence they deserve.

In tired arguments against the English Baccalaureate, opponents of the policy sometimes characterise proponents of a knowledge-rich curriculum as opposing

the development of human creativity and appreciation of the arts. Nothing could be further from the truth.

[Analysis published earlier this year](#) by the Department for Education showed that there is little correlation between the change in EBacc entry and the change in arts uptake in state-funded mainstream schools. The small correlation that does exist suggests that schools where EBacc entry has increased tend to have also seen an increase in their arts uptake.

In an earlier [NSN report](#) showing the same trends, the Culture Minister Matt Hancock and I wrote that there should be no battle between the arts and other subjects, but instead a battle for stronger, better, well-rounded education.

I am clear that the arts are a vital component of every pupil's education. Arts and culture are part of the fabric of our society and the government firmly believes that every child should be taught a high-quality arts curriculum.

At Hywel's school, music has pride of place in the curriculum – a school in which the vast majority of pupils are entered for the EBacc suite of core academic subjects. That is because music – along with other important arts subjects – has an important role to play in ensuring that pupils leave school with the cultural literacy they will need. And cultural literacy is a vital goal of a knowledge-rich curriculum, as Hywel explains in his essay:

We want children to leave our school with the confidence that comes from possessing a store of essential knowledge and the skills to use it. We believe that independence of mind, not compliance with socio-economic expectations, is the goal of a good education. We believe the main focus of our curriculum should be on that common body of knowledge that, until recently, all schools were expected to teach. This is the background knowledge taken for granted by writers who address the intellectually engaged layman – the shared frames of reference for public discourse in modern liberal democracies. Sometimes referred to as “intellectual capital”, at other times as “cultural literacy”, this storehouse of general knowledge will enable all our pupils to grow to their full stature. Passing on this knowledge, as well as the ability to use it wisely, is what we mean by a classical liberal education.

The implementation of a core-academic curriculum currently occupies less bandwidth in our national conversation, but it is no less important. And the deep subject knowledge of teachers is vital to the successful delivery of the curriculum, as Ian Baukham made clear in his excellence [review of modern foreign language pedagogy](#) for the Teaching Schools Council.

In his essay for ‘The Question of Knowledge’ he expertly dissects the key relationship between a teacher's subject and curriculum knowledge, and their appropriate choice of pedagogy. He writes:

The core knowledge pertaining to a foreign language when learnt by a novice consists of vocabulary (words, the lexis), grammar (the rules, syntax, morphology) and pronunciation and its link to the written form (phonics, phoneme-grapheme correspondences). It is essential that language teachers understand this and that their curriculum planning must sequence the teaching of this knowledge and its practice to automaticity in structured but decreasingly scaffolded contexts.

He also adds an excellent critique of the dominant pedagogical approaches that grip far too many modern foreign language classrooms in our country:

The modern languages equivalent of 'discovery learning' or 'child centred' approaches, which we now understand to be not only time inefficient but also unfairly to disadvantage those pupils with least educational capital, is a 'natural acquisition' approach to language learning. A 'natural acquisition' approach emphasises pupil exposure to the language, exaggerates the role of 'authentic resources' at the expense of properly constructed practice or selected material, and tends to favour pupils spotting grammatical patterns for themselves rather than being explicitly taught them. It tends to emphasise the 'skills' of linguistic communication, listening, reading, speaking and writing, over the 'knowledge' which is a prerequisite for these skills (grammar, vocabulary and phonics), and it often turns the skills into the content leading to an ill-conceived curriculum. Moreover, it tends to plan courses around thematic topics (so holidays, the environment and so on) and in so doing to de-emphasise grammatical progression towards a coherent whole picture, as in such a schema grammar is secondary to the 'topic' so is introduced in small disconnected chunks as pertaining to the thematic topic.

Again, this critique returns to the core purpose of the movement for a core academic curriculum for all, embodied by this pamphlet. The driving motive behind the reforms the government has embarked upon since 2010 is shared by this teacher-led movement; the desire for every child in this country to receive a world-class education that equips them with the knowledge they need, taught to them by expert teachers, using evidence-based approaches to teaching.

It is a simple aim, but realising this ambition requires and will require great effort and our continued joint endeavour. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who is here and everyone who contributes each and every day to this movement. Together, we are changing this country's education system for the better.

News story: Charity Fraud Awareness Week (23 – 27 October)

During fraud awareness week we'll be helping the charity sector become more resilient to fraud.

This is the second annual [Charity Fraud Awareness Week](#), aiming to help you increase resilience against fraud.

A group of around 40 charities, regulators, professional bodies and other stakeholders are joining forces to help combat fraud targeted against charities. The main aims of the week are to:

- raise awareness of the key risks affecting the sector
- promote and share good counter-fraud practices
- promote honesty and openness about fraud

How to get involved

We are encouraging the charity sector to get involved in Fraud Awareness Week, you can:

You can find out more about [getting involved](#) on the Fraud Advisory Panel website.

e-learning resources

The partners involved in Charity Fraud Week have developed a range of e-learning resources and webinars for the week.

These will be focused on specific risk areas from 9.30 am each day on the [Fraud Advisory Panel website](#):

Monday 23 October	Creating a counter fraud culture
Tuesday 24 October	Bribery and corruption
Wednesday 25 October	Cyber-fraud and identity fraud
Thursday 26 October	Fundraising fraud
Friday 27 October	Insider fraud and reporting fraud