

Gordon Wilson, former SNP leader, dies aged 79

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Gordon Wilson.

Gordon passed away earlier this morning in hospital after a short illness. He was leader of the Scottish National Party from 1979 to 1990, and was SNP Member of Parliament for Dundee East from 1974 to 1987.

The lessons of the last 12 months

When anniversaries come around, the temptation is always to look back.

One year on from the EU referendum it is right to reflect on everything that's happened. But the most important thing for the people of Scotland, now, is to look forward.

News story: Lorry emissions checks to start at the roadside

DVSA will be target lorry drivers and operators who try to cheat vehicle emissions. The new checks will target those who break the law and will help to improve air quality.

In May 2017, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs published a [draft plan to improve air quality by reducing nitrogen dioxide levels](#) in the UK.

This included looking at ways to reduce emissions produced by vehicles, including those used commercially. A final plan will be published by 31 July.

Fraudulent emissions readings

DVSA's enforcement staff, and their European counterparts, have found evidence that drivers and operators use emissions cheat devices to cut the cost of operating. These include:

- using devices designed to stop emissions control systems from working
- removing the diesel particulate filter or trap
- using cheap, fake emission reduction devices or diesel exhaust fluid
- using illegal engine modifications which result in excessive emissions
- removing or bypassing the exhaust gas recirculation valve

Taking action against emission cheats

DVSA enforcement officers will give the driver and operator 10 days to fix the emissions system if they find a vehicle with tampered emissions readings.

If the emissions system isn't fixed within 10 days, DVSA will issue a fine and stop the vehicle being used on the road.

DVSA enforcement staff can insist that a vehicle be taken off the road immediately if they find a driver or operator is repeatedly offending.

Working with the EU

DVSA will investigate all Great Britain operators cheating emissions and pass the findings to the Traffic Commissioners for Great Britain, who have the power to remove operator licences.

DVSA will also continue to work with our counterpart agencies across Europe, and further afield, to make sure that all offences committed by non-Great Britain hauliers are dealt with locally.

Protecting you from unsafe drivers and vehicles

DVSA Chief Executive, Gareth Llewellyn, said:

DVSA's priority is to protect you from unsafe drivers and vehicles. We are committed to taking dangerous vehicles off Britain's roads and this new initiative to target emissions fraud is a key part of that.

Anyone who flouts the law is putting other road users, and the quality of our air, at risk. We won't hesitate to take these drivers, operators and vehicles off our roads.

Transport Minister, Jesse Norman said:

I welcome this crackdown on rogue hauliers who cheat the system by installing bogus devices which lead to increased pollution.

There has rightly been a huge public outcry against car manufacturers that have been cheating emissions standards, and the same rule should apply here too.

We all need clean air in which to live and work. That's why the government has committed more than £2 billion since 2011 to support greener transport.

Press release: Government pledges to help improve access to UK markets for world's poorest countries post-Brexit

The Government will use Brexit to cement Britain's standing in the world and meet our commitments to the world's poorest by securing their existing duty-free access to UK markets and providing new opportunities to increase trade links.

The commitment means that around 48 countries across the globe, from Bangladesh to Sierra Leone, Haiti and Ethiopia will continue to benefit from duty-free exports into the UK on all goods other than arms and ammunition, known as 'everything but arms'.

On leaving the EU, the UK Government will also explore options to expand on relationships with developing countries such as Jamaica, Pakistan and Ghana – all of which currently benefit from a mixture of reduced or zero tariffs on the goods they export to the UK – as well as maintaining existing trading arrangements and avoiding costly tariffs.

The Government continues to deliver improved support to these countries by helping them break down the barriers to trade, supporting critical trade infrastructure like ports and roads, and building trade skills in those countries, so that they can take better advantage of trading opportunities.

International Trade Secretary Liam Fox said:

Our departure from the EU is an opportunity to step up to our commitments to the rest of the world, not step away from them.

Free and fair trade has been the greatest liberator of the world's poor, and today's announcement shows our commitment to helping developing countries grow their economies and reduce poverty through trade.

Behind the 'duty-free exports' are countless stories of people in developing countries working hard to provide for themselves and their families by exporting everyday goods such as cocoa, bananas and roses, resulting in lower prices and greater choice for

consumers.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

The UK is using its position as a great, global trading nation to seize opportunities to lift countries out of grinding poverty. This will generate the wealth, prosperity and investment needed to create millions of jobs and help the world's poorest people stand on their own two feet.

Helping developing countries harness the formidable power of trade means we are not only creating trading partners of the future for UK businesses, but supporting jobs at home too. Building a more prosperous world and supporting our own long-term economic security is firmly in all our interests.

Around £20 billion a year of goods are shipped to the UK from these developing countries, accounting for around half of our clothing, a quarter of our coffee and other everyday goods such as cocoa, bananas and roses.

Without these trading arrangements, clothing, for example, from some of the poorest countries could face tariffs of over 10% – which could be passed on to UK consumers through higher prices at the till.

Access to the markets of developed countries also provides vital trading opportunities for the world's poorest people and creates jobs. For example, 2 million women work in Bangladesh's garment sector, which is a significant exporter of clothing to the UK. These opportunities help people to work their way out of poverty and build our trading partners of the future.

In 2015, the UK imported the following from developing countries:

- £19.2 billion of goods
- 79% (or £186 million) of all tea imports – enough for 34.9 billion cups of tea
- Over 22% of all the UK's coffee imports, valued at around £131 million. Both Indonesia and Vietnam exported more than £30 million into the UK, and Ethiopia exported over £15 million
- £7.8 billion in textiles – accounting for 45% of all the UK's textile and apparel imports
- Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Vietnam combined exported 34 million dresses – one dress for every woman in the UK.

None of these countries can defeat poverty without sustained economic growth – jobs and investment opportunities are vital to helping the world's poorest people stand on their own two feet. Without these jobs, a whole generation could be consigned to a future where opportunities are out of reach; potentially fuelling instability and mass migration, which could in turn have direct consequences for the UK.

Further information

The world's Least Developed Countries are calculated by the UN using criteria which is based on income criterion, the Human Assets Index and the Economic Vulnerability Index. [Further information can be found here.](#)

Under current EU arrangements, the UK offers Duty Free Quota Free access for Least Developed Countries on all goods which they are exporting to the UK, other than arms and ammunition. For the next tier of developing countries, largely classed as lower middle income, the EU offers a mix of reductions on tariffs.

DFID's first [Economic Development Strategy](#), launched by Ms Patel earlier this year, sets out how private sector investment will help developing nations speed up their rate of economic growth, trade more and industrialise faster, and ultimately lift themselves out of poverty.

The UK is committed to ensuring that when companies source from developing countries, they do so in a way which protects the human rights of workers and their health and safety.

Case studies

Textiles, preferences and development

The UK imported £7.8 billion in textiles and apparel from countries which benefit from preferential access to UK markets in 2015, 45% of all the UK's textiles and apparel imports. Preferential trade arrangements not only created jobs for people in developing countries, but also benefitted customers and businesses in the UK by keeping prices lower and offering greater choice of goods.

The UK imported 34 million dresses from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Vietnam in 2015 – enough for one dress for every woman in the UK. Women in Bangladesh often lack opportunities to work outside the home. The growth of the ready-made garment industry is changing this.

Vast numbers of young Bangladeshi women are leaving their villages to work in garment factories where, in earlier generations, young women were rarely seen outside their homes. In Bangladesh, women make up the majority of workers in the ready-made garment sector as a whole, with around 2 million women currently working in this sector. Women in garment factories are pushing back the social limits on their life options by redefining the norms of female propriety.

The textile industry often has wider spill overs to industries other than textiles. For example, India's textiles sector uses 7% of India's agricultural products, chemical and computer related services sectors, whilst nearly 8% of the transport and storage output goes to the textile industry. Therefore one industry creates multiple demands in others.

Tea and coffee exports supporting jobs in developing economies

Promoting agricultural exports from developing economies supports DFID's agricultural programme which by 2018 could help over 900,000 people to earn better livings from agriculture.

In 2015, 79% of tea in the UK came from beneficiary countries of trade preferences (£186 million). £129 million of this came from African economies – £111 million from Kenya. In total the UK imported 103,000 tonnes of tea from beneficiary economies; enough for 34.9 billion cups of tea.

In 2015 countries which benefit from preferential access to the UK imported over 22% of all the UK coffee imports. These countries imported nearly £131 million worth of coffee into the UK in 2015. Both Indonesia and Vietnam imported more than £30 million into the UK and Ethiopia imported over £15 million.

Bananas

The UK imports 6% of the world's dried and fresh banana exports, and we eat around six billion bananas every year. Countries such as the Dominican Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroon and Ghana are an important source of this trade to the UK, contributing to 30% of total banana imports.

DFID is a committed Fairtrade partner and is providing £18 million over six years to help Fairtrade International have a greater impact in their work and make the global Fairtrade system stronger.

The Fairtrade Foundation highlight that one in three bananas bought in the UK is Fairtrade. Fairtrade plays an important role in helping to improve the lives of poor people, such as by ensuring farmers receive fair prices for their products, workers receive better wages to help them support their families and agricultural practices are made more sustainable.

The UK imported over 105,000 tonnes of bananas from Sub-Saharan Africa in 2015. The amount of bananas the UK imports from Sub-Saharan beneficiary economies has almost doubled since the start of the millennium.

[Press release: Statement from the Secretary of State regarding the cladding testing failure rate](#)

Ever since the appalling tragedy at Grenfell Tower on Wednesday 14 June, the government has been working very closely with local authorities, housing associations, and the private sector to ensure the safety of high-rise

buildings.

We provided [advice to all social landlords on 22 June about interim safety measures](#) that should be taken immediately where it has been determined that a building has Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding that is unlikely to be compliant with the requirements of the current Building Regulations. This guidance was recommended by an independent panel of experts and includes advice on the 3 emerging findings from the Metropolitan Police investigation into Grenfell Tower.

A combustibility testing programme for ACM cladding is running around the clock at the Building Research Establishment (BRE). This is able to test 100 samples a day – and if needed, yet further laboratory capacity could be provided.

So far the cladding from 34 high-rise buildings, in 17 local authority areas, has failed the combustibility test. All landlords and fire and rescue services for those local authorities have been alerted to the results and we are in touch with all 17 areas to support and monitor follow-up action. The landlords for all the affected buildings are taking action to inform tenants and implement the interim safety measures needed. Areas affected include the city of Manchester, Camden, Plymouth, Hounslow, Portsmouth, Barnet and Brent.

The fact that all samples so far have failed the tests underlines the value of the testing programme we have set up with the Building Research Establishment to get samples checked properly in the laboratories.

It is therefore very important for local authorities and housing associations to continue to submit such samples as a matter of urgency.

In the meantime, local authorities are contacting fire and rescue services in their area to conduct fire safety inspections of these tower blocks to inform them on what remedial works might be required.

We expect that authorities and landlords are very sensibly giving the highest priority to buildings with which they have most concern. But we should not be in the position where buildings have such cladding on them. How this occurred – and preventing this from happening again – is likely to be a key question for the public inquiry.

We are now rapidly identifying buildings of concern: samples are being tested very quickly; fire inspectors are checking the safety of the buildings as a whole; and we have issued interim safety guidance to help action that is being taken by local authorities, landlords, and fire and rescue services to mitigate risk and start addressing any defects that have been found.

It is important to stress that cladding itself is not dangerous, but it is important that the right type is used. Also, a failure in testing of the cladding does not necessarily mean that a building will have to be evacuated; the decision by Camden Council to evacuate 4 of the 5 towers on the Chalcots Estate was because the failed testing of the external cladding was compounded by multiple other fire safety failures which the fire inspection team found

within the buildings.

Obviously, those residents in Camden who had to be asked to leave their homes at such short notice have had a distressing experience; I have to express deep admiration for the calm and stoicism with which so many have handled this.

I understand that the tragedy at Grenfell Tower, and now the evacuation in Camden, will be particularly worrying for those living in high-rise towers. However, fire safety standards are in place in buildings across this country and landlords are obliged by law to meet them – in both private rented and social housing. Individuals are no more likely to experience a fire now than before, but everyone should remain vigilant to the risk.

It is the responsibility of the landlords and freeholders to advise their residents what to do in the event of a fire in the building, based on the findings of their risk assessment. We are making sure that authorities and landlords have all the latest advice and support available as quickly as possible.