

Press release: Welsh Secretary in clarion call for Welsh companies to capitalise on Middle Eastern trade opportunities

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns will travel to the Middle East today for a series of meetings with Qatari investors to discuss the many commercial opportunities that Wales as part of a strong global Britain has to offer.

Mr Cairns will meet with the CEO of Qatar Airways HE Akbar Al Baker, who confirmed earlier this month that Cardiff to Doha service on the airline will take to the skies on 1 May 2018. He will then be hosted by an audience of senior members of the Qatari Businessmen Association before meeting with Qatari Diar Real Estate Investment Company to offer post EU exit assurances for their continued investment strategy in the UK.

To round off his busy schedule, Mr Cairns will be the British Ambassador's Guest of Honour at a Red Arrows display in Qatar as part of a Middle East tour designed to promote the United Kingdom's long-standing relations across the Gulf.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

The UK Government is strongly committed to fostering greater commercial engagement, partnerships and opportunities with Qatar. The UK Government has worked closely with Qatar Airways to secure this ground-breaking air route to the Middle East from Wales. I'm determined to take commercial relationships between Wales and Qatar to the next level.

That is why I am visiting this important trading partner today. From government trade missions, to the opportunities the new daily Cardiff to Doha service presents, I want Wales to be on the front foot to exploit every opportunity we have to increase Middle Eastern investment on Welsh shores.

Qatar is already the UK's third largest export market in the Middle East and also accounts for £35 billion of existing investment in the UK. Bilateral trade is valued at more than £5 billion per year and the relationship between the two countries continues to go from strength to strength.

Mr Cairns' visit is part of a series of international missions taken by senior government ministers to showcase the UK's commitment to forming even stronger global economic, investment and security ties as we prepare to leave the EU.

The Secretary of State for Wales visited Japan last month where he met with leading international companies with a presence in Wales to give them the certainty they need to expand and grow.

He also joined the Prime Minister at the biggest ever Qatar-UK Investment Forum to be held in Britain in Birmingham earlier this year where he highlighted Wales' unique offer to potential inward investors from the Middle East.

Mr Cairns added:

At a time when the UK is negotiating a new, deep and special partnership with the European Union, it is continuing to look outwards globally.

We want to link ourselves more closely to the fastest growing and influential parts of the global economy – Gulf States are clearly on that list. Qatar is leading the way as one of the fastest growing economies in the world and the most competitive country in the Middle East & North Africa.

The only sure route to success is to show continued commitment to a country that has huge and increasing potential; values its friendly and historic links with the UK; and maintains a strong desire to see that relationship develop further and profitably.

The Secretary of State for Wales has written to 26,000 Welsh businesses that have been identified as potential exporters and included a copy of a dedicated exporting guide.

The Wales Export Guide sets out the full range of support available to Welsh businesses from the UK Government and contains inspiring stories of companies based in Wales that are successfully exporting.

All the information companies in Wales need can be found [here](#)

NOTES TO EDITORS

- The Prime Minister has made building on existing links between the UK and the Gulf a priority. On her visit to the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) in Bahrain in December last year the Prime Minister expressed her commitment to a true partnership between the UK and Qatar encompassing security and defence as well as trade.
- In 2015 total UK exports to Qatar totalled £2.6 billion, with Qatar exports to UK at £2.7 billion.
- The Qatar 2030 National Vision creates significant potential for the future as Qatar's social and economic development plan for the coming years. It seeks to build a bridge between the present and the future and aims to propel Qatar forward by diversifying its economy away from oil and gas, and focusing on social, environmental and human development.