

Press release: UK exports boom in all 4 nations

Data released today by HMRC (6 June) shows every UK nation recorded a greater value of goods exports in the 2018/19 financial year than ever before.

This highlights how the UK's recent surge in exports is not driven by a single region, but is rather, a nationwide phenomenon as businesses tap into the growing demand for British produce across the globe.

In the 2018/19 financial year, goods exports from:

- England grew at 3.0% to £251.9bn
- Scotland grew at 12.9% to £32.8bn
- Wales grew at 7.5% to £17.7bn
- Northern Ireland grew at 4.4% to £9.0bn

All of the UK nations have now recorded at least 3 consecutive financial years of goods export growth, illustrating the consistency of the success of exporters up and down the country.

The number of businesses across the country exporting has also increased, with 110,831 businesses exporting goods in the first quarter of 2019, 5,073, more than during the same period last year. In fact, there are now more businesses exporting goods in every UK nation than ever before.

Secretary of State for International Trade & President of the Board of Trade, The Rt Hon Dr Liam Fox MP said:

Whether it is an exporter in rural Derbyshire or the Scottish Highlands, people and businesses across the world want to get their hands on British goods at unprecedented levels.

The data released today pays homage to the hard work of people working in British businesses up and down the United Kingdom, who are now exporting their goods on unprecedented scales.

I am delighted that exports continue to grow in every part of the UK, this shows we are working for every corner of our country and are not led by 1 region alone.

I encourage businesses who are considering exporting for the first time to treat today's news as evidence of the vast economic opportunities selling overseas offers, and that the Department for

International Trade stands ready to help.

[Press release: Trial to help hen harriers gets ready for action](#)

Natural England has today (Thursday, 6 June) confirmed that stringent conditions attached to the licence permitting a trial of brood management for hen harriers have been met.

The [licence](#) permits the removal of hen harrier eggs and/or chicks to a dedicated hatching and rearing facility, where they will be hand-reared in captivity, before being transferred to specially-constructed pens in hen harrier breeding habitat, from which they are then re-introduced into the wild in the uplands of northern England.

There are active hen harrier nests this year that meet the intervention density for trial brood management and willing landowners who want to be part of the trial. The licensee is working on the final information and consents required before action may be taken in 2019.

This is the latest in a series of steps taken by Natural England to support rare and endangered bird species in the UK, which includes licensing the reintroduction of white-tailed eagles and issuing a licence for the collection of curlew eggs from RAF airbases.

To ensure we learn as much as possible from this trial about the potential for brood management to be used as a conservation technique, Natural England, the Government's adviser for nature in England, has approved the membership of a Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) and a Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy to support the trial.

Natural England's Chair Tony Juniper CBE said:

Conservation and protection of the hen harrier is at the heart of what we are doing in licensing this trial of brood management. This decision takes forward but one element in a far broader recovery strategy for the species.

Natural England is ready to take the next careful step, aware that the licensed activity and the research will rightly come under close scrutiny from the scientists on the advisory group, from ourselves as the licensing authority and by those both supportive of and opposed to this trial.

We, as an organisation, must pursue all options for an important

bird such as the hen harrier, so that our children may enjoy this majestic species in the wild.

Brood management is the sixth action within the [Defra Hen Harrier Recovery Plan](#), supported by conservation groups, the International Centre for Birds of Prey and the Hawk & Owl Trust. The trial aims to reduce hen harrier predation of grouse chicks on driven grouse moors, leading to an improvement in the conservation status of hen harrier.

French conservationists have successfully been using a similar technique for Montagu's harrier to move birds away from prime agricultural land.

[Press release: Charity SORP must change to meet “new public expectations”, review panel says](#)

A panel set up to review the future development of charity reporting and accounting has today published its final report making a number of recommendations under five key themes. These recommendations are being made in order to ensure that the way that charities report on their work and account for their income under the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) can meet new public expectations and are fit for the future.

The Charities SORP (Statement of Recommended Practice on Accounting and Reporting by Charities) sets out the financial reporting requirements that apply to almost all charities preparing accounts designed to give a true and fair view. The four charity regulators in the UK and Republic of Ireland held a governance review of the constitution and composition of the Charities SORP committee and the SORP making process over the last 9 months.

The governance review was undertaken by an Oversight Panel comprising a representative from each of the four charity regulators and an observer representative nominated by the FRC. The work of the panel was overseen by Professor Gareth Morgan, an independent Chair retained by the SORP-making body.

The [final report](#), published today has made a number of recommendations under five key themes. These recommendations are that:

- The needs of the wider public and beneficiaries require a refocusing of the SORP and greater simplification of reporting requirements for smaller charities
- The SORP Committee should be retained but reforms are needed regarding size, composition and clarification of the respective roles of the SORP-

making body and SORP Committee.

- Broader and ongoing engagement is needed with a much wider group of stakeholders if the SORP is to continue to be fit for purpose.
- The sector and charity regulators should collaborate to identify and codify best practice in non-statutory financial reporting.
- The SORP-making body, supported by the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) needs to ensure that the redesigned SORP development process takes effect.
- The charity regulators are asked to ensure that SORP process is adequately resourced to implement these recommendations.

The governance review was undertaken during 2018 and early 2019, and included a public consultation and a number of events for participants to share their views. The 36 recommendations will now be submitted to the charity regulators for consideration and response.

Charities SORP Committee Governance Review Panel Chair, Professor Gareth Morgan, said:

I was delighted when the charity regulators launched this Review and I was honoured to act as the Independent Chair. As an academic, and as a charity practitioner, I am aware of the strengths of the Charities SORP but I have also been aware of concerns expressed by some. Our consultation led to a wide range of really constructive suggestions, and I am confident that if the Panel's recommendations are implemented the SORP will be considerably more effective in future.

The full report is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Ends.

Notes to Editors

1. The full terms of reference for the Charities SORP Committee Governance Review can be found [here](#).
2. Gareth Morgan is Emeritus Professor of Charity Studies at Sheffield Hallam University where he led various research concerned with charity accounting and regulation. He has also advised a wide range of charities (mostly small to medium organisations) on accounting and governance issues through his firm, The Kubernesis Partnership LLP. He has worked with charities and the charity regulators across the three UK jurisdictions, and with the Irish Charities Regulator.
3. The review was initiated by the four charity regulators of the UK and Ireland: the Charity Commission for England and Wales (CCEW), the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI) and the Irish Charities Regulator (CR). CCEW, OSCR and CCNI are currently recognised by the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) as the SORP-making body for the Charities SORP.
4. The Oversight Panel members are Sarah Atkinson, Director of Policy,

Planning and Communication at CCEW, Judith Hayhow, Head of Support Services at OSCR, Punam McGookin, Head of Charity Services at CCNI. The CR Panel member was initially Tom Malone, Head of Compliance and Enforcement at the Charities Regulator and subsequently Jelena Grisckenko, Professional Accountant.

5. The Financial Reporting Standard is applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and is applicable to accounts prepared to give a true and fair view in the UK and Ireland. The FRC oversees the SORP which provides guidance to charities in the UK and Ireland as to how to apply FRS 102 when preparing charity accounts. Jenny Carter, Director of UK Accounting Standards was the FRC observer on the Oversight Panel
6. For more information about the SORP, the SORP-making body and advisory SORP Committee refer to the dedicated website www.charitySORP.org

[News story: Residents encouraged to have their say to improve building safety](#)

The Grenfell Tower fire on 14 June 2017 resulted in the greatest loss of life in a residential fire in a century. It shattered the lives of many people and shook the trust of countless more in a system that was intended to ensure the most basic human need of having a safe place to live.

Following research into building safety culture across the industry, it became apparent that too many in the building industry were taking short cuts that could endanger residents in the very place they were supposed to feel safest – their own home. That’s why the government commissioned Dame Judith Hackitt, an engineer and former chair of the UK Health and Safety Executive, to review the system and find out how it can be improved.

Dame Judith’s Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety made it clear that there needs to be a culture change in the industry, underpinned by changing how homes are designed, built, maintained and managed in the future.

Following the review, the government began analysing Dame Judith’s recommendations to understand what needed to be done to overhaul the system. To make sure residents are safe and feel safe in their homes, it became evident that the government needed to take forward all of Dame Judith’s recommendations and go further.

Having your say

In December 2018, the government published its plan to make building regulations stronger and more effective. The plan, [Building a Safer Future](#),

committed the government to ensuring that high-rise residential buildings are safe to live in.

The government intends to bring forward new laws to improve building safety. Before doing this, it has launched a consultation (see the [quick read](#)) on the details and [invites your views](#) over the next 8 weeks.

What the government is doing

The consultation launched today proposes a stronger voice for residents of high-rise buildings to ensure their concerns are never ignored. This includes better information regarding their buildings so that they can participate in decisions about safety, as well as clear and quick routes of escalation for their concerns if things do go wrong.

Clearer accountability for building safety

Dame Judith recommended the creation of a system of 'duty-holders', people who will have responsibility for keeping residents of these buildings safe, and making sure building regulations are followed. Duty-holders will be responsible for keeping vital safety information about how the building was designed and built and is managed. This is known as the 'golden thread' of information and will be kept electronically for the entire life of a building, from its design to its place as a home for residents. The people responsible for this information will have to make sure it is up to date and that the right people can access it, including residents.

Powers and sanctions

If the people responsible for a building ignore their responsibilities, a new building safety regulator will have the authority to take enforcement action against them. This could include criminal and civil sanctions, like fines or imprisonment.

The building safety regulator will be responsible for overseeing the safety of new and existing buildings. Their strong focus will be on checking that safety is being properly considered and necessary safety measures are put in place when new high rise residential buildings are being designed and built, and that robust safety measures are in place for existing buildings.

The intention is that, as a result, the regulator and people responsible for a building's safety will be working towards the common goal at the heart of the new regime – the safety of residents.

The government is also consulting on new ways of ensuring that construction products are safe and used properly.

Implementing clearer standards and guidance

For the regulator to work effectively, clearer standards and guidance need to be produced. For construction products and systems standards, the government proposes creating a new standards committee to provide it with impartial

advice on the new standards and guidance.

The government has also consulted on a full-scale technical review of the building regulations guidance on fire safety, known as Approved Document B. The intention is to improve accessibility and usability of the guidance by publishing a single, online searchable document of all the approved documents and guide to the building regulations so everyone in the industry is clear on how to use them.

Taking action

Following the Grenfell Tower fire, the government committed to reforming the building industry to make sure a tragedy like this does not happen again. The aim is for these building safety reforms to work together to improve safety by creating a culture change in the building industry.

The safety of residents is of the greatest importance and steps are already being taken to strengthen the power residents hold and ensure their views and concerns are listened to by those responsible for managing their buildings. This includes through the [Social Housing Green Paper](#), [New Homes Ombudsman](#) and the recent [call for evidence on how residents and landlords can work together to keep their building safe](#), and the Social Landlords Best Practice Group, capturing and sharing effective ways for residents and landlords to work together on building safety.

The government is funding the replacement of unsafe aluminium composite material cladding, like the type used on Grenfell Tower, from high-rise residential homes and has introduced a [ban on combustible materials on the external walls of new high-rise buildings](#).

Residents, building owners, the construction industry and the fire safety sector are all encouraged to make their voices heard by [participating in the consultation](#) and helping shape the future of building and fire safety to make sure residents are safe and feel safe in their homes.

The Home Office has also launched a call for evidence on the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in England. The call for evidence is the first part of a process to ensure that the Fire Safety Order is fit for purpose for all buildings it regulates.

[Press release: Kumar Iyer appointed new Foreign Office Chief Economist](#)

- Has taught international finance and macroeconomics at Harvard where he was a Kennedy Scholar, conducted his post-graduate studies at Cambridge and is currently a Visiting Academic at Oxford

- Has split his career between the private and public sectors holding senior positions in both arenas including with Oliver Wyman, the Boston Consulting Group, HM Treasury, the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
- Becomes first BAME member of the FCO Board

Kumar Iyer has been appointed as FCO Chief Economist and will take up his new role in July.

In this role he will lead the FCO's Economics Unit which provides in-house economic analysis input into foreign policy formulation, and also develops economics capability within the FCO through the Economics and Prosperity Faculty of the Diplomatic Academy.

Kumar Iyer also joins the FCO Management Board.

Born in London, he spent a number of his childhood years living in India before returning to the UK aged 11 and living in Stoke-on-Trent. In addition to English, he grew up speaking Hindi and Tamil, which came to be useful when he was posted to India as British Deputy High Commissioner and Director General for Economics, Trade and Commercial Affairs in South Asia in 2013.

Kumar Iyer said:

I think living abroad during my early childhood gave me a sense of the world as a bigger place and I developed an interest in international issues that has always stayed with me. The role is a real privilege and marries my love of economics with my interest in global diplomacy.

Growing up in Stoke-on-Trent I never thought I would get an opportunity to do something like this but I'm thrilled to be re-joining the Foreign Office at such an important time.

Sir Simon McDonald Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, said:

We are glad to appoint Kumar as Chief Economist. He brings insight of global economics and international finance, and experience of working on economic diplomacy and prosperity abroad.

Kumar will also become our first BAME FCO Board Member, marking a significant step in ensuring diversity across the FCO, particularly within the FCO's leadership.

After leaving academia for consultancy, Kumar joined the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit as Deputy Director at the height of the global financial crisis during Gordon Brown's tenure as Prime Minister. He then moved to HM Treasury where his team was responsible for overall strategy and co-ordinated the Budget and Autumn Statements before joining the FCO.

Since 2017 he has been working part-time as a Visiting Academic at Hertford College, Oxford, as well as being a Partner in the Financial Services Practice at leading global management consultancy, Oliver Wyman.

Kumar Iyer is married to Kathryn, a criminal barrister and they have two children. In his spare time he enjoys cricket, chess, cooking and travelling.

Notes to editors

- The FC0 BAME Network is working with the FC0 Board to ensure that the best of modern diverse British society is representing our islands across the global network. Our diversity is one of biggest diplomatic strengths.
- Last October, as part of Black History month, the FC0 published a new booklet which for the first time provided an insight into the history of BAME staff in the department over the last 70 years. [‘Black skin, Whitehall: Race and the Foreign Office, 1945 – 2018’](#) written by FC0 Historian James Southern revealed the challenges to ensure equal representation for non-white people in the British diplomatic service in the context of decades of political debates about Empire, immigration and racism and pressure from campaign groups.
- Whilst recognising the progress made, the FC0 recognises that we still have some way to go to reflect the full ethnic diversity of Britain at all grades. Some of the initiatives aimed at increasing our ethnic diversity include new talent and development programmes, mentoring and coaching offers including a reverse mentoring scheme launched by the Foreign Secretary, and increased outreach efforts to recruit staff from a broader range of backgrounds.
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