

Press release: International Trade Minister announces 'Export Champions' to promote Midlands businesses to the world

Midlands businesses looking to export to countries across the globe were given a boost today with the announcement of dozens of 'Export Champions' as part of a programme to encourage and inspire businesses to export internationally.

Announced at the inaugural Midlands Engine Trade Summit, the 'Midlands Engine Export Champions Programme' sees 28 high profile business leaders from across the region offering their expertise and advice to inspire companies to export and support existing exporters looking to expand into new markets.

From vehicle manufacturer Westfield Sportscar in Kingswinford, to textiles design business The SundayGirl Company in Kidderminster, the 28 Export Champions span a wide range of sectors and services. Business leaders from these companies will provide peer to peer support and help others to fulfil their global market potential.

Speaking at the Summit in Birmingham, International Trade Minister Mark Garnier said:

We want to use the momentum of the Midlands Engine to drive this region's exports to new heights and I am delighted to announce the launch of these new champions. 28 experienced exporters based in the Midlands will work to inspire others to either export for the first time or to export more.

My department is helping even more companies in the region explore opportunities on the global market and through this Programme local business will truly benefit from a range of expert advice from local business leaders.

Export Champion and CEO of Morningside Pharmaceutical Dr Nik Kotecha said:

It is an honour to be appointed as one of the inaugural Export Champions for the Midlands. This is an incredibly exciting time for businesses across the region, and my fellow Export Champions and I are looking forward to spreading the word about the value of exporting.

The Midlands Engine has a lot to offer the world, and I look forward to

raising the profile of exporting throughout the region, helping businesses to develop opportunities and fulfil their global potential.”

Over 27,000 businesses across the Midlands Engine exported nearly £40 billion worth of products to over 100 countries in 2015 and the Midlands is responsible for 24% of England’s manufacturing output with particular strengths in automotive, motorsport, aerospace and rail.

The creation of the Midlands Engine Export Champions Programme swiftly follows the launch of the government’s [Midlands Engine Strategy](#).

An ambitious strategy to help the Midlands reach its full economic potential, the strategy has been published today as the Chancellor Philip Hammond visited the region the day after delivering his first Budget.

It includes significant investment in skills, connectivity and local growth, while it sets out how the government plans to drive the region’s huge potential and promote it to the world.

Over 500 delegates attended the Midlands Engine Trade Summit at the Vox Conference Centre where they participated in specialist workshops and heard first-hand the steps they can take to export their goods and services overseas.

In addition to engaging with SMEs and local businesses, the Export Champions will promote the Department for International Trade’s Exporting is GREAT campaign and digital tool www.great.gov.uk which helps UK businesses break onto overseas markets. This innovative new programme will provide practical advice and support to drive further growth in exports.

The full list of Export Champions is:

1. Liz Fothergill CBE DL, Chairman, Pennine Healthcare (Derby)
2. Kevin Oakes, Chairman, Royal Crown Derby (Derby)
3. George Paul, Executive Director, Bradbury & Son (Buxton)
4. Jane Shepherd, Managing Director, Shepherd PR (Ashbourne)
5. Stuart Garner, CEO, Norton Motorcycles (UK) Ltd (Castle Donnington)
6. Dr Nik Kotecha, CEO, Morningside Pharmaceuticals (Loughborough)
7. Shahid Sheikh OBE, Managing Director, Clifton Packaging Group (Leicester)
8. Matt Gilmartin, Managing Director, Concept Smoke Screen (Boston)
9. Gary Headland, CEO, Lincoln College Group (Lincoln)
10. Malcom Hall MBE, Managing Director, Hall-Fast Industrial Supplies (Mansfield)
11. Susan Hallam, Managing Director, Hallam Internet (Nottingham)
12. Karen Prior, Group Finance Director, Anpario plc (Worksop)
13. Anil Puri, Chairman, Purico Group (Nottingham)
14. Graham Tyers, Managing Director, Newson Gale LTD (Nottingham)
15. Steve Crane, Managing Director, Business Link Japan (Corby)
16. Philip Duggan, Director, The Boss Design Group (Dudley)
17. Simon Evans MBE, Sales and Marketing Director, Moflash Signalling (Birmingham)

18. Deborah Leary OBE, Chief Executive Officer, Forensic Pathways (Birmingham)
19. Andrew Riley, Chairman, Mechatherm International (Kingswinford)
20. Ian Stokes, Managing Director, Stadi Arena (Meriden)
21. Stewart Towe CBE DL, Chairman and Managing Director, Hadley Industries plc (Smethwick)
22. Julian Turner, Chief Executive Officer, Westfield Sportscars (Kingswinford)
23. Jo Hilditch, Managing Director, Whittern Farms (Lyonshall)
24. Simon Pearson, Managing Director, Jesmonite® (Bishops Castle)
25. Elizabeth Gooch MBE, Chief Executive, eg solutions plc (Stafford)
26. Paul Morris, Founder and CEO, Addmaster (Stafford)
27. James Blakemore, Managing Director, JMB Partnership (Warwick)
28. Gaena Martin, Creative Director, The SundayGirl Company (Kidderminster)