

Welsh Secretary pledges support to automotive sector at 'Driving the Future' event

As the UK Government marks the first anniversary of its 'Road to Zero' strategy, Welsh secretary Alun Cairns told representatives from the automotive sector that he wants the UK to be at the forefront of the design and manufacture of electric vehicles.

The 'Driving the Future' event, sponsored by Aston Martin, Bosch and Wunder Mobility, aimed to address the changing landscape of the automotive sector and its plans to confront these challenges through innovation and technological advancement.

During his keynote address, the Welsh Secretary hailed the enduring success of the UK automotive sector in the face of uncertainty, before going on to highlight Wales as the perfect location for automotive investment.

In his closing remarks the Welsh Secretary told leading sector representatives that the UK Government is committed to supporting and facilitating their innovation to ensure that the UK remains a world leader in the sector.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

The unparalleled shift in consumer demand provides us with a golden opportunity to lead the way in designing the next generation of vehicles and technologies. Cultivating and developing this opportunity requires the automotive sector to innovate, expand and attract new investment to Wales and the UK.

Through the Industrial Strategy, the UK Government will provide you with the tools to do this, securing the future of this industry and guaranteeing jobs long into the future.

The event was co-sponsored by Aston Martin who, last year, announced that they were investing £50 million in their new state of the art facility in St Athan, making it their centre for electrification. Their investment will create an additional 200 jobs at the site and, in total, the new plant will bring up to 750 high skilled jobs to South Wales. This investment not only provided a welcome boost to the Welsh economy, but also demonstrated the incredible skillset of the Welsh workforce who were handpicked by Aston Martin to bring their brand to life.

Dr. Andy Palmer, Aston Martin Lagonda President & CEO, said:

We were delighted to welcome the Secretary of State as the keynote speaker at today's event, where we have been setting out a positive future vision for sustainable mobility, along with our event partners Bosch and Wunder Mobility. As we approach the formal opening of our home of electrification at St Athan in South Wales, it is timely that the Secretary of State could join us to emphasise the important role of government in enabling the transition to new sustainable technologies and to reinforce the case for Wales as a place to do business.

ENDS

Preferred candidate for new Financial Reporting Council Chair announced

Following an open competition, Simon Dingemans has been named as the government's preferred candidate to the post of Chair of the Financial Reporting Council (FRC).

The Secretary of State has invited the Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee to hold a pre-appointment hearing and to report on Mr Dingemans' suitability for the post. This is in line with the government's commitment to strengthen the role of Parliament in scrutinising major public appointments.

Pre-appointment hearings enable select committees to take evidence from preferred candidates for major public appointments before they are appointed. Hearings are in public and involve the select committee publishing a report setting out their views on the candidate's suitability for the post. Pre-appointment hearings are non-binding but ministers will consider the committee's views before deciding whether to proceed with an appointment.

Simon Dingemans will join at a crucial time for the audit regulator, which is going through a period of transformation to become the [Audit, Reporting and Governance Authority](#). This new body will build on the UK's status as a great place to do business and will form an important part of strengthened public trust in businesses and the regulations that govern them.

Mr Dingemans was until recently the Chief Financial Officer and a member of the main board of GlaxoSmithKline plc. He stepped down in May 2019 after over 8 years with the company. During his time with GSK, he provided operational and financial leadership through a period of significant business

transformation including extensive restructuring and the strategic re-shaping of the group and its 3 global businesses: Pharmaceuticals, Vaccines and Consumer Healthcare, which together employ nearly 100,000 people.

Mr Dingemans joined GSK in 2011 from Goldman Sachs International where he was a Managing Director and Partner.

He has been a Trustee of the Donmar Theatre since 2018 and also served as Chairman of the 100 Group of Finance Directors between 2014 and 2016. He has a Masters Degree in Geography from Oxford.

[Chris Skidmore sets out the first steps to establish the Robotics Growth Partnership](#)

Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here.

When Greg Clark launched our Industrial Strategy in the winter of 2017, he said:

We are at one of the most important, exciting and challenging times in the history of global enterprise. Powered by new technologies, the way we live our lives as workers, citizens and consumers is being transformed across the world.

He was right. And smart robotics are a major part of this transformation. A transformation driven by people like you.

We're seeing robots teem out of factories into services and consumer markets. With the potential to help care for our sick and educate our young. To revolutionise our farms, warehouses and emergency services.

Firefighters at Notre Dame were directed by drone-mounted cameras. Which, last year, helped to save a semi-conscious man from an Exmouth cliff face.

Thousands of robots at one of Ocado's fulfilment centres can assemble well over 200,000 orders a week. Passing each other at nearly 20mph just a centimetre apart. All controlled by a machine-learning air-traffic control system.

Such things were the stuff of science fiction when I was a child.

Advances in AI, materials, and sensing have driven extraordinary changes in Robotics and Autonomous Systems – or RAS – in the past 5 years. And things

will only accelerate.

We're now seeing improvements in technology and capability. As machines get cheaper, smaller and more collaborative – particularly as they come together with AI – we'll see more and more areas transformed. And new sectors created.

This transformation will be lucrative. The RAS market is forecast to grow at an extraordinary rate – almost 40% a year. With non-industrial uses making up 90% of the market.

There are huge business opportunities domestically and internationally. Ocado, for example, has deals in place to build 25 cutting-edge warehouses around the world. This is not just world-leading technology. It is a real British export success story.

So what I want to talk to you about today, is how we can make the most of the transformation before us?

How can we realise the enormous potential benefits for the economy and society?

Navigating the challenges it brings, as any revolution does. Placing the UK at the forefront of these new technologies. And giving our businesses access to huge global markets.

Firstly, we need to encourage uptake. Which we are doing across sectors. For example, our Made Smarter programme aims to increase the uptake of digital technologies across manufacturing. Boosting the sector's productivity.

We have a £20 million pilot already in operation in the North West, providing support to manufacturing SMEs to adopt digital technologies.

And we're funding the development of technological solutions to the sector's problems to the tune of more than £120 million.

Secondly, we need to create a modern, effective regulatory framework.

The public can be wary of robotics. For some, they conjure up a sci-fi, job-thieving dystopia.

Government has a crucial role here in building and maintaining trust. And such trust is critical. Both in ensuring robots work for the benefit of all and in developing the public confidence required to encourage uptake.

That's why, just last month, during London Tech Week, the Business Secretary published our white paper on Regulation for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

This sets out plans to transform the UK's regulatory system – supporting innovation and investment, ensuring regulators keep pace with technology. While protecting citizens and the environment.

Thirdly, we need to innovate. Building on the expertise of our world class universities, the talents of our researchers, and the energy of our

businesses.

This means government investing and providing leadership. Helping to drive innovation, steering it towards our most pressing challenges. And de-risking private sector investment.

This is crucial in unleashing the economic and societal benefits new technologies can bring. Because RAS will be central to addressing the challenges facing the world today.

Four of which we have placed at the heart of our Industrial Strategy. Namely:

- tackling climate change while growing our economy
- meeting the needs of an Ageing Society
- harnessing the power of AI and data
- and the future of mobility – how we move goods and people about

We call these our Grand Challenges. And RAS will be key to meeting them, with its potential to, say, revolutionise healthcare, or make self-driving cars a reality – amongst many, many other things.

By putting these challenges at the centre of our Industrial Strategy, and backing them with funding, we're encouraging the market to come up with the solutions that we need.

So that as the world moves towards green living, and industrial societies age, the UK has the technologies it needs to succeed.

As part of this approach, since Autumn 2017, we have invested over £94 million to develop RAS technologies that can be used in extreme environments. Placing the UK at the lead of robotics in nuclear and offshore energy applications.

And fuelling private sector investment in innovation. That £94 million pot now stands at a total of £165 million thanks to co-investment.

This is part of a broader pattern we have seen in the past. Our robotics investment since 2014 – worth £360 million – has been more than exceeded by private sector investment across the sector. Not just from business but also financiers.

Just last year, for example, CMR Surgical, based in Cambridge, raised \$100 million for their surgical robot.

Of course, innovation requires infrastructure too. So I am very pleased to announce today that we will be funding a £3 million extension to Remote Applications in Challenging Environments, or RACE – a remote handling and robotics test facility.

Not only will this create over 100 highly skilled jobs and improve collaboration. But it moves the UK closer to a globally significant robotics cluster in Oxfordshire.

The fourth thing we need to do is collaborate internationally. Because, as today's event shows, this is a global industry. And by working together with our partners overseas, we all benefit.

Just look at Astroscale's operation in Harwell. A Japanese firm investing in the UK and collaborating with our Satellite Applications Catapult.

They're leading a £4 million grant from the UK government to help establish a state-of-the-art national control facility. This will support advanced robotics in space, enabling a commercial service for tackling space debris.

It is because collaboration like this is so important, that I'm delighted to tell you that London has won its bid to host the International Conference on Robotics and Automation in 2023.

As you will know, this is one of the most prestigious robotics conferences in the world. And it will bring over 4000 global leaders in automation and robotics to London.

This underlines our desire to work across borders, and our position as a global player in this important field.

Finally, to help unlock the potential of the robotics revolution, the government can use its convening power. Bringing this diverse sector together to determine what it needs to flourish.

With this in mind, in March, I announced that I would convene a robotics leadership group.

And today I am pleased to set out the first steps in establishing this group – the Robotics Growth Partnership.

This will bring together representatives from across industry, academia, and government. To develop an action plan to strengthen and develop the partnership. To bring the sector together. And to help push UK RAS forward.

I'm very pleased to be able to tell you that two outstanding leaders in the field of robotics have accepted my invitation to co-chair the partnership:

Paul Clarke, Chief Technology Officer at Ocado; and Professor David Lane, Director of the Edinburgh Centre for Robotics and lead for the ORCA robotics hub.

Their proven track records in this area, as well as their broad networks across business and academia, make them ideal for the role. Enabling them to tap into the wide-ranging expertise and insights that the partnership needs to succeed.

I want this partnership to help put the UK at the cutting edge of the global smart robotics revolution. Turbo-charging economic productivity and unlocking benefits across society.

But we need your help. Please spread the word about the partnership and get

involved yourselves.

Because collectively we can realise the benefits – both economic and social – of the transformation before us. With your energy, expertise and enterprise. And a supportive, enabling government.

The rewards are there for the taking. So let all of us – industry and academia, government and consumer – seize this moment together. Thank you.

[Letter from Permanent Secretary, Department for Justice for NI to the PRRB chair](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content] Letter of 17 June 2019 from Permanent Secretary at the Department of Justice for Northern Ireland to the Police Remuneration Review Body chair

[Media freedom and journalists under threat: Foreign Secretary's speech](#)

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the United Kingdom and our co-host, the Government of Canada, I'm delighted to welcome you to this conference. And thank you Chrystia for your great support and enthusiasm for this conference, and for hopefully hosting it next year.

Just 2 months ago on 16 May, a 28-year-old Mexican reporter called Francisco Romero Diaz got a call before dawn about an incident at a nightclub in Playa del Carmen.

Romero specialised in exposing organised crime. He responded as any good journalist should by getting to the scene as quickly as possible.

In fact he was probably walking into a trap. As he arrived, Romero was ambushed and shot dead.

He would have known the risks he was taking. In the previous 2 months, he'd been detained by the police – allegedly for refusing to pay a bribe – and abducted by armed men. He'd been called anonymously by someone threatening to

throw him off a bridge and claiming to know where his son went to school.

And yet despite every act of intimidation and harassment, Romero pressed on with reporting for the newspaper Quintana Roo Hoy and running a website focused on organised crime.

He was the sixth journalist to be shot in Mexico this year. Then just 1 month ago, a seventh, Norma Sarabia, was shot dead in Tabasco State.

Across the world, 99 journalists were killed last year – more than twice as many as a decade earlier – and another 348 were locked up by governments.

Few perpetrators of these crimes are ever held to account. Indeed even after 11 years, of the 46 journalists who suffered violent deaths in 2008, only 8 cases have been resolved.

Which is why our conference and this global campaign are so important. Our challenge is to honour the memory of Francisco Romero Diaz – and others like him – by protecting journalists and championing their work as a vital pillar of a free society.

My friend Chrystia, as she said herself a former journalist, and I are the first Foreign Ministers ever to convene an international conference on this subject and as Chrystia said, we want this to become an annual event around the globe.

Amid the bleak news, today we are joined by delegations from over 100 countries, including 60 ministers, and more than 1,500 journalists, academics and campaigners. Never before have so many countries come together in this cause.

And today we send a resounding message that media freedom is not a Western but a universal value. At its best, a free media both protects society from the abuse of power and helps release the full potential of a nation.

In 1887, the historian and politician Lord Acton wrote his famous words: 'Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.'

The strongest safeguard against the dark side of power is accountability and scrutiny – and few institutions fulfil that role more effectively than a free media.

Real accountability doesn't emerge from the selective and theatrical 'crackdowns' on corruption mounted by authoritarian states, which mysteriously eliminate political opponents whilst leaving the biggest offenders untouched. Real accountability comes from the risk of exposure by a media that cannot be controlled or suborned.

And the evidence is very clear. Of the 10 cleanest countries in the world, as ranked by [Transparency International](#), 7 are also in the top 10 of the [World Press Freedom Index](#). Meanwhile, of the 10 most corrupt countries, 4 are in the bottom 10 for media freedom.

Powerful people value their reputations so the sunlight of transparency is the greatest deterrent to wrongdoing.

I am a politician and, like many members of my profession, I don't always enjoy reading what the media says about me. Indeed a politician who stands up for journalists might occasionally feel like a turkey voting for Christmas.

And of course, I need to say, it may be my only chance, newspapers also make mistakes. Journalists are not immune from the temptations of hyperbole or excess.

But those of us who are sometimes on the receiving end of criticism we should also reflect on the wisdom of Nelson Mandela, who said: "The media are a mirror through which we see ourselves as others perceive us, warts, blemishes and all... Such criticism can only help us to grow, by calling attention to those of our actions and omissions which do not measure up to our people's expectations."

So if we are wise, we politicians will treat the media as a critical friend. Our officials might tell us what we want to hear; the media tell us what we need to hear, providing unvarnished reality whether we wish it or not.

But a free media does more than just criticise failure and deter wrongdoing: it also nurtures and nourishes the progress of ideas. Throughout history, humanity has achieved its swiftest progress whenever we have allowed ideas to be freely debated, tested and challenged.

No discovery was ever achieved and no invention perfected by the suffocating tools of suppression or censorship. The open exchange of ideas through a free media allows the genius of a society to breathe, releasing the originality and creativity of the entire population.

As the great thinker John Stuart Mill wrote: "The peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race... if the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth; if it's wrong, they lose what is almost as great a benefit: the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth produced by its collision with error."

Societies which embrace free debate make a disproportionate contribution to the advance of human knowledge. The 10 nations with the freest media in the world have produced 120 Nobel Laureates between them – 3 times as many as Russia and China combined.

Norway, with only 5 million people, has won 13 Nobel Prizes. With great respect to my Norwegian friends, Norwegians are no more pioneering or inventive than anyone else. They have flourished because their open society and free media – ranked the freest in the world – have created the very best setting for their talents to thrive.

The challenges faced by journalists

In other countries life is tougher – but journalists are succeeding against the odds. In Venezuela, we just heard from Luz Mely Reyes, who has defied the Maduro regime by co-founding an independent news website, Efecto Cocuyo.

In Kazakhstan, Gulnara Bazhkenova runs the website Holanews, which exposed how fish stocks in the Ural river had been devastated by poisoning.

In Peru, Gustavo Gorriti of IDL Reporteros has brought to light a series of corruption scandals involving business, the government and the judiciary.

But sadly in many countries the situation continues to deteriorate. In China, automated censorship and the Great Firewall block access to thousands of news websites, with millions of people employed to censor content, fake social media posts and manipulate online debate.

The first person to establish a website in China focused on human rights was an activist called Huang Qi. He was jailed in 2016 and nothing has been heard from him since a secret trial in January, though he is in poor health. We have raised his case with the Chinese authorities and I urge them again to disclose Huang Qi's fate and provide any medical care he may need.

In Vietnam, Tran Thi Nga produced video evidence of police brutality, only to get a 9-year prison sentence in 2017. So today I call on the Vietnamese authorities to release her.

In a world where a Washington Post columnist, Jamal Khashoggi, was murdered inside a Saudi diplomatic property – and a talented young journalist, Lyra McKee, was shot dead by dissident republicans in Northern Ireland – it would be easy to succumb to fatalism.

But we must resist that. Because if we act together we can shine a spotlight on abuses and impose a diplomatic price on those who would harm journalists or lock them up for doing their jobs.

So today, I want to announce 5 practical steps the British government will take alongside our partners.

Firstly, we will join other governments to establish a new Global Media Defence Fund, to be administered by UNESCO. This will take forward the [UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists](#).

Among the aims will be to help fund legal advice for journalists and safety training for those venturing into conflict zones. Britain will provide £3 million to the Fund over the next 5 years – and we invite others to contribute.

Secondly, we will establish an international task force to help governments to deliver their commitments on media freedom, including by developing national action plans. Every year at the UN General Assembly, we will meet to review progress of the task force, commending those countries where media

freedom is getting better and agreeing what should be done where it is not.

Thirdly, my special envoy, Amal Clooney, has convened a panel of experts to advise countries on how to strengthen the legal protection of journalists. I would encourage all governments to draw on the advice of the panel and respond to its recommendations.

For our part, the British government will ensure that whenever we propose or amend a law, we will consider the potential impact on press freedom. Earlier today, my colleague, Minister Harriett Baldwin, announced that our Department for International Development will spend up to [£15 million on new programmes to promote media freedom across the world](#).

Fourthly, Chrystia Freeland and I will bring together a contact group of likeminded countries to lobby in unison when media freedom comes under attack. Our aim is for this to be a rapid response mechanism, helping foreign ministers and ambassadors to react as one when abuses take place.

Finally, I invite every country represented here to sign the Global Pledge on media freedom, resolving that we will work together as a coalition to promote this cause and meet again next year.

Conclusion

Colleagues, the struggle for media freedom is being waged day after day, not in conference centres like this but by independent journalists in authoritarian states; by vigilant bloggers who expose corruption; and by courageous activists who publish the evidence of human rights abuses.

There is no place for neutrality in this struggle.

We are on the side of those who seek to report the truth and bring the facts to light. We stand against those who suppress or censor or exact revenge.

After the killing of Francisco Romero Diaz, his newspaper carried the headline: 'Pain, Fear and Impotence,' and declared: 'The voice of a journalist has been silenced.'

In the end we all face a choice.

Ignore the threats and we tolerate the stifling of independent voices and the dangers of unaccountable power. But defend our values and nations will flourish from the free exchange of ideas.

By coming to this conference, each and every 1 of the 1,000 people here has made that choice.

We have pledged to do what it takes – and no less – to ensure that instead of being silenced, the plural and varied voices of a free media are nurtured and encouraged as the most important contribution to the open societies that are the foundation of human progress.