

[Press release: New British Deputy High Commissioner for Lagos arrives Nigeria](#)

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Laure Beaufils looks forward to working with a variety of Nigerian partners to further progress on the UK/Nigeria relationship.

The British High Commission in Nigeria has announced the arrival of Laure Beaufils, appointed as British Deputy High Commissioner for Lagos, Laure is the first female to head the UK mission in Lagos. She arrived Nigeria on Monday, 20 January 2017, and already looks forward to the tasks ahead.

Commenting upon arrival, Laure said “I’m delighted to be in Lagos and leading the UK mission here. I look forward to working with a variety of Nigerian partners to further progress the already strong UK/Nigeria relationship”.

Laure Beaufils has been head of the UK Department of International Development in Rwanda since August 2014 where she managed a \$100 million portfolio of programmes focusing on economic development, governance and social sectors. Prior to holding this position, she worked in various positions in the UK Government. She was the lead strategic adviser working for the British Prime Minister in his role as co-chair of the UN Secretary General’s High Level Panel on the post-2015 development agenda.

She ran DFID’s department for Overseas Territories. She led a team working on climate change, and also worked for the UK mission to the UN, as first secretary responsible for development. Prior to joining the UK civil service, she worked with the UN and civil society organisations. She also worked with the private sector as a financial auditor. She has lived and worked in Rwanda, Ethiopia, India, Cambodia, France, the UK and the USA.

[HRH The Duke of York brings Pitch@Palace On Tour to Wales](#)

Pitch@Palace offers entrepreneurs the chance to get their Tech business idea in front of a global audience of influencers who can catapult it to the next

level.

Pitch@Palace was founded by The Duke of York in 2014 to support entrepreneurs with the amplification and acceleration of their business ideas by connecting them with potential supporters including CEOs, investors, elevators and key business partners.

Pitch@Palace On Tour comes to Cardiff's Tramshed on Friday Feb 24 at the invitation of Cardiff Start, a community support hub for technology start-ups and business professionals, based in or around Cardiff. The Welsh Government is principal sponsor of the first Pitch@Palace event in Wales which is also supported by Innovation Point.

Selected entrepreneurs will pitch their business ideas to His Royal Highness and invited guests and compete to progress to the next stage Pitch@Palace Boot Camp with the most successful then pitching at St James Palace to an audience from the world of entrepreneurship, tech, media and investment.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"Technology driven businesses with bright ideas have the potential to create a real positive impact on our lives and on the economy. They operate in a highly competitive environment and young start ups particularly can benefit significantly from high level support and expertise to move to the next level.

"The Welsh Government provides a wide range of business support for these enterprises and our sponsorship of Pitch@Palace opens up potentially new opportunities and experiences for Wales based tech companies and I wish all participants the very best of luck."

Supporting the Economy Secretary's views, Cardiff Start Co-Founder and Pitch@Palace host, Robert Lo Bue, said:

"The tech start up scene in and around the Welsh Capital has exploded in recent years. Our community alone has over 2100 members sharing opportunities and experiences every single day.

"We are very fortunate in Wales to have a supportive Government and a collaborative environment where individual enterprises actively work together to create the ideal ecosystem for budding entrepreneurs.

"Attracting Pitch@Palace to Wales is quite an accolade and an acknowledgement of the rapid growth and success of the sector in Wales."

There are two main Pitch@Palace events held in the UK every year, each with a different theme, focusing on various areas of the UK Tech industry. The

current theme is Human Tech and the potential impact of technology in our everyday lives – focusing on three areas:

- Tech supporting our everyday needs – Health, Education, Environment
- Tech making our lives more efficient – Connecting up homes via the Internet Of Things, Improving Communications, Wearable Tech and Robotics
- Tech augmenting our experience of the world – through Virtual Reality and Artificial Intelligence.

Pitch@Palace has to date:

- helped over 247 businesses grow and create 643 jobs;
- 66% of start ups have increased employment;
- 65% of competing start ups subsequently raised funds;
- £247m+ of economic activity has been recorded.

The judging panel at Cardiff Pitch@Palace includes: David Buttress, CEO, of Just Eat, Yasmin Crawford, owner of Tramorgan and James Henderson, Fund manager of Inspire Wales.

The selected companies pitching are:

- Kraydel
- Salubrious Ltd
- Helpfulpeeps
- BrainWaveBank Limited
- Learnium
- Harness
- Paperclip
- Alkosens
- Medivation Limited
- Vision Game Labs Ltd
- Volunteer Space
- Recall Alert CIC.

[Scotland's exercise blackspots revealed](#)

20 Feb 2017



Scotland's most and least active areas have been revealed in an official Holyrood survey.

The report, which will be presented to the Scottish Parliament's health committee tomorrow, will show a huge disparity in how active residents.

As a result, the Scottish Conservatives have urged the SNP to provide the necessary action to make Scotland an active nation.

The study of more than 3000 people highlighted the percentage of non-participants in regular sport or physical activity based on postcode.

Aberdeen proved to be the least active area in Scotland with statistics revealing that 35 per cent of respondents from the Granite City don't participate in regular activity – 23 per cent behind leaders Falkirk.

Kilmarnock also collated worrying results, 25 per cent of its respondents putting their name under the non-participation brackets.

Scottish Conservative sport spokesman Brian Whittle said:

“This report reveals the SNP’s inability to promote the importance of a healthy and active lifestyle.

“It’s hugely important to participate in regular activity, and it’s known to come hand in hand with living a healthy and happy life.

“It’s sad that the SNP has failed to make the most of Glasgow’s Commonwealth Games’ potential to make Scotland a healthy and active nation for years to come.

“There are of course various barriers preventing participation in regular activity – lack of time, money and self-confidence to name but a few.

“The SNP seems to only talk about making so many improvements. Now people are realising it has no idea how to address these issues.

“That’s why we urge the SNP to read over the Scottish Conservatives’ long-term consultation, a document that we believe will go a long way in tackling the obvious inequality of access across Scotland.

“The Scottish Government claims it wants to shed Scotland’s unhealthy image.

“However, the only way to start making Scotland a healthier and more active nation is to start knocking these barriers down.”

Click here to read a copy of the report:

www.parliament.scot/S5_HealthandSportCommittee/Meeting%20Papers/Public_Papers_21_Feb_2017.pdf

A copy of the Scottish Conservative healthy lifestyle strategy:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Scottish-Conservative-Healthy-Lifestyle-Strategy.pdf>

[Mackay to face Holyrood on business rates crisis](#)

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20 Feb 2017



Finance secretary Derek Mackay will face Holyrood for the first time tomorrow on the escalating business rates crisis.

He will be quizzed as part of topical questions as firms up and down the country warn about the devastating impact of the revaluation.

Shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser has been selected to ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking on the matter.

The Scottish Conservatives last week demanded a statement by Mr Mackay amid accusations ministers have been slow act.

The SNP was warned last year there would be a “severe” impact on various industries if business rates changes go ahead.

However, it has taken until this week for Mr Mackay to respond formally in front of MSPs.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“Businesses across Scotland want to hear what the Scottish Government is going to do about all this.

“Now we will have that chance in the Scottish Parliament.

“Firms that face going to the wall and people whose jobs are in jeopardy will be extremely interested in the answer.

“This is fast-becoming a crisis, affecting organisations large and small, and in all areas of the country.

“The SNP needs to take urgent action.”

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser has been selected to ask the following question in Holyrood tomorrow:

“To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking in response to reported concerns from businesses regarding the non-domestic rates

revaluation.”

The Scottish Conservatives demanded a statement last week:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/02/demand-for-urgent-holyrood-statement-on-business-rates/>

Press release: Industrial Strategy on the agenda at latest Business Advisory Group

Today’s session is the latest in a series of meetings that aim to provide a mechanism for businesses to engage with UK Government on a range of strategic economic issues and to provide UK Government with high level advice on critical business and economic issues facing Northern Ireland.

This afternoon’s meeting was an opportunity for Minister Hopkins to encourage discussion on areas of particular resonance to Northern Ireland in relation to pillars one and four of the Industrial Strategy – investing in science, research and innovation and supporting businesses to start and grow – and to encourage the business groups present to respond to the consultation. It also allowed the minister to provide assurance that the Government is committed to political stability and urge members to use their influence to encourage political parties to deliver a functioning and effective Executive post-election.

Speaking after the meeting, Kris Hopkins MP said:

The Industrial Strategy is a vital part of this Government’s plan to drive growth across the whole United Kingdom and create more high skilled, high paid jobs and opportunities. New Sector Deals and investment in research and development will support the industries of the future where the UK – and Northern Ireland in particular – has the potential to lead the world.

Both the Secretary of State and I will continue to explore how to maximise the positive impact that this Strategy can have in Northern Ireland, particularly in exploring Sector Deals, removing barriers to innovation and growth and developing new trade and investment deals to increase exports.

Today’s session also provided an opportunity to stress the need for

political stability as a fundamental basis for industrial success. Securing strong, stable devolved institutions in Northern Ireland that will provide leadership, support innovation and boost skills will be vital to delivering on Northern Ireland's potential as a place to invest and do business as we continue to build an economy that works for everyone.

Today's meeting was attended by the following:

John Cunningham, Camlin Group

Peter Cunningham, Camlin Group

Linda Brown, Institute of Directors

Ian Sheppard, Institute of Directors/Bank of Ireland

Wilfred Mitchell, Federation of Small Businesses

Roger Pollen, Federation of Small Businesses

John Friel, Federation of Small Businesses

Angela McGowan, Confederation of British Industry

Nick Coburn, Northern Ireland Chamber

Chris Morrow, Northern Ireland Chamber

Professor Paddy Johnston, QUB Vice-Chancellor

Professor Paddy Nixon, UU Vice-Chancellor

Liam Nagle, Norbrook

Nick Wheelan, Dale Farm

Shaun McAnee, Danske Bank

Lynsey Cunningham, Ulster Bank

Joanne Stuart, Catalyst NI