

Press release: Welsh Secretary announces trade and investment visit to New York, New Jersey and Philadelphia

A three-day trade mission to New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, led by Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns, will begin today.

With the aim of attracting American businesses to invest in Wales and build on a trading relationship already worth more than £33.5 billion, Mr Cairns will meet with companies operating in sectors from cyber security to pharmaceuticals.

He will be joined by two Board of Trade Advisers: former Chairman of Cardiff Airport and Welsh Development Agency, Lord Rowe-Beddoe and Chief of Staff for Manchester Airport Group Collette Roche.

Secretary of State for Wales and Board of Trade Adviser, Alun Cairns, said:

Wales and the United States are close trading partners – and I want to ensure that we continue to build on this important relationship by creating more investment and exporting opportunities for companies from both countries.

US firms invest more than £30 billion in the UK and our commercial relationship is stronger than ever. We want to see that partnership continue to grow and flourish, making Wales the place of choice for investors.

In the year 2016-17, the Department for International Trade (DIT) supported 85 investment projects in Wales, generating 2,581 jobs. In the same year, Welsh companies exported more than £16 billion to the world's largest economy, up 18.8% on the previous year.

International Trade Secretary and President of the Board of Trade, Dr Liam Fox, said:

I'm delighted to see this Board of Trade delegation head across the Atlantic, seeking to attract investment into Wales – bringing prosperity, jobs and growth.

As our largest trading partner, the US remains an enormously important market for Wales as well as the rest of the UK, with

exports of Welsh goods to the US increasing by almost 19% last year.

The Department for International Trade's expert advisers stand ready in 108 countries across the world, to support British companies to export and help overseas investors find the right partners in the UK.

Just one of the Welsh companies taking advantage of the huge opportunities offered by the United States is Halen Môn – Anglesey Sea Salt.

The ambitious North Wales company first sent their product abroad in 2001, finding an American distributor shortly after. Their sea salt is now enjoyed in 22 countries around the world.

Used by chefs and food lovers, it has been served at the London 2012 Olympics, political summits and royal weddings and the US market continues to be one of the most important to the company.

Co-Founder of Halen Môn, Alison Lea-Wilson, said:

We have found exporting to the US an extremely positive process, and would urge other Welsh businesses to look to the market for the range of opportunities it offers.

Minister for Investment Graham Stuart will also be heading to Boston and Miami later this month to conduct a series of bilateral meetings with business leaders to discuss investment opportunities.

[News story: Measures announced to ensure talented trainees get into teaching](#)

Aspiring teachers across the country are set to benefit from a number of changes designed to allow them to begin training, and make a difference in the classroom, more quickly.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb has today (12 February) announced that thousands of would-be teachers are now eligible for three attempts at the professional skills tests they must pass to begin Initial Teacher Training (ITT) before they incur any cost, rather than one.

On top of this change – worth up to £77 per candidate – the government has

removed the lock-out period that previously prevented candidates from re-taking tests for two years if they had been unsuccessful in two re-sits.

The changes follow feedback from the teaching profession and remove financial and administrative barriers – ensuring capable trainees do not give up on their hopes of becoming a teacher while they wait to re-take the tests.

Since the government introduced the more rigorous skills tests in 2012, the entry requirements to teacher training have remained unchanged so that only the very best and brightest enter the profession. Today's announcement builds on a number of measures to recruit and retain high-calibre teachers, including a £75million investment in teachers' professional development and follows the recruitment of 32,000 new trainees in 2017.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Standards are rising, with 1.9million more children in good or outstanding schools since 2010 and a record number of teachers in our schools – 15,500 more than in 2010.

In 2012, the government introduced more rigorous skills tests for teachers to ensure they have the highest standards of English and maths. The bar for entrance to the teaching profession remains as high as ever, as parents and pupils would expect, and this is evidenced by the fact that the quality of new entrants into the profession is at an all-time high, with 19% of this year's cohort holding a first-class degree.

It is absolutely right that aspiring teachers can begin training as soon as they prove they are ready and these changes – backed by the profession – will help ambitious graduates to join the profession.

Professional bodies such as the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT) and the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), have welcomed the changes.

Emma Hollis, Executive Director of NASBTT, said:

NASBTT welcomes these changes to the administration of the skills tests. We have seen all too many examples of candidates with excellent potential being locked out of the profession for the sake of one or two marks on a test. This move will keep the profession open to those who deserve the opportunity to train to teach.

James Noble-Rogers, Executive Director of UCET, said:

This is a sensible and pragmatic move. It will allow potentially good teachers who would otherwise have been kept out of the

profession to begin their training.

In the past good candidates have been prevented from re-taking the skills tests because they failed by just one or two marks, often because of the pressure they experience having reached their final attempt.

The measures announced today will be effective from 15 February, but are relevant to all applicants who applied on or after 24 October 2017 – with refunds offered automatically. Candidates still need a degree for graduate training and all assessment criteria for Qualified Teacher Status remain unchanged.

The recently published 2017 Initial Teacher Training census showed that more than 32,000 new trainee teachers were recruited in a competitive labour market, with historic low unemployment rates and a growing economy, showing that the teaching profession continues to be an attractive career.

In full today's changes are:

- The removal of a lock-out period that previously prevented aspiring teachers from re-taking tests for two years;
- No limit on the number of tests, and the first three tests are free of charge to all candidates; and
- Refunds for anyone who has already paid for tests in this year's recruitment cycle – on or since 24 October 2017.

Today's news adds to a growing number of initiatives to attract the brightest and best into the teaching profession, including:

- Increasing bursaries to £26,000 for all trainees with a 2:2 or higher in the highest priority subjects; physics, languages, chemistry, biology, computing, geography and classics.
 - Offering a £20,000 bursary for maths trainees followed by two additional early-career payments of £5k each (£7,500 if teaching in local authority areas where teachers are most needed) in their third and fifth year of teaching, if they have taught in a state school in England since completing their teacher training course.
 - Offering scholarship schemes in six subjects for 2018/19; physics, maths, languages, chemistry, computing, and geography. Successful scholars will receive £28,000 tax-free in all subjects except maths, where scholars will receive £22,000 tax-free.
 - Offering bursaries for English trainees have been increased to £15,000 for all trainees with a 2:2 or higher, and bursaries in all other subjects are unchanged for 2018 to 2019.
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[Press release: UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson holds talks with political leaders in Thailand](#)

During his visit, the Foreign Secretary met Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha and Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai. The Foreign Secretary encouraged swift progress towards democratic elections. Mr Johnson updated Foreign Minister Don on what he had seen during his recent visit to Bangladesh and Burma, and discussed how to do more to address the Rohingya crisis. The wide-ranging discussions also covered co-operation on education, the digital economy, science and innovation, financial technology, and trade and investment, as well as further co-operation to tackle the Illegal Wildlife Trade. Prime Minister Chan-o-cha confirmed that Thailand would be represented at Ministerial level at the London Illegal Wildlife Trade conference this autumn.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

The UK is a country that goes out into the world to build and develop relationships and it was a great pleasure to meet Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha and Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai.

Our relationship with Thailand spans a broad range of issues from bilateral trade and investment to regional security and the Illegal Wildlife Trade. I look forward to further strengthening the UK's relationship with Thailand in the future.

During his visit Mr Johnson also met Dr Surakiart, Chairman of the International Board to Rakhine Advisory Commission, viewed illegally trafficked ivory, pangolin scales and other animal parts seized by Thai customs, and visited a transport development to highlight opportunities for UK businesses in the infrastructure sector.

Songsang.Jatupornsathien@fco.gov.uk

Further information

[Research and analysis: Litter and](#)

Littering in England 2016 to 2017

This publication explains the government's approach to understanding the extent of litter and littering in England. The figures in this publication are based on data from 2016 to 2017.

Press release: Experience the UK at the Great British Festival

Experience the best of British culture and innovation at the #GreatBritishFestival launch event on 23 February as the British Embassy Manila brings together different UK brands to create a fun-filled day with great British music, fashion, food, and arts at Glorietta 2 Palm Drive Activity Center, Makati City.

Daniel Pruce, British Ambassador to the Philippines said:

In this year's festival, our goal is to showcase the very best of what Great Britain as a whole nation has to offer. We are gathering a broad spectrum of British companies that represent not only world-class British culture and creativity but also the core values of the nation.

Among the participating companies are: M&S, Speedo, The Body Shop, Lush, Clarks, Shell, STI Limited, Digital Barriers, Diageo, Quorn, Costa Coffee, Union Jack Tavern, Shakeaway, Norton Motorcycles and HSBC.

Different fun activities await everyone in Glorietta Mall on February 23. There will be interactive exhibits, multiple raffles, a great trivia challenge, British film screenings, book reading for children, a whisky pavilion, and the much-anticipated Rockaoke Contest (with a first prize of two tickets to London on Etihad Airways).

Admission to this Great British Festival event is free.

This year's Festival will be a celebration of UK culture and innovation and will reach out across the Philippines. It will run for two weeks, with activities in Metro Manila, Iloilo, Cebu, Dumaguete, and Baguio.

Organised by the British Embassy and its partners, the Great British Festival 2018 will be a great showcase of the creativity, innovation, culture, heritage and knowledge that spell Britain's success in fashion, music, food, education and design.

Watch what we're up to and join in the conversation on our social media channels.

For more information, like and follow the British Embassy Manila on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).