

[Press release: Final call for business input into export strategy](#)

Following extensive engagement with businesses across the country, Baroness Fairhead, Minister of State for Trade and Export Promotion, today issued a final call for businesses to come forward and input into the government's forthcoming Export Strategy.

Publishing the [Terms of Reference](#) today, the Baroness emphasised the importance of business driving the content of the Strategy, with the Department for International Trade estimating that more than 300,000 UK companies produce products that could be exported but currently have no overseas sales. Ministers have already conducted a series of roundtables with businesses of all sizes and across a number of sectors. These have been convened in conjunction with a number of key stakeholders, including the Federation of Small Business and the British Chambers of Commerce, to understand the barriers preventing companies from exporting.

The minister also set out that the Export Strategy will build on the recent [Industrial Strategy](#), as well as complementing future British trade policy, by helping firms to increase their capacity to export their goods and services overseas.

Businesses are being asked to reflect on the challenges they face that currently prevent them from exporting to foreign markets. They will also be asked about the specific needs of their sectors, as well as the current offer of support available to them.

Baroness Fairhead, Minister of State for Trade and Export Promotion, said:

Export support is a key way that the government can help businesses succeed and grow. The aim of the Export Strategy is to provide assistance which is effective, high quality and timely, allowing companies to achieve sustainable growth on the world stage.

Building on the foundations laid by the Industrial Strategy and our future trade policy, I am confident that with the vital contribution of British businesses – we can help take UK exports to the next level.

The latest figures from the Office of National Statistics show that demand for British goods and services rose to the end of January 2018. UK exports rose 11.5% (£64.5 billion) in the month window to £625.9 billion, with the overall trade deficit narrowing by £12.8 billion in the process.

The minister is today travelling to Hong Kong for the [GREAT Festival of Innovation](#) which is showcasing the best of British creativity to potential partners and investors from around the world.

From this week, British businesses of all sizes will also be able to showcase their products in front of millions of potential new customers as a new campaign launches between the Department for International Trade and some of Asia's top e-commerce platforms and mobile shopping apps.

Over 160 British brands will have their goods promoted across 3 China and Hong Kong based e-tailers – ttHigo, Goxip and MyMM.

The Export Strategy is expected to report in the coming months. [The Terms of Reference](#) are included in today's announcement.

Businesses are being asked to submit answers to the following questions:

1. how should government differentiate its support for different sizes of firm?
2. how should government prioritise its support across different business sectors and overseas markets?
3. how should government change its mix of products and services to help businesses achieve a sustained increase in exports?
4. how should government work with regional and private sector export support to deliver a more joined-up offer for businesses?
5. what should government do to increase capacity and capability in the private sector, particularly at a UK regional level?
6. how should government charge for the services it offers?
7. do you have any other comments that you would like DIT to take into account?

Evidence will be taken until 18 April 2018 and should be submitted to: DITExportStrategy@trade.gov.uk

About the E-Exporting Programme

DIT's [E-Exporting Programme](#) helps UK companies to accelerate their global growth through e-commerce. The programme provides access to the Selling Online Overseas Tool on great.gov.uk, a free-to-use, online service that allows businesses to click, connect, prepare and sell on global marketplaces such as Amazon, eBay and ttHigo. The tool provides access to discounts and benefits, including reduced commissions and special marketing packages.

About the GREAT Festival of Innovation

The Great Festival of Innovation Hong Kong will be the third of its kind, following successful events in Istanbul (2014) and Shanghai (2015). Its vision is to create long-term partnerships that drive the future of free trade and prosperity between the UK and Asia. Several hundred invited delegates will attend the Hong Kong event, which takes place at the Asia Society Hong Kong Centre and will feature more than 60 panels and events over its 4 days.

For more information, please visit great.gov.uk/innovation or follow the hashtag #GREATinnovation.

Press release: Grant to support disabled people in the workplace rises by over a third

Hundreds of disabled employees are to benefit from a £15,000 rise in Access to Work grants to assist them at work, following new measures introduced in Parliament today (20 March 2018).

From April 2018, people will be able to claim up to £57,200 annually to help pay for additional support that they may need in the workplace – approximately £15,000 more than the current cap of £42,100.

Access to Work provides financial support to ensure someone's disability or health condition doesn't hold them back at work, and can cover workplace adaptations, assistive technology, transport and interpreters.

Increasing the amount people can receive annually will ensure that more disabled people, particularly from the deaf community, are able to benefit from the grant and achieve their career aspirations.

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Esther McVey, said:

We believe that disabled people should have every opportunity to thrive in the workplace, and the tailored support of Access to Work caters to every individual's unique needs.

By extending this grant we're ensuring that many more disabled people can reach their career potential, which is a key part of our commitment to getting one million more disabled people in work by 2027.

The UK Council on Deafness said:

We are pleased to see that the Department for Work and Pensions has decided to significantly raise the Access to Work cap.

This will help deaf people whose first language is British Sign Language (BSL) to access the communication support so vital to enabling them to thrive and succeed in the workplace.

Access to Work is part of a range of support available to ensure that disabled people can enter, and thrive in, the workplace. This includes supported work experience placements, the government's [Disability Confident](#)

[scheme](#) and personalised support package. These are all part of the government's ambitious plan to see a million more disabled people in work by 2027.

The new cap will take effect from 1 April 2018.

As we continually seek to improve Access to Work, we will introduce the following measures:

- discretion in exceptional cases of multiple disability, to consider award limits averaged over a longer period – for example, where a customer's ongoing need for a support worker may be below the cap but when coupled with a periodic need for say a wheelchair, would exceed the cap in that year
- introduction of managed personal budgets to enable greater choice and control for customers in the way grants are spent
- taking applications 12 weeks ahead of a job start date rather than the current 6 weeks to allow more time for support to be agreed and put in place
- continuing to invest in our digital improvements such as developing the facility to submit invoices online
- allowing more flexibility in how people can use Access to Work to support short periods of work experience where there is a likelihood of a paid job in the near future

Follow DWP on:

[News story: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Mali in April 2018](#)

Ms Cat Evans has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of Mali and non-resident Ambassador to the Republic of Niger.

Ms Cat Evans has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of Mali and non-resident Ambassador to the Republic of Niger in succession to The Honourable Alice Walpole OBE. Ms Evans will take up her appointment in April 2018.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Full name: Catherine Angela Evans

2015 – present Addis Ababa, Deputy Head of Mission

2012 – 2015 FC0, Deputy Head, Future of Europe Department

2012 FCO, Deputy Head, Olympic Operations, Counter-Terrorism Department

2011 – 2012 Kabul, Counsellor (Political)

2009 – 2011 Islamabad, First Secretary (Political)

2008 – 2009 Basra, Ministry of Defence (MOD), Policy Adviser, Multi-National Division

2007 – 2008 MOD, Project Manager, Special Projects Integrated Project Team

2006 – 2007 Freetown, Deputy Civilian Adviser to Sierra Leone MOD, Department for International Development (secondment from MOD)

2005 – 2006 MOD, Programme Desk Officer, Defence Change Programme Directorate

2004 – 2005 Merton College (secondment from MOD), Team Leader, Prince's Trust Team Programme

2003 – 2004 MOD, Policy Desk Officer for Afghanistan

Further information

[News story: CMA Panel Inquiry Chair appointed](#)

His role will include chairing groups of CMA panel members making decisions on Phase 2 merger inquiries, market investigations and regulatory appeals. Panel members bring their experience of competition, economics, regulation, business, public policy and consumer law to the CMA's decision-taking.

Stuart will take up his role from 2 April 2018.

He brings with him a wealth of experience, having had a successful career as an economist specialising in regulatory economics, including as an executive Board Member and Group Director at Ofcom, the communications regulator.

He also held senior positions in several private sector organisations including PwC and IBM.

He has served as a panel member at the CMA since October 2017, following an appointment process run by BEIS and in accordance with the requirements set down in the Commissioner for Public Appointment's Code of Practice.

News story: Civil news: next steps for 2018 civil contracts tender process

The Legal Aid Agency (LAA) will now advise those organisations that have been successful in bidding for the remaining face to face categories:

- Family
- Welfare Benefits
- Immigration and Asylum (including Immigration Removal Centres)
- Mental Health
- Community Care
- Clinical Negligence
- Claims against Public Authorities
- Public Law
- Family Mediation

This follows the closure of tenders for face to face contracts on 10 November 2017 and the notification in January 2018 of those who were successful in bidding for face to face contracts in the Housing and Debt categories.

For completeness, the LAA will re-confirm to those who were successful in the Housing and Debt categories under the face to face contract procurement process.

Those organisations taking part in the procurement process for the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme (HPCDS) contracts will be notified of the outcome in due course.

How will these notifications on face to face contracts be made?

The LAA will formally write to each affected organisation via the e-Tendering system, advising them of the status of their tenders, from week commencing 19 March 2018.

We anticipate that most notifications will have been sent out by Friday 30 March. Applicants who have bid for face to face contracts and have not received notification by 3 April should contact the LAA through the e-Tendering system message board.

When will services under new contracts begin?

Services under new face to face contracts will begin on 1 September 2018.

Services under new Civil Legal Advice (specialist telephone advice) contracts will also begin from 1 September 2018, and services under new Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme contracts will begin from 1 October 2018.

How long will the contracts last?

Each contract will initially run until 31 August 2021, with an option for the LAA to extend for up to a further 2 years.

What will happen next?

Following notifications, the LAA will work with organisations to complete the verification process described in the letter of notification through the Bravo system. However, organisations are reminded that the award of the contract is conditional on them satisfactorily verifying their bids.

It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure they provide all the necessary information to evidence they meet the relevant verification requirements no later than 23:59 on 20 July 2018.

Further information

Further information about the process can be found on our tender page:

[Civil 2018 contracts tender page](#)