

[Press release: British High Commission hosts the Commonwealth Big Lunch in Dhaka](#)

Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury MP, Honourable Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament attended as Chief Guest and the event brought together 150 people including the High Commissioners of Malaysia, Brunei, Canada and Sri Lanka, and Acting High Commissioners of Australia and Pakistan, representatives from the university and education sector, NGOs and civil society, medicine, businesses, Bangladeshi Queen's Young Leaders and Points of Light award winner and the British Council's Active Citizens.

The lunch celebrated the diversity and achievement of the Commonwealth and this year's theme of 'towards a common future', with themed discussion of education, business and trade, women empowerment and girl's education, climate change, health and working children.

This lunch was one of a series held across the Commonwealth – launched by the Eden Project in partnership with the UK Government – between 12 March, Commonwealth Day, and 22 April to mark the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting when Government leaders and representatives and civil society representatives from 53 countries will gather in the UK to work together to address shared global challenges.

British High Commissioner Alison Blake CMG said:

“The idea behind the Big Lunch is a simple one: to bring together friends and partners to celebrate being part of the Commonwealth, to draw on our diversity, our strengths and our shared values and to enjoy a meal in each others' company. I was delighted that so many of our colleagues and friends and partners joined us. Bring together a group of talented high achievers, committed to working every day to build a safer, more prosperous and fairer world, and you start a series of the discussions and new connections that fire the imagination and turn a simple meal together into something very special.”

The previous day, 17 April, the British High Commissioner hosted an evening reception to celebrate the Birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, at which Khandker Mosharaf Hossain, MP, Hon'ble Minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives, was the Chief Guest.

Further Information

About the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

This week the UK is hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, where leaders from across the Commonwealth are gathering in London and Windsor. With the theme of 'Towards a Common Future' they are working to

create a more prosperous, secure, sustainable and fair future for the Commonwealth's 2.4 billion citizens, particularly its young people.

For more information please visit [Commonwealth Head of Government Meeting](#) or follow on Twitter [@commonwealth18](#) #OurCommonwealth.

The Eden Project

The Eden Project is an educational charity and social enterprise based in Cornwall, UK, that aims to connect people with one another and the natural world to explore a better future.

[The Eden Project Big Lunch](#) takes place this year on Sunday, 3 June.

For updates on the British High Commission and for more information on the Chevening Programme, please follow our social media channels.

[News story: UK and South Africa welcome progress on trade relationship](#)

The Minister of Trade and Industry (the DTI), Dr Rob Davies had a bilateral meeting with his United-Kingdom counterpart Dr Liam Fox in London on Tuesday 17 April 2018. In the margins of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting they discussed the trading relationship between the UK and South Africa. The ministers were pleased with the strength of the UK-South Africa trade and investment relationship.

As the UK is in the process of exiting the European Union (EU), South Africa welcomed the UK's intention to avoid any disruption to trade. In particular, both ministers welcomed the significant progress made so far in discussions with the Southern African Customs Union (SACU which includes Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland) and Mozambique. These are to ensure continuity of the EU-SADC Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) as the UK leaves the EU.

Both parties welcomed the agreement reached between the EU and UK at the March European Council that the UK is to be treated as a Member State for the purposes of international agreements during the EU-UK Implementation Period (1 April 2019 to 31 December 2020). This provides further certainty that there will not be disruption to the existing trading relationship during the implementation period.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:

Free trade has transformed developing economies across the world,

and 44 of our 52 Commonwealth partners, including South Africa, benefit from development-focused preferential trade access to the UK market. That's why it's important to ensure continuity and certainty in our current trade arrangements as we leave the EU, and UK officials with their counterparts across Southern Africa have made excellent progress in this.

As we leave the EU and create a new independent UK trade policy, we will build further on our £9 billion of annual trade with South Africa, our biggest trading partner in Africa, and champion free trade to help developing countries combat poverty and grow their economies.

Minister Davies, said that the UK remains an important strategic partner for South Africa globally. South Africa and the UK have enjoyed mutually beneficial preferential trade since entry into force of the first reciprocal trade agreement between South Africa and the EU in January 2000.

Minister for Trade and Industry, Dr Rob Davies said:

The UK is South Africa's second largest trading partner in the EU Region. Our goods exports to the UK in 2014 were R37.6 billion and increased to R46.3 billion in 2017.

Noteworthy is the positive trade balance that South Africa continues to enjoy in its trade with the UK, which earns the country foreign currency and contributes to reducing the country's current account deficit. The key priority for South Africa is to change the structure of our trade to more value added products.

Minister Davies also welcomed the progress made by experts towards finalisation of the rollover of the EPA arrangement between SACU + Mozambique and the UK. "This is critical to ensure continuity post-Brexit", added Davies.

Both parties agreed to assess options for bilateral technical cooperation in the areas of trade and investment promotion. In addition, the parties agreed to work together to promote investments in priority sectors to advance sustainable economic development.

[News story: Find out what's new about](#)

the National Apprenticeship Awards 2018 – now open for entries

One of the new categories is the recruitment excellence award – and will recognise employers who have attracted a diverse and high-quality apprenticeship workforce through new and innovative approaches to recruitment. The National Apprenticeship Service will identify one individual winner to receive a recognition award, rewarding someone who has made a special contribution to the promotion and delivery of apprenticeships.

For the first time, a rising star award will showcase apprentices who have made impressive progress in their career to date and who show the potential, through their apprenticeship, to take a career path to the very top of their chosen profession. Nominated by their employers, at the national stage of the awards the public will be invited to vote on the overall winner for this category.

Apprentice employers and apprentices from all sectors and industries are invited to enter the awards. Judged by a team of experts, entrants have the opportunity to be crowned a regional winner at nine awards ceremonies set to take place across the country. From the regional champions, a national judging panel will select the overall National Apprenticeship Award winners, to be celebrated at a national ceremony on 28 November 2018.

The awards are the largest and most prestigious celebration of apprentices and apprentice employers across the country. Previous winners have experienced a diverse range of benefits following their success. Here, 2 award winners from last year share the benefits that their victory has had for them so far.

Charlotte Hughes, GSK employee and winner of the Higher or Degree Apprentice of the Year 2017, said:

“I am extremely proud to have been a winner at the National Apprenticeship Awards. It’s provided a huge boost to my confidence and has helped raise my profile within and outside my organisation. Everyone is really proud of my achievement and many opportunities have opened up due to winning. The whole process has made me realise what I’m truly capable of. I would encourage anyone that is eligible to apply.”

Tim Brown, managing director of Superior, a Dorset-based manufacturing firm, crowned medium Employer of the Year 2017, said:

“The whole experience of entering the awards, winning at regional stage and then being crowned a winner at the National Apprenticeship Awards has been unforgettable. It has motivated us to do more and continue raising the profile of apprenticeships.

“Everyone at Superior is incredibly proud of this fantastic achievement, it

has helped us gain positive recognition as an employer that is committed to offering quality apprenticeships and careers to people of all ages and backgrounds – it has also helped us attract the best talent. If you're thinking of applying for the National Apprenticeship Awards, you should absolutely do it – getting that gold award is unbeatable.”

Employer of the Year categories:

- SME of the Year: 1 – 249 employees
- Large Employer of the Year: 250 – 4,999 employees
- Macro Employer of the Year: 5,000+ employees
- The Recruitment Excellence Award: new for 2018, the winner will be selected from the Employer of the Year award entries

Apprentice of the Year categories:

- Intermediate Level (level 2)
- Advanced Level (level 3)
- Higher or Degree Level (level 4 or higher)

Special recognition categories:

- Rising Star Award: new for 2018, recognises apprentices that have made impressive progress in their career to date, and have the potential to go even further
- Recognition Award: new for 2018, awarded to an individual who has made a special contribution to the promotion and delivery of apprenticeships – to be selected by the National Apprenticeship Service
- Apprenticeship Champion of the Year: recognises individuals who go 'above and beyond' to champion apprenticeships

The application site is now open, entry is free and online at appawards.co.uk. To help with entries, this year the process has been simplified further and guidance documents for employers and apprentices are available to download.

The deadline for entries is the 25 May 2018.

Applying is easier than ever before. Start your awards entry today, visit: appawards.co.uk.

[Press release: New partnership aims to strengthen conventional arms control](#)

in the Commonwealth

The UK's Counter Proliferation and Arms Control Centre and the Commonwealth Secretariat have agreed a new partnership to strengthen cooperation, coordination and information-sharing on conventional arms control among Commonwealth countries. The Conventional Arms Control in the Commonwealth Initiative will provide unique tools to Commonwealth countries to support national and regional implementation of measures to tackle the illicit arms trade, in line with international obligations and standards.

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Patricia Scotland, commented on the timeliness of the initiative:

Our member countries have expressed the need for assistance to help implement international obligations in relation to arms control, and the Conventional Arms Control in the Commonwealth Initiative will certainly be welcome. Member countries have stressed the devastating consequences of illegal arms trade on development, by prolonging violence and undermining human rights. Cooperation between Commonwealth countries can make an important difference in tackling illicit arms trade.

The Rt Hon Sir Alan Duncan, the Foreign Office Minister with responsibility for defence and international security said:

The effective control of arms is a goal that unites us all because the potential consequences of their misuse are so grave. The UK is committed to playing a leading role in global efforts to regulate the arms trade in order to stop these weapons from falling into the hands of terrorists and criminals, who use them to undermine international peace and security and drive the illegal wildlife trade.

We are delighted to provide nearly half a million pounds to fund this initiative and to join together with other Commonwealth countries in the fight against illicit arms trafficking.

This is in line with one of the four main goals for the Commonwealth Heads of Government summit taking place in the UK this week, to build a more secure future through increased multilateral action and cooperation.

The Conventional Arms Control in the Commonwealth Initiative will be

delivered by the Commonwealth Secretariat, in conjunction with the Small Arms Survey, a Geneva based global centre of excellence on small arms and armed violence. It will facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise on measures to address the illicit arms trade, take stock of progress achieved in implementing international and regional arms control instruments and provide assistance on legal reform and legislative drafting.

[News story: The Royal Parks appoint Richard Hamilton](#)

Richard is Director, Digital Land strategy programme at Ordnance Survey, prior to which he was Director of Strategy at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. He began his career at Barclays where he spent ten years, followed by eight at KPMG.

Richard has variously been Strategy Advisor to the British Council, Business in the Community and The Prince's Charities. He was an elected local authority member (Dartford Borough Council) from 1998 until 2003, and a non-executive Director of Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust from 2003 until 2007. He holds an MBA from the University of Oxford.

The role is not remunerated. This appointment has been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's [Governance Code on Public Appointment](#). The appointments process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Under the Code, any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years must be declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation, or candidature for election. Richard has declared that he delivered leaflets at the 2017 election for conservative candidates.