

Press release: Project launched to protect the Ouseburn River

Groundwork North East & Cumbria is working with partners from across the region to protect and preserve the upper part of the Ouseburn River.

The charity has secured £200,000 from the Environment Agency to fund the Ouseburn River Restoration Project.

Working with partners including landowners, communities, schools and local businesses, Groundwork will carry out a number of enhancements to the river and the surrounding environment to improve water quality through a number of environmental improvements.

The project will implement several physical measures to slow the flow of the river, including widening it at strategic points, sculpting areas of the river bank, altering meanders and installing silt traps.

In addition to the physical work, the Ouseburn River Restoration Project will also work with farmers and landowners about how to manage fertiliser and sediment run off, which causes high levels of phosphorus in the river, this diminishes invertebrate life and affects all aspects of river life.

Lesley Silvera, Senior Project Officer at Groundwork North East & Cumbria, said:

It's fantastic that the Ouseburn River Restoration Project is now off the ground. Over the next two years, we will be working closely with third parties to improve the water quality and ecology of the river.

We'll also be looking to survey and eradicate invasive species, remove litter, monitor wildlife and plant trees, which will keep the river cool, create riverbank habitats and help prevent bank erosion.

We will be working in partnership with Newcastle University, the Environment Agency and Tyne Rivers Trust to observe and measure water quality to gauge the success of the scheme, which will also inform future work on the river.

Lucy Mo, the Environment Agency's Project Manager responsible for funding this work added:

The health of our rivers is better than it's ever been with drastic improvements to water quality over the past 20 years. However, there is still more to do and by working with partners on projects

such as the Ouseburn River Restoration Project we can play to different organisations' strengths and deliver more.

We're pleased to be part of this exciting project, which will improve in-river and bankside habitats, and will also give us more water monitoring data and analysis.

The work is funded primarily through the Environment Agency. Additional funding is from Groundwork NE & Cumbria, Northumbrian Water Ltd, Newcastle University. Partners include Environment Agency, Northumbrian Water Ltd, Natural England, Tyne Rivers Trust, Newcastle City Council and Newcastle University.

Speech: Mark Garnier speech at the Midlands Engine Trade Summit

Thank you. I'm delighted to be back in this great city at the inaugural Midlands Engine Trade Summit.

I want to thank my department's regional team here in the Midlands for organising this event. I know it's taken a lot of hard work.

Personally, this is an important event for 2 reasons:

First, as a Minister at the Department for International Trade – I am responsible for ensuring the world knows that the Midlands, like every other region in the UK, is open for business.

And secondly, because I have the honour of being a Midlands MP.

Wyre Forest, my constituency, is based in Worcestershire.

So I know, better than most, the potential of businesses in the Midlands.

They are diverse, innovative and can be world beaters.

And history is on our side.

If you head up the A41 for 2 miles you'll arrive at the birthplace of the industrial revolution.

It was in Soho that James Watt created his steam engine: a manufacturing marvel that led to levels of productivity the world had never seen.

It allowed Britain, and this region in particular, to become the manufacturing powerhouse of the world.

It's a well-known fact, particularly if you have a friend from these parts, that Birmingham has more miles of canals than Venice – albeit with fewer gondolas.

150 years ago, these canals were the arteries of the Midlands economy – carrying everything from Black Country coal and iron ore, to Wedgwood pottery heading to the markets of Birmingham and Manchester.

Today, we talk a lot about innovative disruptors shaking up the modern economy – the likes of Uber and AirBnB; however historically, the Midlands has been the world economy's disruptor in chief.

Whether that was Rolls Royce in Derby developing their iconic Merlin aero-engine, or Cooke Optics in Leicester, who produced the camera lenses with which they filmed Star Wars – this region has always led, never followed.

There will be some who dismiss the Midlands Engine as an empty political slogan.

They are mistaken.

Between 1997 and 2010, manufacturing output in the Midlands fell from over £15 billion to under £12 billion. No other UK region had a greater fall.

Regional productivity here is also on the wrong side of the national average.

These are real issues that need more than gimmicky solutions.

That is why the Chancellor recently announced our strategy for the Midlands Engine – focussing on the key themes of connectivity, skills, enterprise and innovation. The strategy demonstrates our commitment to the Midlands and we will work with Sir John Peace and the Midlands Engine partners to ensure it is a success.

For me, the Midlands Engine is a commitment by this government to ensure that the best days for this region are not those consigned to history, but those of the future.

It is a commitment to harness this region's 11.5 million people, a fast growing economy, and expertise across many sectors, to create the jobs and growth that spreads prosperity from Dudley to Derby.

That is why I entered politics; that is why I joined the Department for International Trade.

And that is why we will make the Midlands Engine a success.

Let me outline 3 areas government will focus on to ensure the Midlands fulfils its huge potential.

Midlands exports

The first is to use the momentum of the Midlands Engine to drive this region's exports to new heights.

Transport technologies, advanced manufacturing and engineering as well as healthcare and life sciences are just some of the centres of excellence in the Midlands.

This is expertise the world wants.

Over 27,000 businesses in the Midlands export nearly £40 billion worth of products to over 100 countries.

Incredibly, even the so-called factory of the world, China, runs a goods deficit with the West Midlands. But these impressive figures belie a bleaker national picture.

Only about 11% of British businesses export anything beyond our borders, despite hundreds of thousands having a product or service that is export ready.

This unfulfilled national potential is not just affecting the businesses themselves, who forgo the additional profits and productivity that overseas trade unlocks, but also the national economy – the strength of which relies on our ability to trade overseas.

That is why my department was created: ensuring that Britain becomes a champion of global free trade – lowering barriers and raising prosperity wherever and whenever possible.

For the first time, the 3 pillars of trade – policy, promotion and finance are under one roof – so we can be more coordinated in our approach.

Our objectives are simple and clear.

We will promote UK companies abroad; we will attract inward investment into regions such as the Midlands, and promote our businesses across the world; and finally, we will build a strong trading framework for the UK outside the EU.

But what does this actually mean in practical support for the businesses here today.

It means DIT delivering 20 Midlands Engine trade missions by 2020.

Eighty Midlands companies and over 100 delegates have already participated in DIT-led trade missions across the globe, from the USA to the UAE to China.

We are encouraging companies from Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire to meet with buyers from Shanghai, New York, and Dubai.

We expect the business done at these trade missions to generate £5 million

worth of deals over the next 12 months.

A simple face to face meeting with the right contacts can be a game-changer for SMEs.

Like packaging manufacturer B&G Products from Staffordshire, who landed their first export deal to the United States, worth hundreds of thousands of pounds, just 4 months after taking part in the first Midlands Engine trade mission.

Later you will hear from UK Export Finance's Chief Executive, Louis Taylor, who will explain how we are helping Midlands companies win, fulfil and get paid for their overseas contracts.

Last year, UKEF provided £19 million in support for nearly £200 million worth of export contracts for companies in the Midlands.

Businesses, as you know, run on cash flow; so we are making it easier.

We're also taking our export support online.

If you haven't already, please visit great.gov.uk – the government's new digital platform.

It should be every exporter's first port of call for information and my department's International Trade team will be on hand throughout the day to show you how to get the most from it.

Where else can you find nearly 1,500 live business leads for which you can apply today; or sell your products on the world's biggest online marketplaces like Amazon and Tmall at preferential rates; or have global buyers contact you direct to supply what they need?

It's all in one place; it's all digital; and quite frankly, I've seen nothing like it anywhere else in the world. Some of you may be thinking that it's all well and good politicians standing here and telling you about the benefits of exporting. They don't know what it's like running a business.

I'd be the first to agree that our best ambassadors and spokespeople are actually exporters themselves.

They know what it's like; they've felt the benefits; they have a story to tell.

Which is why I am delighted to announce today the launch of the [Midlands Engine Export Champions Programme](#).

Twenty eight experienced exporters based in the Midlands have agreed to serve as Export Champions and inspire others to either export for the first time or to export more.

They will promote the government's Exporting is GREAT campaign and raise the profile of the Midlands Engine in the UK and overseas.

Many of them are here today, ready to share their insights.

Investment

The second way to fulfil the potential of the Midlands is by continuing to attract investment into the region that creates jobs, introduces new technology and raises standards of living.

Last year alone, nearly 15,000 new jobs were created because of inward investment in the Midlands. And with the pull factors of the Midlands, it's easy to see why.

Investors will be dealing with a regional economy worth over £200 billion; they will be able to access 90% of businesses anywhere in the UK within 4 hours; and benefit from the talent and research fed by 25 universities.

I want these factors to be known worldwide.

That is why today, I am also launching the Midlands Engine Investment Hub.

Specialist staff will work with local partners to ensure investment projects land effectively into this region.

They will work with our embassies and High Commissions to raise the profile of the Midlands overseas.

It is the only physical hub of its kind in the UK – and is currently hosting 12 global entrepreneurs from Eastern Europe who are looking to set up here.

Brexit

The final point I want to make is how businesses in the Midlands can thrive post Brexit.

I know Lord Bridges from the Department for Exiting the EU is leading a session later, so I will be brief.

There may be businesses in the audience who are currently exporting to mainland Europe.

In the short term, nothing changes. We are still EU members until the formal process of exiting is complete. During this time, goods and services will flow as usual.

The Prime Minister has been clear. When we leave, we will seek the greatest possible access to the single market so that British and EU firms can trade with as little friction as possible.

Brexit is not a rejection of European values, or the idea of the EU.

This country was built on those values and ideas; they form part of our own national identity.

We want the EU to succeed – it is in our national interest.

But if you look further afield, you will see opportunities beyond the borders of Europe too, which we can now look to seize.

90% of future global growth will be outside the EU.

We can strike trade agreements with global partners, who also happen to be some of the fastest growing economies.

Many of whom have already signalled strong interest in striking agreements with the UK.

The Midlands, as it so often has, is leading the way.

My department will ensure that the whole of the UK will be ready, willing and able to follow suit.

Conclusion

When it comes to Midlands, it is clear that with great potential comes great expectation.

If the Midlands matches its predicted growth over the next 15 years – it will create 300,000 jobs and inject £34 billion into the UK economy.

The Midlands Engine is how we go about meeting that expectation.

The great and innovative businesses of this region need only look to history to see how high the bar has been set.

Speaking as a local MP and a minister, I can assure you that both regionally and nationally, we are all backing you to succeed.

Thank you.

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New research by Labour has revealed that 97 per cent of Scottish modern apprenticeships in construction, the motor industry, manufacturing and engineering are taken by men.

In a speech at Reform Scotland to mark International Women's Day and the Budget earlier this week, Kezia Dugdale published new research showing that just 3 per cent of modern apprenticeships in key industries are taken by women.

Research by [Engender](#) revealed that just 25 per cent of company directors in Scottish FTSE 100 companies are women.

More details about modern apprenticeships in Scotland can be found [here](#).

Speaking at Reform Scotland, Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale said:

"In planning for the future we should be planning for a Scottish economy that puts equality at its heart.

"By that I mean the whole gamut of equality. We need an economy that works for all, regardless of who you are, where you live and the sector you work in.

"For those in professional sectors the tide is turning but it is still not nearly good enough.

"As Engender's Sex and Power report said earlier this week, only 25 per cent of company directors of Scottish FTSE 100 companies are women, and not a single chief executive of a Scottish FTSE company is female.

"At all senior levels in public life, and in the private sector, women are still not getting the top opportunities. As we look to the future, we have to ensure that this same inequality isn't sustained into the next generation.

"Earlier this week, I had the privilege to meet some of the new apprentices at Standard Life. These are young people getting front line experience of the finance sector and gaining valuable real-world experience. It's a great scheme.

"But across the country, the next generation of workers are still finding themselves setting out on their careers being segregated by gender.

"Ninety-seven per cent of the modern apprenticeships in construction, the motor industry, manufacturing and engineering are taken by men, while more than half of apprenticeships in sport, health and social care and administration are taken by women.

"These apprenticeships are meant to provide the best start for young people beginning their careers. We cannot have a situation, as we do right now, where inequality is being hardwired into the future workforce in these sectors.

"The SNP should be taking action to make sure that this situation doesn't persist into future years of the scheme."

“Under the Tories living standards are being squeezed and public services are being cut”

The Chancellor's Budget will impose further cuts on the public services we all value.

Philip Hammond claimed it was an upbeat Budget, but the reality is that by the end of this decade up to £1 billion will have been cut from the Scottish Parliament's funding. That means less money to spend on schools and hospitals.

Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale said:

“This was billed as a Budget that would be upbeat, but what we got instead was an insight into the devastating impact a chaotic Tory Brexit will have on families across the UK. Under the Tories living standards are being squeezed, debt is on the rise and public services are being cut.”

“The Chancellor could have brought an end to seven years of damaging Tory austerity, but instead he doubled down by imposing cuts to public services and welfare. Despite the £350 million extra for the Scottish Government announced today, the reality is that by the end of this decade up to £1 billion will have been cut from Holyrood's budget – cuts the SNP chooses to meekly pass on to families here in Scotland.”

“The fact that the Chancellor barely mentioned Brexit at all is a sign of the Tories' complacency. Brexit will not only damage our economy but it has also provided the Nationalists with the excuse they have been looking for to impose another destabilising independence referendum on the people of Scotland. The Tories cannot be trusted on the Union.”

With major new tax and welfare powers being devolved to the Scottish Parliament, there is a chance to do things differently. For example, Labour has set out a plan to top up Child Benefit by £240 a year by 2020. This will lift 30,000 people out of poverty.

Kezia Dugdale added:

“We don't have to pass on Tory austerity. The SNP should stop using the Scottish Parliament as a conveyor belt for Tory austerity and back Labour's plan to stop the cuts and invest in valued local services like schools and social care.”

One of the big mistakes of the Budget was the Chancellor's change to National Insurance. It means that self-employed workers – like tax drivers and

plumbers – will face a National Insurance contributions hike. This breaks a Tory manifesto promise from 2015, where they said that National Insurance would not increase.

Commenting on the National Insurance increase, Scottish Labour Westminster spokesman Ian Murray said:

“This is yet another broken manifesto promise from the Tories. At the General Election in 2015 the Tories made a very clear commitment not to increase National Insurance, yet today the Chancellor did exactly that.

“This Budget proves once and for all that ordinary working people just cannot trust the Tories. The Tories are increasing taxes on those who set up their own businesses and drive our economy while cutting taxes for big business.”

Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Montenegro

2015 – present FC0, Temporary duties in the Middle East & North Africa, Finance and Prosperity Directorates 2013 – 2015 Sana'a, Deputy Head of Mission 2013 Full time language training (Arabic) 2010 – 2012 FC0, Head of Policy Unit, National Security, Middle East, North Africa & South Asia 2008 – 2010 FC0, Deputy Director Estates & Sustainability, Estates and Security Department 2007 Kurdistan Region & Northern Iraq, Consul General 2006 – 2007 Liberia, Political Chargé 2004 – 2005 FC0, Near East Team Leader, Arab, Israel North Africa Group 2002 – 2004 FC0, Head of Political Team, Afghanistan Unit 1999 – 2002 Colombo, Second Secretary Political 1997 – 1998 FC0, Desk Officer Greece and Cyprus 1997 Joined FC0