

Press release: Minister Smith attends new Board of Trade to ensure the benefits of free trade are spread throughout the UK

- President of the Board of Trade Dr Liam Fox convenes the new Board of Trade today in Bristol
- First meeting attended by leaders from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- Advisers from across the United Kingdom present, providing local expertise to guide the Board on trade and investment matters

Chloe Smith MP attended UK Government's new Board of Trade, which aims to help boost exports, attract inward investors and ensure the benefits of free trade are spread across the country.

The Board of Trade will bring together prominent figures from business and politics from each part of the UK, including representatives from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In 2016/17 UK Government helped to attract 34 Foreign Direct Investment projects to Northern Ireland, which created a total of 1,622 new jobs and safeguarded almost 1,000 more. On top of this, more than 600 companies in Northern Ireland have been able to access a wealth of opportunities by attending overseas trade shows, carrying out crucial market research and developing vital international relationships.

One of the many success stories has been Northern Ireland manufacturer, BlueMAC. BlueMAC have seen their annual turnover increase by 50 per cent since beginning exporting three years ago, securing deals in the UAE, Australia, France and China.

After experiencing widespread success in the UK, BlueMAC decided to broaden their scope and explore international markets. Identifying a gap in the market for advanced waste and recycling technology in the UAE, the company embarked on a trade mission to Dubai, supported by the Department for International Trade (DIT).

BlueMAC met DIT International Trade Advisers (ITAs) who provided advice on upcoming local projects and market research, introduced the company to in-country distributors and helped with lead generation.

Chris Brooke, Global Sales Engineer, BlueMAC said:

Exporting has been a huge learning curve for us and the support we received from ITAs was invaluable.

Initially we didn't have an understanding of market culture and we soon realised that not every market works the same way as the UK, we received important strategic advice on ways of working and local differences, it saved us a lot of time and money.

Chloe Smith MP, NIO Minister said:

Northern Ireland continues to be an attractive place to do business with inward investment projects secured across the year, creating over 1,600 new jobs and safeguarding almost 1,000 more.

The Board is another crucial step towards helping Northern Ireland businesses make their mark on the global stage and shows the UK Government is committed to working with all parts of the United Kingdom in ensuring we deliver an economy that works for everyone.

President of the Board of Trade, Dr Fox, has also invited advisers from across the United Kingdom, including Mark Nodder CEO of Ballymena's Wright Group, to provide local expertise and guide the Board on trade and investment matters.

The Board of Trade will meet four times a year with meetings rotated around the UK guaranteeing all parts of the union have a chance to raise the issues most important to them.