

Speech: Liam Fox encourages businesses to have their say on trade deals

Good afternoon, and welcome to DIT's Free Trade Agreement stakeholder engagement event.

I'd like to thank Karl and the whole of KPMG for hosting us today, and British American Business, for helping my officials to organise this event.

I'm going to start by talking about beer.

I accept that it may seem a little bit early in the day to be talking about more alcohol. But the UK beer and cider industry is one of my favourite examples of the transformative power of Free Trade Agreements.

In the year before a formal FTA opened up South Korean markets to British exporters, the industry's sales to that country were less than £2 million a year.

By 2017 however, Koreans were consuming some ten times that value of British beer and cider a year. By coincidence, I will be heading to South Korea tomorrow.

The quality of the product, of course, speaks for itself. Yet it also demonstrates how formal inter-governmental agreements can transform the prospects and profits of ordinary businesses across the UK.

As you will be aware, from April next year the United Kingdom will begin to negotiate new, independent trade deals with key partner nations.

The negotiations will be conducted by my Department for International Trade. Our department is one of the youngest in government – just two years old – but in that time we have built up an unparalleled repository of trade expertise.

The negotiation and signing of these agreements will be conducted at a government level. Yet FTAs exist not for the benefit of government departments, but for businesses across the United Kingdom.

That is why we have launched public consultations for our first four FTAs – with the United States, Australia, with New Zealand, and on the UK's potential accession to the Trans-Pacific Trading Partnership.

You have all been invited here today because you have a stake in the outcome of these negotiations. Many of you will trade with one of these countries, or all of them.

All of you will have customers, or suppliers, that are some way connected to these nations. Globalisation has reached us all.

After all, Birmingham, and the wider Midlands Engine, is one of the most internationally-connected areas of the United Kingdom. Technology, advanced manufacturing and the aerospace industry all have a significant footprint here, and all require free and open access to the world's markets.

It is not only manufacturers and exporters of physical goods that stand to gain from our future free trade agreements.

The United Kingdom derives around 80% of its GDP from its service industry – more than almost any other nation in the G20. This is reflected in the make-up of today's audience.

Yet the rules-based international system has often failed to liberalise the trade in services in the way that it has for goods. As such, services exports are often subjected to tariffs and complexities that goods are not.

Despite these constraints, the global trade in services tripled between 2000 and 2016.

How and what we trade is also changing rapidly. International data flows will be 300 times higher by 2021 than they were in 2005. We are living in a world where knowledge and information is traded as readily as cars and steel, and yet we have no framework to govern or facilitate it.

These FTAs, and the others that will follow, are an opportunity to redress the imbalance. They are a chance not only for the UK to open up new and vital market for our own companies, but to lead the way globally on trade in services liberalisation.

You are here today because we want your input in this process. I have mentioned the wealth of expertise that exists in my department, but that can only get us so far.

DIT exists to facilitate trade, and to help businesses from every corner of the United Kingdom to realise their global potential. To do that, we must shape our policy to your requirements.

We have a once in a generation chance to choose what kind of country we want to be, and we want you – our businesses – to help us to realise it.

And now I am happy to take a few questions, before I hand over to my officials, led by director Oliver Griffiths, who will take you through the Free Trade Agreement Consultations, and discuss the process with you further.

[Press release: RWM strengthens Board](#)



Karen Wheeler

Radioactive Waste Management (RWM) Chairman Professor Malcolm Morley OBE has announced the appointment of two new Independent Non-Executive Directors to join the Board of RWM, the body responsible for providing radioactive waste solutions today and for the future. RWM Chairman Professor Malcolm Morley OBE said:

RWM is responsible for ensuring that radioactive waste is safely and securely managed today and for delivering a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) for the disposal of high activity radioactive waste in the future. It is committed to working with communities, Government, the nuclear industry and a wide range of stakeholders to deliver a GDF. I am delighted that Karen and David have joined RWM to add their extensive range of experience and knowledge to work with Board colleagues to support the development and success of the company.

Karen Wheeler has senior level public and private sector experience of major change programmes and the development of organisations to become delivery organisations. She is currently Director General for Border Delivery Group and works across Government.

David Prout is Pro-Vice-Chancellor at Oxford University where he has responsibility for strategic planning, resource allocation, the University estate and its capital plan. Previously David worked in central and local government, including as Director General for the £50 billion High Speed 2 rail programme.

David Prout

Karen and David took up their appointments in September 2018.

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[News story: New education and skills measures announced](#)

Education Secretary Damian Hinds has today (2 October) announced a series of measures to make sure every child has access to a world-class education at every stage of their lives, regardless of their background.

The announcements build on the hard work of teachers and the government's reforms with 1.9 million more pupils now in good or outstanding schools than in 2010 – an increase from 66% of pupils to 86%.

School sport action plan

A cross-government school sport and activity action plan will consider ways to ensure that all children have access to quality, protected PE and sport sessions during the school week and opportunities to be physically active throughout the school day.

The Department for Education, [Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport](#), and the [Department of Health and Social Care](#), will review what further steps can be taken to support schools to train their teachers to deliver high quality provision in school and ensure that every child can participate in the sport and physical activity that is right for them.

Ministers will meet National Governing Bodies and sporting organisations including the Football Association, the Premier League, Rugby Football Union, England Hockey and England Netball to ensure that school sport platforms offer our young people the best opportunities to compete.

The action plan will be launched in spring 2019 and it will be informed by the first publication of data from the Active Lives Children Survey – the government's new and world-leading approach to measuring how children and young people engage with sport and physical activity.

It will also link to the existing [Sporting Future strategy](#), [Childhood Obesity Plan](#) and to plans to build a legacy from the Commonwealth Games, which will be taking place in Birmingham in 2022.

Basic maths skills

Centres for excellence in maths will be established across the country to improve the quality of maths teaching in post-16 institutions, focusing on improving basic maths knowledge and skills for those aged 16 and over.

Maths is one of the most in-demand skills in the labour market and it is already the most popular subject at A Level and GCSE. However, a third of young people do not achieve a standard GCSE pass in maths.

The government is determined, through its modern [Industrial Strategy](#), to

increase the number of people understanding and studying the subject, helping them to secure good jobs and boost the UK economy.

That is why 21 new centres for excellence will be established in post-16 institutions across the country – with at least one in every region of England. The programme will design new and improved teaching approaches, develop high quality teaching resources, build teachers' skills, and spread best practice across the country through maths networks.

This announcement is part of the £40 million announced in the 2017 Autumn Budget to improve the quality of basic maths provision for low attaining young people over the age of 16 over the next five years.

English hubs

The government is announcing the names of 32 schools across England that will take a leading role in supporting schools that struggle to teach children to read by improving the teaching of early language and reading.

This network of some of the best performing primary schools will work to increase reading standards in schools across the country and improve education outcomes for the most disadvantaged children, particularly in underperforming schools.

Reading is key to opening up learning. While the government has made great progress through the introduction of phonics, it wants to continue to drive improvements in the standards of literacy.

Building on the success of phonics, which has contributed to 163,000 more six-year-olds on track being fluent readers than in 2012, the 32 schools will spread best practice and teaching techniques, backed by £26.3 million funding. This will include providing school workshops for teachers and more intensive school-to-school support.

The hub schools were chosen through a competitive process – all 32 have a background of excellent phonics teaching and are distributed to benefit the areas that need it most. Each hub will identify specialist literacy teachers who will get additional training to act as experts in teaching in early language and reading from reception year to Key Stage 1. The hubs will work with up to 170 local primary schools and will build a network of excellent phonics teaching in every region.

Capital funding for T Levels

£38 million is being made available to the first providers of T Levels to make sure pupils taking the new technical qualifications from 2020 have access to the equipment and facilities they need.

T Levels, which will be on a par with A Levels, will provide young people with a high quality choice between technical and academic education post-16. Courses in construction, digital and education & childcare will be taught for the first time from September 2020.

The new qualifications will help ensure that young people can get the skills and knowledge they need and the economy demands.

The funding will be available to the providers delivering the first three T Levels in time to make sure they can invest in equipment, facilities and refurbishment works via a bidding round.

Careers guidance

The government will expand the network of schools and colleges across the country that is sharing and developing the best careers advice so young people get the guidance and support they need.

The number of areas served by these networks, supported by the Careers & Enterprise Company, will double from 20 to 40.

The government will also expand the training places available to support new careers leaders in schools and colleges from 500 to 1300.

In addition, the National Careers Service website is being refreshed and improved to ensure that it better meets the needs of young people and adults.

Tackling poor behaviour

Schools must get the tools and support they need to tackle poor behaviour so no child's education is undermined by disruption.

The government will reform training so every teacher is equipped to manage behaviour, backed by a £10 million investment to support schools to share best practice and back heads who choose to ban mobile phones.

The reforms to training will mean that all teachers will be shown how to effectively manage behaviour in their first two years in the profession.

Most schools already have a policy in place restricting pupils' use of mobile phones in schools. The Government has made clear that it will back heads who take these decisions as this can reduce bullying and improve attainment.

Research from the London School of Economics in 2015, found that after schools banned unrestricted access to mobile phones, the test scores of students aged 16 improved on average by 6.4%, and time lost in classes that permitted free access to smartphones was equivalent to around five days of schooling per year.

Further information:

Earlier this week the government [announced a package of reforms and an extra £95 million of government funding](#) to ensure the Apprenticeships Programme continues to help business train people with the skills they need for the new economy and the Chancellor pledged £100 million for the first phase of the National Retraining Scheme.

News story: Matt Hancock warns of dangers of social media on children's mental health

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock has issued an urgent warning on the potential dangers of social media on children's mental health, stating that the threat of social media on mental health is similar to that of sugar on physical health.

He confirmed that the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Professor Dame Sally Davies, is reviewing the impact that excessive social media can have on children's mental health.

The CMO will draw up guidance to help parents ensure children don't use social media in a way that harms their mental health.

The guidance will include what age a child should be allowed to sign up to a social media account, and how often they should have access.

The CMO's review will also cover:

- cyberbullying
- online gaming where there is a social media aspect
- sleep problems
- problematic internet use, also known as 'internet addiction'

Dame Sally will publish interim findings from the review in December.

Evidence shows that children who spend more than 3 hours using social networking websites on a school day are twice as likely to report high or very high scores for mental ill-health.

The government has made children and young people's mental health a top priority in the NHS, and is half way through a major programme to improve access to specialist NHS services, supported by £1.4 billion of funding.

While the Health and Social Care Secretary welcomes the progress some social media companies have made, there is much more to do.

Next year, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) will work with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to launch an online awareness campaign to raise awareness of all existing information and tools for parents on limiting their children's screen time.

Matt Hancock is also continuing to engage with his ministerial colleagues at DCMS and the Home Office around their upcoming Online Harms white paper.

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care said:

Overwhelmingly technology is a force for good, but we are seeing more and more evidence that children using social media sites for hours on end each day is having a detrimental impact on their mental health.

I want to empower parents to keep their children safe in the digital age which is why I've asked the Chief Medical Officer to draw up helpful guidance to allow them to make an informed choice

Chief Medical Officer Professor Dame Sally Davies said:

Mental health is just as important as physical health and should be treated as such.

I recognise there is concern amongst parents about the impact of social media on their children's mental health so I am conducting a thorough evidence review and will draw up advice to help empower parents and provide clarity.

Press release: New awards to celebrate the best in the highways sector

The Highways England Awards aim to showcase individuals, teams, projects and companies.

Nominations open today, and are invited from all Highways England employees, its suppliers and their supply chain (including extended supply chain and small and medium enterprises).

To recognise the very best of its suppliers and staff, Highways England has combined the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Awards and the Supplier Recognition Scheme.

Jim O'Sullivan, Highways England chief executive, said:

At Highways England we are constantly challenging ourselves and our supply chain to achieve more for our customers. We focus our efforts around our three imperatives – safety, customer and delivery – and seek out ways to improve and innovate in these areas.

The Highways England Awards allow us to reflect on our accomplishments, celebrate our achievements and share examples of excellence in our industry. These awards will continue the legacy of the Supplier Recognition Scheme and the Health Safety and Wellbeing Awards under a single event, which recognises the very best work of our company and its suppliers.

I encourage you to apply for these awards. I know we have committed, talented and motivated people in our company and supply chain. This is your opportunity to take pride in your achievements and allow Highways England to celebrate the contributions made by those who work with us and for us.

View a video by Jim O'Sullivan announcing the launch of the awards:

[Highways England Awards 2019 launch](#)

Judges will be looking for nominations that demonstrate clear outcomes and benefits and illustrate how these have been evaluated. The winners will reflect the very best of the business and demonstrate the highest standards for the industry.

The ten award categories are:

Safety

- Excellence in Occupational Health and Wellbeing
- Excellence in Safety for Road Users
- Championing Safety
- Leading Behaviour Change for Safety

Customer

- Excellence in Customer Service
- Improving Customers Journeys
- Improving Employee Engagement and Behavioural Change

Delivery

- Excellence in Environment and Sustainability
- Leading Efficiencies and Continuous Improvement
- Project of the Year

In addition, the Chairman's Award for Excellence in Safety, which focuses specifically on excellence in safety and getting people 'home safe and well', will also be presented at the awards.

Previous Highways England award scheme winners include SafetyCam – a mobile road worker protection system that collects hard evidence of drivers entering roadworks to improve road worker safety. On average there are nearly 300 incidents a week of incursions and abuse reported by road workers. In 2016/17, a total of 31 fatal injuries to workers were caused by being struck

by a moving vehicle. SafetyCam is tackling these issues, with 13 vehicles operational and another 10 due soon.

Darren Nelson, Chief Executive, Carnell Support Service Ltd said:

Winning a Highways England Health, Safety & Wellbeing Award provided us with a powerful endorsement of SafetyCam, our road worker protection system. This has not only raised awareness of our innovation, but also the dangers that site teams face every day on the strategic road network.

Since the awards success we have seen an increase in requests for long-term deployment from clients nationwide, which has led to us doubling our fleet. We are proud to have developed and shared a solution that has led to a demonstrable improvement in driver behaviour through road works.

The entry form is available on the [awards website](#).

The closing date for entries is 5pm on Monday 3 December 2018 and a ceremony to present the awards will take place in Birmingham on 28 March 2019.

For any further information please email: HEawards@highwaysengland.co.uk.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.