

# Press release: Baroness Fairhead opens UK pavilion at Silk Road Expo

Minister of State for Trade and Export Promotion, Baroness Fairhead, will today (Friday 11 May) open the British pavilion at the Silk Road International Expo in Xi'an, where the UK is the country of honour.

The Minister will be accompanied by a delegation of more than 50 British businesses from a wide range of sectors, including healthcare, infrastructure and education as the UK looks to make the most of the vast exporting opportunities presented by the Belt and Road initiative.

The government sees the UK as a natural Belt and Road partner, and visits from the Prime Minister and International Trade Secretary in recent months have highlighted the initiative as a means for global growth and connectivity between the 2 countries.

With DIT estimating that £1.8 billion worth of opportunities related to the Belt and Road initiative are available for UK companies, delegates will benefit from a series of workshops and forums, introducing them to Chinese counterparts and regional government officials as they present what their businesses have to offer.

Delegates will also be able to attend sector tours of the Expo, provided by the China-Britain Business Council, where they will build bridges with potential partners in their sector.

Total trade between the countries currently stands at £67.5 billion, and UK goods and services exports to China grew by 25.9% between January and September 2017.

Launching the UK pavilion at the Expo, Baroness Fairhead highlighted the support that is available for British companies seeking to export to China. The Minister emphasised the £25 billion of support that is available to businesses across key Belt and Road markets through the government's export credit agency UK Export Finance.

Minister of State for Trade and Export Promotion, Baroness Fairhead:

UK exports to China are growing strongly, but it's clear that there is still vast untapped demand for British goods and services in the Chinese market.

The Belt and Road initiative is creating opportunities for British businesses across Asia, and the Department for International Trade will continue to offer support through Trade Missions, our award winning export credit agency UK Export Finance and [GREAT.gov.uk](http://GREAT.gov.uk).

Baroness Fairhead will also launch the 'Be Yourself: Pledge for Progress' campaign with HM Ambassador to China Dame Barbara Woodward. The campaign will promote empowerment for women across the Chinese business world following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) last year between the UK's Equalities Office and the All China Women's Federation.

The visit comes shortly after the UK signed a MoU with Chinese giants Tencent to establish strategic collaboration in the Cultural Creative Industries. Tencent will kick-off collaboration with leading British enterprises and corporations in the arena of digital creativity, with a focus on film and television, gaming and fashion in the initial phase.

## Further information

- the Silk Road International Expo 2018 will take place between 11-15 May in Xi'an. Last year the event was attended by over 42 countries, with 300 companies represented – this year's event is expected to be a similar size
- the British companies attending are from across the country, including contingents from the Northern Powerhouse and the Midlands Engine
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## [News story: Drive to create more good school places for families](#)

New good school places in areas where they are needed most will give more children from all backgrounds the world-class education they deserve, under plans announced today by Education Secretary Damian Hinds.

The package of measures will create more school places, giving parents greater choice and raising education standards – including in disadvantaged areas. It will include:

- a new wave of free school applications, building on the 212,000 places created by free schools since 2010;
- £50 million funding to expand the number of places at existing good or outstanding selective schools alongside measures to give more disadvantaged pupils the opportunity to attend these schools;
- new support for faith schools where there is demand for good school places; and
- fresh agreement with the independent schools sector to help improve outcomes for pupils of all backgrounds.

Today's moves will build on the hard work of teachers and the success of the government's reforms, creating 825,000 new school places since 2010 with 1.9

million more children now in good or outstanding schools.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

Children only get one chance at an education and they deserve the best, wherever they live and whatever their background. Standards are rising in our schools and we've created hundreds of thousands of new places since 2010 but we want to make sure every family can access a good school.

By creating new schools where they are needed most and helping all great schools to grow, we can give parents greater choice in looking at schools that are right for their family – and give children of all backgrounds access to a world-class education.

Today's announcements follow the Schools that Work for Everyone consultation, which set out the government's ambition to ensure there is a good school place for every child, whatever their background. The measures will create more places across the diverse school system, giving families greater choice and raising standards for pupils.

### **Wave 13 of free school applications to deliver further innovation and parent choice**

This latest applications round will target areas where there is a demand for places and a need to help raise school standards, giving more families access to a good school place. Nearly 400 free schools are open.

### **More places at good grammar schools and support for disadvantaged pupils**

The government is launching the Selective Schools Expansion Fund, with £50million available for 2018-19 so that existing selective schools can expand their premises to create more places. This will give parents greater choice and give more children, from all backgrounds, access to a good school place. Schools will have to submit a Fair Access and Partnership Plan setting out what action they will take to increase admissions of disadvantaged pupils. Research shows pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds attain better results in selective schools and around 60% of these schools already prioritise these children in their admissions. For example, King Edward VI in Birmingham actively encourage more pupils from less privileged backgrounds to join their schools, including considering 11+ results for disadvantaged pupils separately to their non-disadvantaged counterparts. A Memorandum of Understanding with the Grammar School Heads' Association has also been unveiled, outlining its commitment to widen access and work with local schools to raise standards for all children.

### **Faith schools to help meet local demand for school places**

There are many good or outstanding faith schools and more want to open. The Government will retain the 50% cap on faith admissions for free schools but will develop a scheme to help create new voluntary-aided (VA) schools for

faith and other providers to meet local demand, supported by capital funding. The VA route already allows for schools to apply to open with up to 100% faith based admissions. The Department will work with local authorities to create these schools where they are needed, subject to a 10% contribution from the provider to the capital costs. To support the measures to promote social cohesion announced in the Integrated Communities strategy, these schools – as all schools do – will continue to be expected to play an active role in their communities. This could include twinning with other schools and ensuring diversity on the governing board. Examples of schools already doing this include St Joseph's Catholic Junior School in Leyton, which has a strong record of working with local Muslim, Jewish, Christian and non-faith schools.

### **Universities and independent schools building partnerships with state schools to raise attainment and widen access**

Following the Schools that Work for Everyone consultation, we have established a dedicated unit that works with universities and independent schools to develop and strengthen partnerships with state schools to help raise attainment and aspiration for all pupils. A number of institutions have already come forward to do this including independent and state schools working together to support school improvement. The Department for Education has today published a Joint Understanding with the Independent Schools Council, setting out how it will work in partnership with state schools and, in particular, help pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. The higher education sector is also supporting these objectives and, in February, the Office for Students set out what is expected of universities with regard to participation and access.

This package of measures builds on the government's support for the most disadvantaged children and the drive to raise academic standards in poorer areas of the country, including:

- A plan to improve social mobility, boosting opportunities for all young people;
- The £72 million Opportunity Areas programme to raise standards and improve outcomes in twelve disadvantaged areas of the country;
- Steps to transform education for children with additional needs; and
- More than £45million awarded to successful multi-academy trusts to help tackle underperformance and improve schools in areas that lack capacity, particularly in disadvantaged areas of the country.

Grammar School Heads' Association Chief Executive Jim Skinner said:

We are very pleased that, like other good and outstanding schools, selective schools now have access to a fund to allow them to expand their premises. This is particularly important at a time when there are increasing numbers of pupils reaching secondary age and such high demand from parents for selective school places.

We look forward to working with the Department for Education through the Memorandum of Understanding, to continue and further

extend the work that member schools have undertaken in recent years, to increase access for disadvantaged pupils and to support other schools to raise standards for all children.

Parents and Teachers for Excellence Director Mark Lehain said:

The new wave of free schools announced today is fantastic news for communities across the country. Already hundreds of towns and tens of thousands of families have benefitted from the addition of great new schools to our system, and the next wave, targeted at areas that haven't yet had this, will ensure the benefits are felt wider still.

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## [News story: UK response to Ebola cases in the DRC](#)

The UK government is working with the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and World Health Organization (WHO) to monitor the situation and be ready to act quickly to tackle the spread of the disease.□

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

The Ebola epidemic in 2014 highlighted that to save lives we need to act quickly to stop the spread of this disease.

We're well-practiced in responding to disease outbreaks, and are coordinating across government to support the WHO in their leadership of the response. Vaccines have been stockpiled, we have built research and monitoring capacity, and the Rapid Support Team of health experts stand ready to be deployed if needed.

I've spoken to the UK team in the DRC and heard how we are working with the country's government, the WHO and other partners to monitor the situation closely and to take fast and appropriate action to tackle the spread of Ebola, to keep us all safe from this disease.

I'd also like to thank the brave healthcare experts already working on this response, and on broader work to tackle disease outbreaks across the globe to stop these threats reaching our shores.

It is vital we are ready to respond rapidly when outbreaks are detected,

which is why the UK is the second largest contributor to the WHO's Contingency Fund for Emergencies, from which \$1 million has already been mobilised to respond to this outbreak. We also work to strengthen health systems in high-risk countries such as DRC, so that they can better detect and tackle disease outbreaks when they arise.

DFID and Wellcome jointly fund a research initiative on epidemic preparedness. Today, DFID is making available £1 million from this programme to support the rapid response, in addition to a further [£2 million being made available by Wellcome](#).

DFID has worked with Wellcome to develop a safe vaccine for Ebola which is currently stockpiled, ready for use, by the Global Vaccines Alliance, GAVI – to which we are a major contributor.

The UK Public Health Rapid Support Team is also on standby ready to be deployed to support the response, if required.

DRC has experienced several Ebola outbreaks since 1976, and the country is familiar with managing the disease.

The FCO have also updated [travel advice](#) for DFID DRC.

#### **Notes to editors**

- The £1 million provided through the Joint Initiative on Epidemic Preparedness is part of the £19 million we provide to Wellcome from 2016-21.
- WHO released US\$1 million from its Contingency Fund for Emergencies (CFE) to support response activities for the next three months with the goal of stopping the spread of Ebola to surrounding provinces and countries. The CFE has a vital and unique role to play in the global effort to prevent and mitigate health emergencies. The UK announced this year an increase of support of £4 million for the CFE, bringing the total commitment to £10 million.

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## **[Press release: PM call with Prime Minister Netanyahu: 10 May 2018](#)**

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister held a telephone call with the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier today.

The Prime Minister condemned the Iranian rocket attacks against Israeli forces, and said we strongly support Israel's right to defend itself against Iranian aggression.

The Prime Minister noted our statement calling on Iran to refrain from any further attacks, and for calm on all sides.

They agreed it was vital for the international community to continue working together to counter Iran's destabilising regional activity, and for Russia to use its influence in Syria to prevent further Iranian attacks.

The Prime Minister reiterated our position on the Iran nuclear deal, noting that we and our European partners remain firmly committed to ensuring the deal is upheld, as the best way of preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

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## [News story: Improving patient diagnosis and treatment: apply for funding](#)

Innovate UK has up to £5 million to invest in new technologies that will help doctors to make early and accurate diagnosis of disease and that will lead to better treatments.

### **More accurate identification and treatment**

Disease processes and treatments can vary highly from person to person. Only between 30% and 70% of patients are thought to respond positively to any drug.

Precision medicine – also known as stratified medicine or personalised medicine – seeks to improve this through more accurate identification of disease and of the right treatment to pursue. It combines knowledge of clinical biomarkers with advances in diagnosis and data analysis.

The aim is to ensure patients receive an accurate diagnosis and get the best treatment for their personal circumstances.

Supporting our ageing society with earlier diagnosis and precision medicine is part of the government's modern [Industrial Strategy](#). Find out more about [how we are tackling this challenge through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund](#).

## What we are looking for

This competition is for both early-stage feasibility studies and for collaborative research and development. Projects may combine different research categories if needed.

### Feasibility studies

Projects could conduct feasibility studies into:

- initial technical activities
- the value proposition of a concept
- understanding the technical, operational, clinical and regulatory requirements of a technology and the challenges of getting it adopted by medical professionals
- determining relevant regulatory and health technology assessments
- analysing progress and developing a clear development plan for a technology

### Collaborative research and development

We will support collaborative research and development under one of the following themes:

- rapid and accurate diagnosis of commonly misdiagnosed ailments to help pick cost-effective remedies already on the market
- mental health and precision psychiatry
- paediatric and maternal-foetal medicine
- inflammatory diseases including psoriasis, respiratory, autoimmune, Crohn's and transplant rejection

## Competition information

- the competition opens on 14 May 2018, and the deadline for applications is at midday on 11 July 2018
- a briefing event will be held on 31 May 2018
- for feasibility projects, these:
  - must be led by a business working alone or with other businesses or research organisations
  - have project costs of up to £100,000 and to last up to 12 months
- for collaborative research and development projects, these:
  - can be led by a business or a research and technology organisation



and must include another organisation such as a healthcare provider, business or research organisation

- have project costs of up to £2 million and to last up to 24 months
- businesses could attract up to 70% of their project costs

[Find out more about this competition and apply.](#)