

Bounce-back plans launched for consumer and retail industry

- Exports Minister outlines new measures to help boost exports and increase British retail firms' readiness to sell overseas
- New plans include creation of a Consumer and Retail Export Academy to help businesses export, via a digital learning syllabus

Today Exports Minister, Graham Stuart MP, has announced a series of new measures to support businesses in the consumer and retail industry to export overseas as part of efforts to help the sector recover from Coronavirus.

The new measures will offer immediate support to businesses by ensuring specialists provide advice on online retail and international market-places. Additionally, the launch of a new Consumer and Retail Export Academy will provide businesses with the critical knowledge, skills and networks needed to increase exports. The plan will also outline long-term support for the sector as new export opportunities arise from trade deals being negotiated with the US, Japan, New Zealand and Australia.

E-commerce will be at the heart of the plans, with measures tailored to help consumer and retail businesses develop international, multi-channel, e-commerce strategies fit for the changed retail environment.

The value of retail sales made online has risen by more than 300% in the last 10 years. This trend is expected to continue as a result of Coronavirus, with many UK businesses already experiencing increased sales online.

Minister for Exports, Graham Stuart MP said:

We recognise that Coronavirus has brought challenges to many industries, not least the consumer and retail sector, where so much depends on face-to-face interactions. This package of support will give businesses the helping hand they need to adapt their methods and thrive in the future.

More trade and investment is absolutely critical if the industry – and our whole economy – is to overcome such challenges. These measures provide both short and long-term support for businesses that employ so many people across the UK.

As we continue to encourage businesses to increase their trade overseas, we will also ensure that they can take full advantage of the opportunities that will be unlocked through our negotiation of Free Trade Agreements with countries around the world.

The retail industry is a key pillar of the UK economy, contributing £104bn of GVA to the UK economy in 2019, with the value of retail sales reaching £395bn in 2019, a 3.8% increase from 2018.

Julie Driscoll, UK Regional Director, Hyve Group plc said:

We are thrilled to be working in collaboration with the UK Government and the Department for Trade on their plans to reinvigorate the UK retail industry.

The retail landscape has been affected hugely by the crisis and it is a pleasure and a privilege to be able to welcome Graham Stuart, the Minister for Exports to speak to the retail community as we bring the industry together, digitally, for Autumn Fair @ Home, and we are incredibly excited to hear the latest measures that are being implemented to revive the industry and help retail bounce back.

The British Home Enhancement Trade Association said:

Following the COVID-19 outbreak, it is now essential that suppliers and retailer have strong e-commerce sales channel. DIT's support to help companies develop an e-commerce strategy will be immensely valuable to businesses as they begin and continue to trade overseas.

British Jewellery & Giftware International said:

Producing a series of fact sheets for specific markets to educate UK companies on opportunities and risks, is a welcome addition. This information will be hugely valuable notably by first time exporters.

The full range of measures announced today include:

- Consumer and Retail Export Academy: A digital learning syllabus of consumer & retail-focused webinars available through DIT's online platforms; a dedicated regional coaching programme; and an extensive library of industry-specific factsheets on key export markets.
- Boosted digital and e-commerce offer consisting of three initiatives:

- International Clicks Fast Track Initiative: Access to new DIT partnerships with business-to-business marketplaces, increasing the routes to market following store closures due to COVID-19.
 - Omnichannel Optimiser Initiative: Tailored advice for consumer and retail businesses to help them develop an international multi-channel strategy to help them succeed online; Exclusive e-commerce related insights from industry experts via talks, virtual events and podcasts; A specialist webinar series equipping exporters with e-commerce knowledge to help them take advantage of the growing digital opportunities that have emerged from the COVID-19 outbreak.
 - FDI e-commerce marketing campaign: Digitally led marketing activity to showcase e-commerce inward investment opportunities to potential international investors.
- UKEF offer: Further outreach and engagement with the industry to respond to the industry's needs; a refreshed 'Exporters Edge' campaign to raise awareness of the support available; and easier access to working capital to allow a wider range of businesses to access support.
 - A digital investment prospectus: A prospectus detailing the UK's RetailTech offer and unique capabilities. This will be promoted in key markets in order to engage with inward investors.
 - Showcasing 'Brand Britain' at global events: Leveraging Government presence at high profile events, such as Expo 2020 Dubai, Tokyo Olympics and the Commonwealth Games, to provide a platform for consumer goods companies to showcase their offering to a global audience; enabling UK companies to use GREAT branding at global events; engaging consumer and retail businesses in the Midlands region to help them take advantage of DIT's international events, and Hyve Group PLC's market leading trade shows as a platform to reach overseas buyers.

The measures follow the recently announced [agriculture, food and drink bounce-back plans](#) in June, in conjunction with the Department for Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra).