

News story: Best of East Midlands business lauded by Robert Jenrick

Treasury Minister Robert Jenrick has embarked on a UK tour to lift the lid on the innovation of Great British businesses and learn how they are tackling the productivity gap.

His first stop is Leicester, in the heart of the Midlands Engine, to see for himself businesses that are playing a vital role in driving the new economy.

This will include meeting a local entrepreneur whose company – Micro-Fresh – has helped stop the spread of bacteria in everyday products like towels and bedding. Micro-Fresh has received government funding to support its expansion into the housing sector.

The Minister will also meet a construction company that is sharing its know-how with others to improve efficiency and productivity, as well as textile factory workers to hear how harnessing new technology is ensuring this traditional Leicester industry continues to thrive.

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Robert Jenrick, said:

There are some incredible businesses here in the East Midlands whose great innovations have helped boost this region's productivity beyond others, including London. But too often their contributions go under the radar.

That's why I have chosen the Midlands to kick-start my tour of the UK to lift the lid on those playing a vital role in delivering growth, skills and jobs for local people. It's vital that we learn from these trailblazing innovators so we can help others follow suit and boost productivity across the country.

The East Midlands contributes £100 billion a year to the UK economy. Since 2010, the region has seen the creation of 68,000 businesses and 344,000 apprenticeships, with record-high levels of employment (2.3 million) and unemployment down by nearly half (42 per cent).

Notes to Editors

The Exchequer Secretary will meet:

- Local Leicester entrepreneur Byron Dixon OBE, CEO and Founder of Micro-Fresh International – the company, which is growing 25% every year, provides anti-bacterial treatment for products like bedding, towels and footwear and are available in John Lewis, Sainsbury's and M&S. A recent £120,000 grant from the Government helped the company conduct research which will allow the product to be used in social housing to combat damp

and mould.

- Caterpillar's Logistic Services – the construction company is sharing its expertise with other businesses to fuel innovation in the sector.
- East Midlands Chamber of Commerce – the Minister will host a meeting to hear first-hand what can be done to further support growth and innovation in the region.
- Factory workers and managers in the textile industry – the traditional business is seizing opportunities in the new economy and ensuring this long-established industry remains a key part of the Leicester identity.

East Midlands economy facts:

- The East Midlands contributes £100 billion of gross value added per year to the UK economy.
- Manufacturing accounts for 12.4% of all jobs in the East Midlands – higher than any other UK region.
- Since 2010, unemployment has fallen faster in the East Midlands than in London (-42.8%).
- Employment in the East Midlands is at a record high level (2.3 million).
- Since early 2010, 204,000 (+10%) more people are in employment in the East Midlands. Unemployment has fallen by 72,000 (-43%) over the same period.
- Productivity growth since 2010 has been faster than London (12.1%).

The Chancellor Philip Hammond highlighted the role of innovators in the new economy in his Autumn Budget and set out the Government's plans to support those who deliver growth, create higher paying jobs and make sure everyone has the skills they need.