

[Press release: Next phase of the discard ban takes effect](#)

From today (2 January), fishermen targeting certain fish in the North Sea must land everything they catch as the [next phase of the discard ban](#) for demersal species comes into force, Fisheries Minister George Eustice has announced.

The discard ban, also known as the landing obligation will encourage sustainable fishing by ending the wasteful practice of throwing dead fish overboard.

It has been gradually introduced to allow time for fishermen to adapt to the new rules, and today, the existing ban for cod, whiting and saithe has been extended to include more vessels in the North Sea. Fishermen targeting saithe in North Western Waters, including the Irish Sea, will be required to land it for the first time.

Commenting on the next phase of the discard ban, Fisheries Minister George Eustice said:

The UK is leading the way in championing sustainable fishing, and the latest phase of the discard ban will help put an end to the wasteful practice of throwing fish back, dead, overboard.

Together with careful quota management, the discard ban will help us create a profitable fishing industry and safeguard our marine environment.

Today's extension of the discard ban follows the successful introduction of the [pelagic ban in January 2015](#) and the [demersal ban in 2016](#).

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[Press release: International Trade Secretary Dr Fox visits China](#)

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox, travels to China today (Tuesday 2 January), in his first international visit of the new year to advance the UK's trade and investment relationship.

In a 2-stage visit to Beijing and Shenzhen, Dr Fox will meet the Chinese Minister of Commerce Zhong Shan and the chairman of one of the world's largest insurance companies, Ma Mingzhe from Ping An. He will also promote the government-backed [GREAT 'Festival of Innovation' taking place in Hong Kong](#) later this year to showcase the latest technology from the UK and Asia.

China is the UK's fifth largest trading partner in the world, with trade between the countries worth £59.1 billion based on the latest figures (2016). In the same period the UK exported £16.8 billion of goods and services, making China the UK's eighth largest export market.

The Department for International Trade has also just announced up to £25 billion in financial support – including loan guarantees – for UK businesses operating along the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The initiative, set up by the Chinese government, aims to increase economic cooperation with countries around the world along key transport routes.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox said:

China as a world leading economy and the UK's fifth largest trading partner is an important market for British companies as we look to build independent trading relationships across the world.

As an international economic department, we want 2018 to be the year of exporting with businesses across the UK seizing the opportunities that the world provides.

That's why we're determined to make exporting even easier, and we have announced we're making up to £25 billion of funding available for UK exporters and buyers of UK goods and services along the Belt and Road Initiative so that no viable export fails for a lack of funding.

The Trade Secretary's visit follows the [Economic Financial Dialogue in China](#) last month (December 2017) where more than £1.4 billion of trade and investment was agreed in Beijing. Trade Minister Mark Garnier supported the Chancellor as they reaffirmed their commitment to developing a global partnership, establishing the next steps for a deeper trade and investment relationship as the UK builds an economy fit for the future.

The UK has also attracted more foreign direct investment projects than ever before (year 2016 to 2017). With 2,265 projects recorded, figures show an increase of 2% on the previous year. This means more than 75,000 new jobs were created, and 32,600 safeguarded, amounting to over 2,000 jobs per week across the country.

Total trade in goods and services (that is exports plus imports) between the UK and China totalled £59.1 billion in 2016 an 8.9% increase from 2015 (Source: [ONS Pink Book 2017](#)).

In 2016, UK exports to China amounted to £16.8 billion (a 2.4% increase from 2015).

The top 5 UK goods exported to China in 2016 were:

87 – vehicles other than railway or tramway stock (27.6% of all UK goods exported to China)

27 – mineral fuels or oils, products of their distillation (12.1%)

84 – machinery and mechanical appliances (10.5%)

85 – electrical machinery and equipment (6.8%)

71 – precious stones and metals (6.5%)

[Press release: Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant opens for applications](#)

From today (Tuesday 2 January 2018), applicants can apply for the [Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant](#) – a scheme to help landowners reap the environmental and financial benefits of woodland creation.

The grant is open to all qualifying land managers. Successful applicants will receive a two-year capital grant of up to £6,800 per hectare, as well as an opportunity to apply for annual maintenance payments for ten years.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Planting trees is one of the best ways we can invest in our environment for future generations. They provide a haven for wildlife, reduce flood risk and improve water quality – making them some of our most cherished assets.

I have seen first-hand how planting trees can really make a difference at places such as the Lowther Estate in Cumbria, so I would urge landowners to apply to this scheme.

Richard Greenhous, Forest Services Director for the Forestry Commission, said:

Aside from the environmental benefits, planting trees on your land can offer an alternative source of income.

Your local Woodland Officer can provide advice and support throughout the application process.

Guidance and application forms for the scheme were [made available](#) in September to give potential applicants more time to develop their plans. The process has now been streamlined to make it easier to apply.

Alongside the Woodland Creation Grant, landowners can also apply for the [Woodland Creation Planning Grant](#) to help with planning and proposals. This grant has already supported two large-scale planting schemes in England this autumn: [Doddington North Moor](#) in Northumberland and the Lowther Estate in Cumbria.

The Forestry Commission has appointed a new team of specialised woodland creation officers to assist landowners through the application process for large scale projects.

More information on the funding options available is available [here](#) and applicants can [contact the Forestry Commission](#) for further advice and assistance.

Case study

Mr Hugh Davis, the owner of Treworder Barton Farm in Cornwall, has received funding from the Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant to plant a new productive woodland that enables him to quickly produce a crop of timber for wood markets. The grant has covered 80 per cent of the planting costs with an ongoing payment of £200 per hectare for the next 10 years.

Speaking about his application, Mr Davis said:

Planting is relatively straight forward. For the first two years, you need to keep weeds under control and protect young trees from other threats, for example pests, frost or drought. Once they are established, looking after the trees is relatively low maintenance.

The thing with forestry is that you can't play catch up. You need to plan ahead and invest sooner rather than later. I'm very pleased I've done it.

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