

Press release: Britain and Saudi Arabia to strengthen cultural links and boost trade

A new deal to pave the way for Britain's world-leading culture and entertainment industries to land lucrative new business in Saudi Arabia has been agreed.

With an economy worth £545 billion and half of its 30 million population aged under 24, the agreement opens up huge opportunities for the UK's sports, cultural and creative industries to export. These industries combine soft-power with economic might and the combined value of their global exports in goods and services is more than £39 billion, up 43 per cent since 2010.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) on entertainment and leisure made by UK Digital and Culture Secretary Matt Hancock and his Saudi counterpart Ahmed Al Khateeb is a world first for the Gulf state. The three-year agreement will play an important role in delivering the Saudi Crown Prince's long-term vision to open up the country's economy and culture. The countries also agreed an MoU on cultural cooperation.

The Kingdom's entertainments industry is in its infancy but one of its earliest international deals was signed last month with UK-based cinema chain VUE International. Alongside Abdulmohsin Al Hokair Holding Group, it will launch 30 multiplex cinemas across the country over the next three years to help return the big screen to the Gulf state.

Supporting our world-leading tech and creative industries is a central part of the UK's Industrial Strategy and the government's upcoming Creative Industries Sector Deal will create new opportunities for joint-collaboration and potential Saudi Arabian investment in this sector.

The Crown Prince is due to meet representatives of the UK's world-leading creative technology industries including Improbable as part of his visit to the UK. The British technology company closed a \$502m investment round led by SoftBank, the largest of its kind in Europe, last year. Improbable will show examples of how its large-scale simulation and virtual world-building technology can be used to transform fields as diverse as video games and real-world planning.

Digital and Culture Secretary Matt Hancock said:

This agreement is an historic moment for change and reform in Saudi Arabia, and marks a new chapter in relations between the Kingdom and Britain. Arts, sports and the creative industries give people the freedom to express themselves, provide enjoyment and entertainment, and can be many people's first introduction to a

nation's culture. We are a world leader in this area. By sharing our success we can encourage Saudi Arabia on its new path and strengthen our strong relationship.

The agreement commits the countries to deepening cooperation in the arts, architecture, film, creative industries, sport and recreation, heritage management, archeology, social clubs, NGOs, volunteering, entertainment and event management. It supports the Crown Prince's Vision 2030 to catalyse and open up the country's economy over the next 15 years.

The UK Government can today also confirm:

- An exhibition fund set up to help UK cultural institutions bring major shows from leading museums and new work from other British galleries will aim to take a four major exhibitions to venues in the Gulf between 2018 and 2020. The exhibitions will offer inspiration and high quality educational opportunities for the region's youth. The new initiative will showcase the best of UK art, culture, science and sport. It will also create new opportunities for UK and Gulf institutions to foster long-term cultural and educational relationships.
- Leading British artists and designers will use digital technologies to create site specific art in Riyadh linking with the ambitions set out in Vision 2030 and British excellence in filmmaking will be showcased as part of the first Gulf digital film festival.
- A joint Saudi/UK working group on leisure and entertainment will be established by the end of March to implement the memorandum.

Michael Ellis, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, is due to visit Riyadh in April. He will be accompanied by a business delegation from the UK leisure and entertainment sectors, which will meet prospective business partners endorsed by the Saudi Government. The Minister will sign an MoU on heritage and tourism with his Saudi counterpart during this visit.

Between July and December 2018, the countries will cooperate on further political and commercial agreements to create skilled jobs in both economies, stimulate the growth of the Saudi leisure, entertainment and tourism sectors, and engage young people.

The Gulf Culture and Sport Programme, which aims to share the UK's values through culture and sport, including women's participation and leadership, will establish training courses to support new and established festival directors in the Gulf and promote collaborations with the UK. The programme has been allocated more than £6m over four financial years.

The British Council will partner with existing volunteering organisations in the Gulf to support young Gulf nationals to volunteer at culture and sports

events that are part of the culture and sports programme. This will build on British excellence in volunteering.

The Youth Sport Trust (YST) will develop a programme to improve the quality of sports coaching and teaching across the Gulf. It will work with local schools, colleges and community groups to develop a network of young sports leaders to promote participation in sport and competition through the Gulf Festivals of Sport.

Tim Richards, chief executive of Vue International, said:

This is a significant time for UK businesses in Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom is the largest economy in the Arab world, and home to a young, dynamic and fast-growing population. Combined with the country's plans for reform, this makes it an attractive high-growth market for Vue and other global firms.

We are delighted to have been chosen to deliver a world-class cinema experience for Saudi people across the Kingdom, in what is a huge moment in the history of the international cinema industry. Our experience working in the country has been extremely positive, there are some incredible plans in place across sectors, and we are excited about what lies ahead.

Ian Blatchford, Director of the Science Museum Group, said:

Science is a truly international endeavour and Britain's cultural expertise is recognised around the globe. The group has a major role to play in sparking the curiosity of young people everywhere and inspiring them to improve our world through science, technology, engineering and mathematics. We look forward to partnering with Saudi Arabia for their Vision 2030.

Notes to editors:

Media enquiries – please contact the DCMS News and Communications team on 020 7211 2210 or out of hours on 07699 751153.

The memorandum of understanding on entertainment and leisure includes agreements on:

- Arts – to participate in each others' festivals, theatre and dance productions;
- Architecture, heritage management and archeology – to share knowledge through expert visits and coordinate efforts to protect sites of national and international importance;

- Film industry – to exchange experience and facilitate visits by actors, directors, producers;
- Creative industries – to promote visits and the exchange of products such as fashion and crafts;
- Sport and recreation – to share ideas and knowledge, including through visits by athletes;
- Social and hobby clubs – to share expertise in regulation, promotion, activities and structure;
- NGOs and volunteering – to exchange experience and expertise
- Entertainment and event management – promote visit, training programmes and seminars Implement joint plans to carry out international activities

Crown Prince HRH Mohammed bin Salman is visiting the UK for the first time since his appointment in June 2017. He has embarked on a major programme of domestic reforms, including a commitment to lift the ban on women driving and opening up attendance at major sporting events to women.

Saudi Arabia has set out a roadmap – Vision 2030 – to catalyse and open up the country's economy over the next 15 years. This will provide opportunities for British businesses to help support delivery in areas where they have expertise.

The UK's Industrial Strategy sets out a long term plan to boost the productivity and earning power of people throughout the country. It sets out how we are building a Britain fit for the future – how we will help businesses create better, higher-paying jobs in every part of the UK with investment in skills, industries and infrastructure.