

Press release: 'Brand Britannia' dominates the field at world's largest music, film and interactive media festival

Brit Award and Turner Prize winners, including Rag n' Bone Man, will join over 70 leading UK tech and digital businesses showcasing 'Brand UK' at the world's largest creative festival in Texas this weekend.

Over 1,500 UK delegates are traveling to Austin, Texas, as the UK is set to have the biggest international presence at the South by Southwest (SXSW) festival. Performers and businesses will look to break into lucrative US and international markets, supported by government and industry experts such as Mick Fleetwood of Fleetwood Mac.

The Department for International Trade is supporting UK businesses to attend including virtual reality technology firms from Northern Ireland, companies from London developing smart cities solutions and delegates from Birmingham, Manchester and Wales. They will be helped by DIT to build vital contacts with international investors, bringing in tens of millions of pounds to the UK economy.

International Trade Minister Greg Hands, who will visit the event this weekend, said:

Our huge presence here at South by Southwest, the biggest of any country outside the US, shows the strength of 'Brand Britannia' internationally. From what we watch and listen to, to the new technologies making our cities better places to live – UK companies and individuals are here demonstrating ground-breaking ideas that are leading the world.

Last year we helped boost new export opportunities for our home-grown businesses by around £10 million and with our biggest ever delegation, this year aims to be even bigger and better.

The festival, which last year welcomed 87,000 participants including former US President Barack Obama, is a huge opportunity for performers and businesses to attract investment into the UK's £90 billion creative industries.

Through government support in 2015 over 20 inward investment projects to the UK, and over £10 million in new export business wins for UK companies, was generated from SXSW. One company, Trackd, an app which allows musicians to

record and share music studio-style, secured a £1.25 million contract through DIT support at SXSW.

Also, successful artists such as Bastille, and The 1975 have used the festival to launch their US careers, selling millions of records in the country. DIT is the lead partner of the British Music Embassy, a venue in Austin where for the tenth year the department and UK music industry will showcase the best new British music artists. The British Music Embassy will host over 50 performances from artists such as Rag n' Bone Man and Yorkshire-based punk newcomers Life, who are included in the BBC Introducing showcase.

Throughout the week long event, DIT will host performers, businesses and investors for three days at the Great Britain House – a national pavilion showcasing the very best the UK has to offer in the tech, creative and music industries.

Events include:

- a Q&A session for British businesses with Mick Fleetwood: legendary drummer, band leader and founding member of world-renowned rock group, Fleetwood Mac
- sessions on the impact of AI on artists with Arts Council England and nine creative delegates, from an interactive dance company to a cutting-edge virtual orchestra
- workout sessions from global UK sports brand Sweaty Betty

One company attending SXSW with DIT support is Pavegen, based in London and Cambridge – demonstrating its revolutionary street paving which generates electricity from footsteps and captures data within the urban environment.

Laurence Kemball-Cook, founder and CEO of Pavegen said:

This year's South by Southwest is crucial for us, helping us to build vital relationships with some of our most important international customers. With the support of the Department for International Trade we're now closing some of our biggest deals yet, in the US and beyond.

Notes to editors

- Founded in 1987 in Austin, Texas, SXSW is best known for its conference and festivals that celebrate the convergence of the interactive, film and music industries
- SXSW 2016 featured more than 2,000 sessions including keynotes by President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama, plus dozens of visionaries at the forefront of their industries to more than 87,000 participants

Further information

[Security Council encourages Syrian parties to take part in UN-supported talks 'without preconditions'](#)

10 March 2017 – Looking forward to the early resumption of the United Nations-facilitated intra-Syrian negotiations, the Security Council today encouraged the Syrian parties to return to talks in good faith “and to engage constructively and without preconditions” on the agenda set out by UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura when they resume.

In a press statement that follows a briefing earlier this week from Mr. de Mistura, the Council welcomed the conclusion of a further round of intra-Syrian negotiations in Geneva on 3 March 2017. It further welcomed the Special Envoy’s announcement that the talks had yielded a clear agenda for future negotiations as indicated by resolution 2254 (2015), focusing on governance; constitutional issues; elections; and counter terrorism, security and confidence building measures.

The members of the Security Council reiterated their commitment to ensuring the inclusion of Syrian women in the political process through sustained consultation and dialogue and promoting their full and effective participation.

Recognizing that the continuation of political negotiations was made possible by the ceasefire developed through the Astana process, the Council called on the Syrian parties to fully implement the ceasefire, established pursuant to the arrangements of 29 December 2016, including ending ceasefire violations and ensuring humanitarian access.

The Council also encouraged the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) members to use their influence over the parties to help end violations, reduce violence, build confidence and ensure safe, sustained and unhindered humanitarian access in line with its resolution 2165 (2014).

The ISSG established respective taskforces on humanitarian aid delivery and a wider ceasefire. They have been meeting separately since early 2016 on a way forward in the crisis. Russia and the United States are the co-chairs of the taskforces and the ISSG, which also comprises the UN, the Arab League, the European Union and 16 other countries.

In his briefing to the Council, Mr. de Mistura had expressed his intention “to bring the invitees back to Geneva for a fifth round with a target date of

23 March.”

Nation-building amid insurgency ‘an uphill struggle’ for Afghanistan – UN envoy

10 March 2017 – The United Nations envoy for Afghanistan today highlighted both the visible progress the conflict-torn country has made and the challenges lie ahead, urging the Government to redouble efforts while calling for continued international political and financial support.

“The Government has to pursue both an inclusive peace process and economic growth against the backdrop of an intensifying insurgency and worsening security,” said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative in Afghanistan, during a UN Security Council quarterly debate on the situation in that country.

Mr. Yamamoto said that the National Unity Government – almost halfway through its five-year term – has made visible steps forward on anti-corruption, the electoral process and women’s economic empowerment.

“Fortunately, the ground is being prepared to make Afghanistan a success,” he stressed.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), headed by Mr. Yamamoto, will launch its first anti-corruption report, titled *Afghanistan’s Other Battlefield: The Fight against Corruption* soon. The report will highlight the Government’s achievements in addressing corruption, and recommends options for further progress, he explained.

The Government has committed to holding parliamentary elections which are seen as fair, inclusive and transparent by the Afghan people, he said, noting that the commissioners of the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission have been appointed.



Special Representative and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Tadamichi Yamamoto, briefs the Security Council. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Afghanistan remains one of the most difficult places in the world to be a woman, he said. However, just two days ago, on International Women’s Day, the Government launched a national plan that recognizes women as key economic actors.

The deteriorating security situation remains of great concern, he pointed out, urging the Taliban to enter peace talks without preconditions and warning against attacks by foreign fighters, including the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh).

Last year, UNAMA recorded the worst number of civilian casualties since record-keeping began nearly a decade ago.

Deteriorating security also led to the highest-ever level of internal displacement in 2016. More than 650,000 Afghans were displaced. Returns from Pakistan exceeded 620,000 people. Displacements and returns for 2017 are likely to remain at these levels.

Developing a nation while fighting an insurgency is an uphill struggle, he emphasized, noting that due in part to the worsening security situation over the past two years, service delivery has become increasingly difficult. "We have witnessed some downward trends in key indicators, such as access to health clinics and education facilities," he said.

More focused action on governance, social services and private sector development to promote equitable growth will be necessary, he said.

He urged the countries concerned, particularly in the neighbourhood, to support the Afghan Government's interest in the intensified regional peace effort, and asked the Council to renew UNAMA's mandate, which expires on 17 March.

UNAMA is mandated to support the Afghan Government and the people of Afghanistan as a political mission that provides 'good offices' among other key services. 'Good offices' are diplomatic steps the UN takes publicly and in private, drawing on its independence, impartiality and integrity, to prevent international disputes from arising, escalating or spreading.

UNAMA also assists the process of peace and reconciliation; monitors and promotes human rights, including the protection of civilians in armed conflict; promotes good governance; and encourages regional cooperation.

[News story: Jetty completion marks major milestone in Carrier works](#)

This is a major milestone in preparations at the naval base where £100m has been invested by the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

USNS Robert E Peary on the Jetty

The jetty, parts of which date back over 90 years, has been refurbished to

prepare for the first of the Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers. This is in addition to the dredging of the approach channel, inner harbour area and berth in order to make them deep and wide enough for the new ships, moving three million cubic metres of clay, sand and gravel from an area the size of 200 football pitches.

Bespoke navigational lights, a high-voltage electrical supply and specialist carrier-specific gangways, known as 'brows' are also being provided as part of the huge programme of works. The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) has worked with VolkerStevin and BAE Systems to deliver the package of infrastructure needed for the carriers.

DIO Project Manager Philip Wise said:

"I am delighted that the works to the jetty are completed. It is a crucial element of the £100m infrastructure package being delivered to support the arrival of the carriers into their homeport of Portsmouth. We are looking forward to seeing the first of the ships berthing against the new and improved jetty later this year."

With the core jetty works complete and new specialist equipment delivered, the Naval Base's preparations for the arrival of the Queen Elizabeth Class (QEC) Carriers are centred on a programme of Familiarisation, Integration and Testing, otherwise known as FIT.

This has been designed by BAE Systems on behalf of the Portsmouth Naval Base Commander and Naval Base staff to prepare equipment, personnel and processes for the arrival of the Queen Elizabeth Class Aircraft Carriers. They provide a valuable means to practice and refine standard operating procedures designed for the QEC and to role-play emergency scenarios.

David Mitchard, Managing Director, BAE Systems Maritime Services said:

"In readiness for the arrival of HMS Queen Elizabeth our team at BAE Systems in Portsmouth has put in place a rigorous testing programme for the new infrastructure at the Naval Base. We have a long expertise in maritime support and servicing and are committed to delivering the most innovative and cost-effective solutions to the Royal Navy for these remarkable ships."

Today (10th March) saw the start of Phase 3 of the FIT trials, using the visit to the Naval Base of the 40,000 Tonne United States Naval Ship Robert E. Peary for live testing of people, processes and equipment.

Royal Navy Captain Iain Greenlees, the QEC Infrastructure Director said:

"This jetty lies at the very heart of the preparations for the arrival of HMS Queen Elizabeth and the wider development of the Base for this century. It is tangible evidence of how close we are to the dawn of the QEC era and I am proud of the way the Royal Navy, DIO and Volkerstevin have been able to work together on this challenging project to get us ready for today."

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