

[News story: Education Secretary addresses ASCL conference](#)

Justine Greening speaks to school and college leaders about the teaching profession and the recruitment and retention package.

In a [speech to the Association of School and College Leaders' \(ASCL\) annual conference](#) in Birmingham today (Friday 10 March), Education Secretary Justine Greening discussed her vision for the teaching profession and its role in school improvement.

Addressing the audience of school and college leaders, Justine Greening also explained how she wanted the teaching profession to embed flexible working as the norm, to help keep hold of the most talented teachers. As part of this she announced that a summit would be held later this year with teaching unions looking at ways of implementing flexible working more widely across the profession.

Education Secretary Justine Greening said:

If we really want to get great teachers into the schools that need them most – and keep them there – then we have to align the right incentives.

We need to take coherent, concrete steps to tackle the challenge in areas that need it most – beginning with a multimillion-pound investment to pilot new approaches to attracting and retaining teachers in the north of England.

Flexible working exists in most other workplaces and we need to work out how to embed it in teaching. This is about a culture shift – it won't be the whole answer to recruitment and retention but it is definitely part of it and many schools are already demonstrating what's possible.

Ms Greening also referred back to her commitment to strengthen qualified teacher status (QTS) and the CPD offer for the teaching profession, including:

- making absolutely clear that QTS will not be scrapped – instead, the government will work with the sector to develop and introduce a newly strengthened QTS from September 2019, so that all school leaders will want all their teaching staff to achieve it
- announcing the first round of bidding for the £75 million teaching and leadership innovation fund to enable new, high-quality continuing professional development (CPD) provision to be delivered where it can make the most difference, including in the 12 opportunity areas

- new, fully revised gold-standard national professional qualifications (NPQs), developed in partnership with the teaching profession, to be implemented from September this year – funding of £10 million from the teaching and leadership innovation fund will be made available to incentivise take-up of the new NPQs for high-potential professionals working in the most challenging schools.
-

Press release: Minister Sir Alan Duncan meets Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister Titov

Minister for Europe and the Americas, Sir Alan Duncan, today held talks in London with Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Titov.

The Ministers had a frank and open discussion of the UK-Russia relationship and current international issues ahead of the Foreign Secretary's visit to Moscow in the coming weeks. They discussed shared priorities in the relationship between our two countries, including the Year of Science and Education; and cultural exchanges. They also discussed areas of difference including Ukraine, and recent human rights developments in Russia. Sir Alan Duncan noted the importance of a political settlement to bring an end to the war in Syria, on which Russia must play a role.

It is important we engage on these issues, push for change, and seek to find a way forward. Sir Alan Duncan's meeting with Mr Titov reflects the UK's policy of guarded engagement with Russia.

Press release: Project launched to protect the Ouseburn River

Groundwork North East & Cumbria is working with partners from across the region to protect and preserve the upper part of the Ouseburn River.

The charity has secured £200,000 from the Environment Agency to fund the Ouseburn River Restoration Project.

Working with partners including landowners, communities, schools and local businesses, Groundwork will carry out a number of enhancements to the river and the surrounding environment to improve water quality through a number of

environmental improvements.

The project will implement several physical measures to slow the flow of the river, including widening it at strategic points, sculpting areas of the river bank, altering meanders and installing silt traps.

In addition to the physical work, the Ouseburn River Restoration Project will also work with farmers and landowners about how to manage fertiliser and sediment run off, which causes high levels of phosphorus in the river, this diminishes invertebrate life and affects all aspects of river life.

Lesley Silvera, Senior Project Officer at Groundwork North East & Cumbria, said:

It's fantastic that the Ouseburn River Restoration Project is now off the ground. Over the next two years, we will be working closely with third parties to improve the water quality and ecology of the river.

We'll also be looking to survey and eradicate invasive species, remove litter, monitor wildlife and plant trees, which will keep the river cool, create riverbank habitats and help prevent bank erosion.

We will be working in partnership with Newcastle University, the Environment Agency and Tyne Rivers Trust to observe and measure water quality to gauge the success of the scheme, which will also inform future work on the river.

Lucy Mo, the Environment Agency's Project Manager responsible for funding this work added:

The health of our rivers is better than it's ever been with drastic improvements to water quality over the past 20 years. However, there is still more to do and by working with partners on projects such as the Ouseburn River Restoration Project we can play to different organisations' strengths and deliver more.

We're pleased to be part of this exciting project, which will improve in-river and bankside habitats, and will also give us more water monitoring data and analysis.

The work is funded primarily through the Environment Agency. Additional funding is from Groundwork NE & Cumbria, Northumbrian Water Ltd, Newcastle University. Partners include Environment Agency, Northumbrian Water Ltd, Natural England, Tyne Rivers Trust, Newcastle City Council and Newcastle University.

Speech: Mark Garnier speech at the Midlands Engine Trade Summit

Thank you. I'm delighted to be back in this great city at the inaugural Midlands Engine Trade Summit.

I want to thank my department's regional team here in the Midlands for organising this event. I know it's taken a lot of hard work.

Personally, this is an important event for 2 reasons:

First, as a Minister at the Department for International Trade – I am responsible for ensuring the world knows that the Midlands, like every other region in the UK, is open for business.

And secondly, because I have the honour of being a Midlands MP.

Wyre Forest, my constituency, is based in Worcestershire.

So I know, better than most, the potential of businesses in the Midlands.

They are diverse, innovative and can be world beaters.

And history is on our side.

If you head up the A41 for 2 miles you'll arrive at the birthplace of the industrial revolution.

It was in Soho that James Watt created his steam engine: a manufacturing marvel that led to levels of productivity the world had never seen.

It allowed Britain, and this region in particular, to become the manufacturing powerhouse of the world.

It's a well-known fact, particularly if you have a friend from these parts, that Birmingham has more miles of canals than Venice – albeit with fewer gondolas.

150 years ago, these canals were the arteries of the Midlands economy – carrying everything from Black Country coal and iron ore, to Wedgwood pottery heading to the markets of Birmingham and Manchester.

Today, we talk a lot about innovative disruptors shaking up the modern economy – the likes of Uber and AirBnB; however historically, the Midlands has been the world economy's disruptor in chief.

Whether that was Rolls Royce in Derby developing their iconic Merlin aero-engine, or Cooke Optics in Leicester, who produced the camera lenses with

which they filmed Star Wars – this region has always led, never followed.

There will be some who dismiss the Midlands Engine as an empty political slogan.

They are mistaken.

Between 1997 and 2010, manufacturing output in the Midlands fell from over £15 billion to under £12 billion. No other UK region had a greater fall.

Regional productivity here is also on the wrong side of the national average.

These are real issues that need more than gimmicky solutions.

That is why the Chancellor recently announced our strategy for the Midlands Engine – focussing on the key themes of connectivity, skills, enterprise and innovation. The strategy demonstrates our commitment to the Midlands and we will work with Sir John Peace and the Midlands Engine partners to ensure it is a success.

For me, the Midlands Engine is a commitment by this government to ensure that the best days for this region are not those consigned to history, but those of the future.

It is a commitment to harness this region's 11.5 million people, a fast growing economy, and expertise across many sectors, to create the jobs and growth that spreads prosperity from Dudley to Derby.

That is why I entered politics; that is why I joined the Department for International Trade.

And that is why we will make the Midlands Engine a success.

Let me outline 3 areas government will focus on to ensure the Midlands fulfils its huge potential.

Midlands exports

The first is to use the momentum of the Midlands Engine to drive this region's exports to new heights.

Transport technologies, advanced manufacturing and engineering as well as healthcare and life sciences are just some of the centres of excellence in the Midlands.

This is expertise the world wants.

Over 27,000 businesses in the Midlands export nearly £40 billion worth of products to over 100 countries.

Incredibly, even the so-called factory of the world, China, runs a goods deficit with the West Midlands. But these impressive figures belie a bleaker national picture.

Only about 11% of British businesses export anything beyond our borders, despite hundreds of thousands having a product or service that is export ready.

This unfulfilled national potential is not just affecting the businesses themselves, who forgo the additional profits and productivity that overseas trade unlocks, but also the national economy – the strength of which relies on our ability to trade overseas.

That is why my department was created: ensuring that Britain becomes a champion of global free trade – lowering barriers and raising prosperity wherever and whenever possible.

For the first time, the 3 pillars of trade – policy, promotion and finance are under one roof – so we can be more coordinated in our approach.

Our objectives are simple and clear.

We will promote UK companies abroad; we will attract inward investment into regions such as the Midlands, and promote our businesses across the world; and finally, we will build a strong trading framework for the UK outside the EU.

But what does this actually mean in practical support for the businesses here today.

It means DIT delivering 20 Midlands Engine trade missions by 2020.

Eighty Midlands companies and over 100 delegates have already participated in DIT-led trade missions across the globe, from the USA to the UAE to China.

We are encouraging companies from Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire to meet with buyers from Shanghai, New York, and Dubai.

We expect the business done at these trade missions to generate £5 million worth of deals over the next 12 months.

A simple face to face meeting with the right contacts can be a game-changer for SMEs.

Like packaging manufacturer B&G Products from Staffordshire, who landed their first export deal to the United States, worth hundreds of thousands of pounds, just 4 months after taking part in the first Midlands Engine trade mission.

Later you will hear from UK Export Finance's Chief Executive, Louis Taylor, who will explain how we are helping Midlands companies win, fulfil and get paid for their overseas contracts.

Last year, UKEF provided £19 million in support for nearly £200 million worth of export contracts for companies in the Midlands.

Businesses, as you know, run on cash flow; so we are making it easier.

We're also taking our export support online.

If you haven't already, please visit [great.gov.uk](https://www.great.gov.uk) – the government's new digital platform.

It should be every exporter's first port of call for information and my department's International Trade team will be on hand throughout the day to show you how to get the most from it.

Where else can you find nearly 1,500 live business leads for which you can apply today; or sell your products on the world's biggest online marketplaces like Amazon and Tmall at preferential rates; or have global buyers contact you direct to supply what they need?

It's all in one place; it's all digital; and quite frankly, I've seen nothing like it anywhere else in the world. Some of you may be thinking that it's all well and good politicians standing here and telling you about the benefits of exporting. They don't know what it's like running a business.

I'd be the first to agree that our best ambassadors and spokespeople are actually exporters themselves.

They know what it's like; they've felt the benefits; they have a story to tell.

Which is why I am delighted to announce today the launch of the [Midlands Engine Export Champions Programme](#).

Twenty eight experienced exporters based in the Midlands have agreed to serve as Export Champions and inspire others to either export for the first time or to export more.

They will promote the government's Exporting is GREAT campaign and raise the profile of the Midlands Engine in the UK and overseas.

Many of them are here today, ready to share their insights.

Investment

The second way to fulfil the potential of the Midlands is by continuing to attract investment into the region that creates jobs, introduces new technology and raises standards of living.

Last year alone, nearly 15,000 new jobs were created because of inward investment in the Midlands. And with the pull factors of the Midlands, it's easy to see why.

Investors will be dealing with a regional economy worth over £200 billion; they will be able to access 90% of businesses anywhere in the UK within 4 hours; and benefit from the talent and research fed by 25 universities.

I want these factors to be known worldwide.

That is why today, I am also launching the Midlands Engine Investment Hub.

Specialist staff will work with local partners to ensure investment projects land effectively into this region.

They will work with our embassies and High Commissions to raise the profile of the Midlands overseas.

It is the only physical hub of its kind in the UK – and is currently hosting 12 global entrepreneurs from Eastern Europe who are looking to set up here.

Brexit

The final point I want to make is how businesses in the Midlands can thrive post Brexit.

I know Lord Bridges from the Department for Exiting the EU is leading a session later, so I will be brief.

There may be businesses in the audience who are currently exporting to mainland Europe.

In the short term, nothing changes. We are still EU members until the formal process of exiting is complete. During this time, goods and services will flow as usual.

The Prime Minister has been clear. When we leave, we will seek the greatest possible access to the single market so that British and EU firms can trade with as little friction as possible.

Brexit is not a rejection of European values, or the idea of the EU.

This country was built on those values and ideas; they form part of our own national identity.

We want the EU to succeed – it is in our national interest.

But if you look further afield, you will see opportunities beyond the borders of Europe too, which we can now look to seize.

90% of future global growth will be outside the EU.

We can strike trade agreements with global partners, who also happen to be some of the fastest growing economies.

Many of whom have already signalled strong interest in striking agreements with the UK.

The Midlands, as it so often has, is leading the way.

My department will ensure that the whole of the UK will be ready, willing and able to follow suit.

Conclusion

When it comes to Midlands, it is clear that with great potential comes great expectation.

If the Midlands matches its predicted growth over the next 15 years – it will create 300,000 jobs and inject £34 billion into the UK economy.

The Midlands Engine is how we go about meeting that expectation.

The great and innovative businesses of this region need only look to history to see how high the bar has been set.

Speaking as a local MP and a minister, I can assure you that both regionally and nationally, we are all backing you to succeed.

Thank you.

[Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Montenegro](#)

2015 – present FC0, Temporary duties in the Middle East & North Africa, Finance and Prosperity Directorates 2013 – 2015 Sana'a, Deputy Head of Mission 2013 Full time language training (Arabic) 2010 – 2012 FC0, Head of Policy Unit, National Security, Middle East, North Africa & South Asia 2008 – 2010 FC0, Deputy Director Estates & Sustainability, Estates and Security Department 2007 Kurdistan Region & Northern Iraq, Consul General 2006 – 2007 Liberia, Political Chargé 2004 – 2005 FC0, Near East Team Leader, Arab, Israel North Africa Group 2002 – 2004 FC0, Head of Political Team, Afghanistan Unit 1999 – 2002 Colombo, Second Secretary Political 1997 – 1998 FC0, Desk Officer Greece and Cyprus 1997 Joined FC0