

Single market exit heralds disaster for family farms, warns Green MEP



23 January 2017

The Green MEP for the South West, Molly Scott Cato, has warned that family farms could disappear from our countryside if the UK leaves the Single Market. Dr Scott Cato, who sits on the Agricultural Committee in the European Parliament, believes that in the absence of a new trade deal with Europe outside the Single Market, the UK would revert to WTO trade rules which could prove disastrous for farmers.

Under WTO trading rules, tariffs would be imposed on around 90% by value of the UK's exports to the EU [1]; the EU accounts for around 65% of total agricultural exports from the UK, while around 70% of the UK's imports originate from other EU countries [2]. Tariffs on both exports and imports would make UK farmers less competitive and increase both food prices for consumers and supply chain costs for food producers. Molly Scott Cato said:

"The decision by Theresa May to opt for a hard Brexit will strike our family farmers and small scale food producers particularly hard. They are the cornerstone of agriculture across many parts of the UK, so any tariff or non-tariff barriers could seriously weaken regional economies and devastate rural communities.

"The government has no plan on replacing the agricultural support and direct payments farmers receive through the Common Agriculture Policy; it wants to end free movement making it impossible to take on seasonal migrant labour from EU countries and exit the single market risking tariffs on exports and imports. This is a triple whammy few family farms could withstand."

Dr Scott Cato argues that Brexit does throw up opportunities for a new approach to farming, but doesn't believe the government have shown any willingness to support such an approach:

"Brexit could be used as an opportunity to move towards a diverse and ecologically sustainable farming system; one which focuses on relocalising food production and boosting rural economies [3]. But so far all we have heard from the Defra secretary, Andrea Leadsom, are plans to shred EU legislation, dismissing it as red tape [4]. But many of these measures are aimed at safeguarding our soils, protecting habitats, guaranteeing animal welfare and utilizing farmland for capturing and storing carbon to help in the fight against climate change.

"This government seems hell-bent on pushing large scale industrialised farming post-Brexit, and letting our family farms and small scale producers flounder. Such an approach will leave the 71% of our land currently used as farmland less protected and further damaged; less beneficial to protecting

soils, biodiversity and animal welfare and less able to tackle climate change.”

Molly Scott Cato will launch a new report in the Spring on farming policy after Brexit which will identify opportunities on how farming can create environmental, social and economic benefits.

Notes

[1] http://www.cbi.org.uk/global-future/case_study06_wto.html

[2] <http://www.nfuonline.com/assets/61142>

[3]

<http://mollymep.org.uk/2016/09/14/green-meps-agricultural-support-post-brexit/>

[4]

<http://mollymep.org.uk/2017/01/04/defra-secretary-is-environmentally-irresponsible/>

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[News story: Liam Fox welcomes industrial strategy commitment to UK trade](#)

Following the launch of the industrial strategy green paper today – International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox, visited a leading advanced technology business in Oxfordshire to reiterate the government’s commitment to supporting UK business to grow at home and abroad.

On the visit to Prodrive in Banbury – a successful independent British engineering innovation business – the International Trade Secretary outlined the steps government is taking to support trade and investment across the country which can have a crucial impact on the growth of local economies.

The industrial strategy green paper sets out a plan to improve living standards and economic growth by increasing productivity and driving growth across the whole country. To achieve that goal, the green paper sets out ten strategic pillars to underpin a new government approach.

Encouraging trade and inward investment policy is one pillar and is key to opening up markets for UK firms, boosting productivity and growth across our economy, including by increasing competition and helping to bring new ways of doing things to the UK.

The Secretary of State for International Trade, Dr Liam Fox, said:

Trade and investment is a vital part of building an economy that works for all, creating jobs and transforming local communities and industry.

Across the UK we're pioneering a whole host of new technologies, working with industry and universities to ensure Britain remains the location of choice for many sectors, such as the next-generation automotive industry. Prodrive is a fantastic example of innovative British automotive engineering at its best and a great illustration of our how we can and should be exporting our world-class expertise to benefit our economy.

The UK is open and ready for business and the launch of the Industrial Strategy today shows our commitment to improving growth and productivity across the whole country.

The Department for International Trade is leading government work to continue to champion free trade and ensure it helps deliver an economy that works for everyone.

The strategy lists how the department will:

- build future trade relationships – The UK remains committed to pursuing free trade. That includes seeking to achieve continuity in our trade and investment relationships with third countries thereby minimising disruption for business as we leave the EU
- build global prosperity
- improve market access for exporters
- create a more active approach to winning overseas contracts
- increase defence exports
- double export finance capacity
- make government trade services easier to use for firms – the department has recently launched a [ground breaking new digital platform](#) to provide digital services to help exporters and investors;
- join up trade and inward investment promotion with local areas
- strengthen the value from trade shows and
- develop a new, more strategic approach to inward investment

Following the decision to leave the European Union, the UK has the opportunity to develop its new trading arrangements and take forward its ambition to become a global trading nation and champion of free trade.

On the visit to Prodrive the Secretary of State had a tour of the factory and saw first-hand how the company makes bespoke parts for race and rally cars

using traditional metalworking techniques and the advanced technology workshop where the company develops innovative projects for some of the company's biggest clients such as Jaguar Land Rover, Volvo and McLaren.

Further information

The [Automotive Investment Organisation](#) which now sits within DIT, has since it was set up by the Automotive Council in 2013, helped create or safeguard over 20,000 jobs in the UK automotive supply chain, and by attracting inward investment helped increase local content in UK-built cars from 36% to 41%.

Car-making in the UK is thriving – with more cars built last year than any year since 1999.

Speech: Rob Wilson's speech to the London Library Ambition sector forum

I am delighted to join you this morning to support the publication of our new Ambition document. I hope it's a great opportunity to really look at some of the practical proposals it makes to help libraries thrive in the future.

It's the first time central and local government has joined with sector stakeholders to draw up a strategy for public libraries in England and commit to a plan to deliver that. It's built on – and I hope you would recognise this – extensive consultation and input from the sector. We have all signed up to what it says, and to a successful future for libraries.

And why have we done that? Libraries are hugely important for the communities they serve. They not only provide access to books and other literature, but also help people to help themselves and improve their own opportunities. They bring people together and they provide practical support and guidance.

And libraries support people in different ways at each stage of their lives, and they can help government to achieve strategic priorities by delivering services in communities – whether related to health, social cohesion, information and digital literacy, jobs and business support or the enjoyment that literature and cultural activity brings.

Now I've been a councillor myself; I know councils have to make important decisions about resources, to meet local needs and also legal requirements as well.

But I believe that if councillors think imaginatively about how libraries can help deliver their priorities, providing real leadership, then Local Authorities will start to see libraries as an asset to be developed. Ambition challenges government at all levels to think 'Libraries First' in planning

services for communities – and I'll be championing that message with ministerial colleagues and councillors.

Ambition challenges councils and the library services they run to think and act differently. Standing still isn't an option. The way people use libraries and other public services is continuing to change. So we all need to think in innovative ways.

There are great examples of Local Authorities doing interesting and positive things – the Taskforce shares stories and ideas through its blog to stimulate original thinking. I've seen some great approaches during my own library visits; so for example,

- the new Curve in Slough, which is a part of the entire town's regeneration process. Alongside the library, it hosts Slough Museum, a multi-purpose community and performance space, community learning spaces, the Council's registrars services and a café with garden terrace.
- And Farnham Common, a thriving library run by a community group with financial and professional support from the council. It raises extra income to support the library service from renting space to the children's centre and police who share the building and also through community events and fundraising.

Councils should embrace change; should seek to do things differently, and to be as bold as possible. If they do, DCMS will help them. We are already helping to spark creative new approaches – for example through grants from our new £4 million 'Libraries: Opportunities for Everyone' innovation fund to assist libraries helping people living in disadvantaged areas. We've received over 100 bids, which Arts Council England is currently evaluating.

We're also providing advice and support to councils that want to find different and more effective ways to run their library services, such as public service mutuals; 4 library services have already successfully gone down this particular route.

I believe this is a really positive direction to take as I want to see more staff owning part of the service they run – so we will offer support to Councils who want to do go down this route. The challenge is to think strategically about reform and service delivery and not to tinker piecemeal.

Some changes will of course be more challenging. People often think of libraries as buildings – But it's not just the buildings that make libraries, it's the service that's important. Sometimes their location or layout no longer suits the things local councils and local communities want.

If so, then changes – such as co-location with other services or sometimes closures may be actually justified, and indeed required, in favour of providing library services in other ways; maybe through outreach into

communities or online.

But, and I want to make this absolutely clear, councils should make decisions like this based on robust evidence – rather than reducing provision in ad-hoc or very reactive ways.

Councils should be marshalling evidence about local needs, then actively discussing options to meet these with the community and with library professionals. I'll also expect councils to consider a full range of funding and delivery options before making significant reductions to their library services.

And if we receive complaints as part of our superintendence role, and where local authorities do not appear to be meeting their statutory duties, we will investigate. Where needed, I will take action under the 1964 Act. Libraries will not be seen as a soft option.

These sector events today and around the country are a start – I hope a useful and enjoyable start – to spreading the word about Ambition and sharing learning about things we can all do to help libraries succeed. But they aren't the end – keep an eye out for future masterclasses the Taskforce will be running to delve into some of these areas in more depth.

That way we can all work together to take library services forward into a sustainable and successful future.

Press release: Industrial Strategy will help unlock Northern Ireland's potential

From:

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Part of:

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, James Brokenshire, today hailed the launch of a modern Industrial Strategy which will build on the UK's strengths and tackle its underlying weaknesses to secure a future as a competitive, global nation.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

The Industrial Strategy is a vital part of the plan set out by the Prime Minister last week 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, from electric vehicles to biotech and quantum technologies.

My engagement with the Northern Ireland business community over the last six months has left me in no doubt about the opportunities that Northern Ireland can unlock. Today's Strategy Green Paper offers Northern Ireland businesses a valuable opportunity to address sector-specific challenges and work with government on solutions that can help.

I will continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders in Northern Ireland 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.

I will also be making the case 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.

There is a pedigree of achievement in Northern Ireland to build upon with 54,000 more people in work than in 2010. Now is the time to build on that success and look ahead to future opportunities, as the government steps forward to help build a United Kingdom that works for everyone.

SNP urged to 'come out of hiding' on independence economy plans

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23 Jan 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have called on the SNP to “come out of hiding” over its plans for the economy of an independent Scotland.

The nationalists’ Growth Commission, launched last year, presented a report to the party at the end of 2016 but it is yet to be published.

It comes as senior SNP figures have called on the party to ditch its support for the pound amid growing evidence it is divided over its flawed 2014 prospectus for independence.

The Scottish Conservatives will oppose any attempt by the SNP to bring forward a second independence referendum – and are calling on the SNP to rule it out.

And today, the UK Government outlined its plans for a modern industrial strategy, aimed at boosting business and creating more high-skilled jobs.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“Today the UK Government is setting out a clear way forward to prepare the UK for our future outside the EU.

“The SNP, by contrast, has once again spent the weekend threatening a second referendum on independence, which would pile even more uncertainty on to Scotland.

“Nicola Sturgeon last year set up a growth commission, but has conspicuously refused to reveal any of its proposals.

“If the SNP is really confident about its case for separation, it should let us know what its plans are.

“Anything short of that will simply confirm the fact that the nationalists are all bluster and no plan.

“It is time for the SNP to come out of hiding.”

The SNP pledged to publish findings from its growth commission before the end of 2016:

http://www.snp.org/snp_growth_commission

The UK Government published its industrial action plan today:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-38713327>