

BCC comments on Theresa May Brexit speech: positive ambition – now for the detail

Commenting on the Prime Minister's speech at the Mansion House today (Friday) outlining the government's Brexit objectives, Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

"Businesses will appreciate the Prime Minister's ambition and her determination to secure a wide-ranging agreement in the next phase of negotiations with the EU. Theresa May's commitment to supporting the interests of business and enterprise will reassure firms that their needs will be front and centre in the negotiations ahead.

"Businesses will still have to wait for some of the detail they need to plan ahead with confidence, but the Prime Minister was clearer and more realistic than ever before on the political choices and economic trade-offs ahead.

"The practical issues that matter for business and trade must now become the absolute priority. The time for high-level statements is over, and attention must now turn to the painstaking process of getting the details right.

"Over the next fortnight, it is imperative for both sides to come to a swift agreement on transitional arrangements, to give businesses further certainty over short-term trading conditions, and to move swiftly on to detailed and constructive discussions about the future UK-EU relationship. Businesses on both sides of the Channel will be dismayed if the parties opt for high-volume megaphone blasts over pragmatic and practical concerns."

Commenting further on aspects of the Prime Minister's speech, Anastassia Beliakova, Head of Trade Policy at the British Chambers of Commerce, added:

On tariffs and mutual recognition, she said:

"Although some barriers to trade are inevitable as the UK leaves the EU, there are some that can and must be avoided. The Prime Minister's commitment to seek a tariff-free trading arrangement, and to aim to minimise costs and red tape behind the border, will be welcomed by businesses on both sides."

On customs and border management, she said:

"Much of the debate has been focussed on the merits and drawbacks of whether the UK should be part of a customs union with the European Union, but there are many other issues related to cross-border trade that need as much if not more attention.

"Transit of vehicles, validity of licences, inland health and safety checks on goods, and the waiving of unnecessary declarations are all critical areas

for negotiations – and would significantly ease future burdens on businesses. This is the sort of the detail that needs to be addressed, and swiftly, to give businesses greater confidence.

“Having reiterated the proposal for a customs partnership with the EU, whereby the UK collects two different sets of tariffs, the Prime Minister must now outline how this could work in practice – as this could potentially be very challenging for businesses to implement. The ‘highly streamlined option’ would also require a significant amount of investment, work and cooperation from customs on both sides – and if this is the preferred approach, the UK and the EU must agree next steps without delay.”

On future regulatory cooperation, she said:

“The Prime Minister is right to highlight sectors like aviation, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, where future co-operation between the UK and the EU is both desired by industry and eminently sensible. A pragmatic approach would seek to avoid the replication of processes and agencies, where a joint approach makes clear business sense.”

On the maintenance of a unified market within the United Kingdom, she added:

“We welcome the Prime Minister’s steadfast commitment to maintaining the integrity of the United Kingdom as a unified market for business. The ability to trade between the nations of the UK without expensive, unnecessary additional compliance measures is absolutely crucial.”

On immigration and labour markets, Beliakova said:

“At a time of critical labour shortages in many parts of the UK, a pragmatic approach to immigration is sorely needed. Business welcomed the recent clarity from government around the rules for EU nationals arriving during the transition period, but will want to see an ambitious agreement between the UK and the EU that allows businesses across the continent to get the skills they need in future.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: www.britishchambers.org.uk

Media contacts:

Allan Williams – Head of Press and Communications

020 7654 5812 / 07920583381

Orla Hennessy – Press and Communications Officer

BCC Launches Chamber Business Awards 2018 at London Stock Exchange

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) today launches its flagship Chamber Business Awards at the London Stock Exchange. London Chamber of Commerce & Industry members AnyJunk, last year's winner of the 'Business of the Year' award, has the honour of opening the day's trading.

The prestigious competition is one of the showpiece events in the business calendar, recognising and promoting the best of British business through a series of regional heats, culminating in a Gala Awards Dinner, which will take place at Tobacco Dock, London on 29 November.

[Entries open today and will be accepted until midnight on Friday 29 June.](#)

This year's winner of the Business of the Year award will have the same chance to open the market at the London Stock Exchange as a prize, a rare opportunity for a private business.

Companies can enter nine categories, covering exports, small business, exemplary employers, technology, high-growth, customer commitment, partnerships with the education sector, digital communications, and workplace wellbeing. Sponsors of this year's awards include Bibby Financial Services, DHL, Legal and General, The London Stock Exchange, Qdos Consulting and RADA in Business.

Francis Martin, President of the British Chambers of Commerce said:

"Businesses are the driving force of the UK economy, generating jobs, prosperity and growth. Every year, the Chamber Network celebrates the best of British business, and recognises their contribution to both local communities and the wider economy.

"Every time I visit Chamber member businesses I'm struck by the time and resources they invest in developing the technology and talent of tomorrow. The Awards acknowledge the relentless efforts of these businesses and their talented employees.

"Each year the calibre and diversity of applicants to the Chamber Business Awards surpasses our expectations, and we look forward to seeing the scope of great companies that apply this year."

Jason Mohr of AnyJunk, Winner of the 'Business of the Year' award 2017, said:

"Everyone at AnyJunk is extremely proud to have been recognised in this way.

To have been chosen from hundreds of companies across the UK is a huge honour and one we'll do our very best to live up to. Getting to open the London Stock Exchange is definitely the icing on the cake."

Marcus Stuttard, Head of UK Primary Markets & Head of AIM, London Stock Exchange Group said:

"We are proud to support the Chamber Business Awards and celebrate the best of British business. London Stock Exchange Group is committed to supporting the most ambitious firms, allowing them to scale and grow."

Ends

Notes to editors:

The Chamber Business Awards culminates in a Gala Dinner which will take place on 29 November 2018 at Tobacco Dock, London.

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: www.britishchambers.org.uk

Media contacts:

Allan Williams – Head of Press and Communications

020 7654 5812 / 07920583381

Orla Hennessy – Press and Communications Officer

020 7654 5813 / 07825746812

[BCC: Immigration announcement big step in right direction](#)

Commenting on the Home Office's statement on UK immigration policy during the planned transition period following the UK's exit from the European Union, Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

"The BCC has long campaigned for an immigration system that supports the economy, so the UK government's unilateral offer of rights for EU nationals during the transition period is a big step in the right direction.

“Since the vote to leave the European Union, employers across the country have sought assurances and clarity on the status of existing EU workers and those that arrive during the transition, so they will be pleased to finally have answers. This announcement will remove significant short-term uncertainty for families, businesses and wider communities.

“The government’s announcement means that employers can hire EU nationals during the transition period without expensive and unnecessary compliance issues, which too often hinder the ability of firms to recruit talent from overseas when necessary.

“Business will be pleased that during a time of record-high labour shortages, the government is showing a pragmatic approach to immigration. Firms will want to see this realism embedded in future migration policy when the UK leaves the EU.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: www.britishchambers.org.uk

Media contacts:

Allan Williams – Head of Press and Communications

020 7654 5812 / 07920583381

Orla Hennessy – Press and Communications Officer

020 7654 5813 / 07825746812

[BCC: migration figures no cause for celebration](#)

Director General Adam Marshall comments on the latest migration figures.

Commenting on the migration statistics for the year to September 2017, published today by the ONS, Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

“These figures are no cause for celebration. At a time when businesses in every part of the country are seeing record skills shortages, falls in the levels of migration from the EU, for whatever reason, will only exacerbate the problem.

Our recent survey work showed that only 2% of firms look to hire directly from the EU in the first instance, preferring to hire locally. When skilled staff simply can't be found, a fall in migration makes it harder for firms to maintain their existing performance – much less grow their business. The fact that skilled people are choosing not to come to the UK to work is a cause for real concern.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: www.britishchambers.org.uk

Media contacts:

Allan Williams – Head of Press and Communications

020 7654 5812 / 07920583381

Orla Hennessy – Press and Communications Officer

020 7654 5813 / 07825746812

[BCC comments on labour market statistics for February 2018](#)

Suren Thiru comments on the labour market statistics for February 2018.

“While the latest data confirms that the UK labour market remains a source of strength for the UK economy with another strong rise in employment, the first rise in the unemployment rate since mid-2016 suggests that a few cracks are starting to appear in an otherwise robust picture.

“Although there was a welcome pick-up in pay growth, inflation continues to outpace earnings growth. While firms are reporting some upward pressure on pay settlements amid a very tight labour market, more subdued economic conditions together with high upfront business costs are likely to limit the

extent to which wages are likely to rise.

“The continued rise in job vacancies is further confirmation of the chronic skills shortages faced by businesses across the UK. Our own survey data confirms that the lack of available workers with the right skills continues to be a drag on overall business activity.

“It is vital that more is done to support firms looking to recruit and grow their business, including tackling the high up-front taxes and costs of doing business in the UK and ensuring companies have access to the workers they need to compete on the global stage.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: www.britishchambers.org.uk

Media contacts:

Allan Williams – Head of Press and Communications

020 7654 5812 / 07920583381

Orla Hennessy – Press and Communications Officer

020 7654 5813 / 07825746812