

Press release: Welsh Secretary: North Wales is a shining beacon of export success

- Welsh Secretary joins International Trade Secretary at the second Board of Trade meeting in Preston to boost North Wales-Northern Powerhouse links
- Halen Môn scoop one of the first Board of Trade awards for global export success
- Bangor University students take part in first Ideas Hack programme
- Alun Cairns will also gather North Wales exporters in Wrexham to seek views on the UK Government's Export Strategy

North Wales' dynamic mix of major exporters are making a substantial contribution to Wales' global business ambitions, Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns said today as he embarks on a series of export themed visits across the north of the UK (29 March).

Mr Cairns will attend the second Board of Trade meeting in Preston this afternoon, convened to help boost exports, attract inward investors and ensure the benefits of free trade are spread equally across the country.

Presided by the Secretary of State for International Trade, Liam Fox, the Board of Trade brings together prominent figures from business and politics from each part of the UK to provide local expertise and guide the Board on trade and investment matters.

It will coincide with the presentation of the very first Board of Trade Awards, designed to recognise excellence in trade and investment across the whole of the UK.

And leading Welsh exporter Halen Môn will be among the first recipients as their business achievements at home and overseas are lauded at a Board of Trade reception this evening.

Since it began its exporting journey in 2001, Halen Môn has seized the expert support on offer from the UK Government, and now have their products stocked in over 100 British shops including M&S, Waitrose and Harvey Nichols, and can be found in over 22 countries globally.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

The UK Government wants to celebrate the achievements of businesses that are demonstrating exceptional innovation, delivering prosperity to their local communities, and championing free trade. Halen Môn are a company doing just that.

I'm delighted to see their name embossed on one of the very first

Board of Trade awards handed out today.

Halen Môn's success is down to the entrepreneurship and dedication of those involved in the company. But Government has also had a part to play. From setting up meetings with buyers in markets ranging from Hong Kong to Singapore, China, Russia and Japan, to helping them navigate the necessary paperwork, we have been ready to support them on every step of their exporting journey.

North Wales' stamp on the Board of Trade meeting in Lancashire will be strengthened by students from Bangor University who will take part in the first 'Ideas Hack' – an initiative that forms part of the Department of International Trade's National Trade Academy Programme that seek to engender a culture of exporting in our future business leaders.

Working in teams, they will work to develop a new food or drink product and accompany exporting strategy to pitch to a panel of experts in a Dragon's Den style scenario.

Ahead of the meeting in Preston, Alun Cairns will seek the views of some of North and Mid Wales' most successful exporters at a meeting in Wrexham to discuss the priorities, opportunities and challenges they face on their exporting journeys around the world.

It is part of a series of engagement opportunities undertaken by the UK Government as part of its Export Strategy review.

Exports from Wales rose by 12.3% to £16.4 billion in the latest year on year figures, and is home to nearly 4,000 exporters with an average value per exporter of more than £4.2million.

Wales is also growing in stature as a destination for inward investment, with latest figures showing that 85 foreign direct investment projects were secured in Wales last year, creating over 2,500 new jobs and safeguarding over 11,000 more.

Only last month, Toyota announced its commitment to building the next generation Auris vehicle at their plant in Derbyshire, and confirmed that the majority of the engines will be sourced from Deeside, helping to secure 3000 jobs across the two sites.

Alun Cairns added:

Export support is a key way that the UK Government can help businesses succeed and grow.

The Export Strategy review will draw on expertise from across government and the private sector, helping us to understand how best to support British companies to take advantage of opportunities in overseas markets.

Throughout this process, I want to see significant input from businesses in Wales, both large and small, to ensure we develop a strategy that meets their needs.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

Halen Môn

Situated in an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Halen Môn, the Anglesey Sea Salt Company has been making sea salt since 1997, and exporting its products since 2001 when the company joined forces with an American distributor.

Today, Halen Môn's sea salt is enjoyed across the UK it has been served at the London 2012 Olympics, a Royal Wedding and is a vital ingredient in Green and Blacks Chocolate and Piper's Crisps. The company continues to build their international reputation and currently exports to more than 15 countries.

In 2015, the company opened a new visitor centre that offers guided tours, tasting sessions and unique insights into how their sea salt is produced. The centre is part of a new salt-cote that the company has built with support from the Welsh Government, the AONB Sustainability Fund, the Lottery Coastal Communities Fund, the Fisheries Local Action Group, and HSBC. The company has also created more than twenty jobs in the local area and supports many more through their 'local business preferred' policy of using local suppliers.

The UK Government has assisted with the paperwork required to comply with export and labelling regulations and helped them to establish meetings with potential customers in overseas markets. The company also relied on Welsh and UK Government support to apply for, and successfully obtain Protected Designation of Origin status in 2014, which supports the company's exporting strategy in Europe and beyond.

Board of Trade

Alun Cairns is joined on the Board of Trade by two expert business advisers from Wales, Lord Rowe Beddoe and Heather Stephens.

Lord Rowe Beddoe has a distinguished international business career and brings with him decades of experience gathered during his years as Chairman of the Welsh Development Agency and Cardiff Airport.

Heather Stephens was part of the small team which launched the insurance group Admiral in 1993 in Cardiff. Since its launch Admiral has grown to become one of the largest private sector employers in Wales with a turnover of more than £2bn. She is also currently the chair and founding member of The Waterloo Foundation, a charity aiming to give grants to companies in the UK & worldwide.

Membership of the Board of Trade is restricted to Privy Councillors.

The only member is

(i) Secretary of State for Department for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade (Chair)

Advisers to the Board

(i) Secretary of State for Scotland

(ii) Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

(iii) Secretary of State for Wales

England (6)

(i) Patricia Hewitt – outgoing Chair of UK India Business Council

(ii) Andrew Mills – CEO Virtualstock

(iii) Collette Roche – Chief of Staff, Manchester Airport

(iv) Marnie Millard – CEO Nichols PLC

(v) Iqbal Ahmed – Chairman, Chief Executive and Founder of Seamark Group

(vi) Edward Timpson – former Minister of State for Children and Families

Scotland (2)

(vii) Brian Wilson – former Trade Minister

(viii) Ian Curle – CEO of Edrington Group

Wales (2)

(ix) Lord Rowe-Beddoe – former Chair of Welsh Development Agency

(x) Heather Stevens – Chair and founding member of The Waterloo Foundation

Northern Ireland (1)

(xi) Mark Nodder (CEO of Wrights Group)