

Press release: Board of Trade Meets in Northern Ireland for the first time



Dr Liam Fox with students at a National Trade Academy Programme event ahead of a previous Board of Trade meeting

The global success Northern Ireland firms is celebrated as the International Trade Secretary takes the Board of Trade to Northern Ireland for the first time.

- International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox MP will back businesses in Northern Ireland by taking the Board of Trade to Belfast for the first time in its almost 400 year history
- Firms selling overseas urged to become Export Advocates to provide advice, encouragement and support to other businesses looking to sell abroad
- Six companies presented with Board of Trade Awards (BOFTAs) for their exceptional performance in international trade
- Three new advisers appointed to the Board of Trade

The global success of businesses in Northern Ireland will today (Thursday 16th May) be celebrated as International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox MP takes the Board of Trade to Northern Ireland for the first time in its almost 400 year history.

Looking to a world beyond Europe and a time beyond Brexit, Dr Fox will urge companies to become Export Advocates and to provide advice, encouragement and support to other companies looking to sell their products and services overseas.

The Export Advocate community is a network of UK companies acting as ambassadors for exporting, sharing their success stories, offering practical advice and leading by example. They can be contacted via great.gov.uk and on the Exporting is GREAT Facebook group. Businesses in Northern Ireland can sign up to become Export Advocates via great.gov.uk/community

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

This is a very historic time for Northern Ireland and the Board of Trade (BoT) is meeting here for the first time in our history. The BoT was specifically set up to ensure that all parts of the UK are able to share in the prosperity generated by trade. Today's visit makes that commitment clear.

I am encouraged by the success of Northern Ireland's Export Advocates and I urge more businesses who have successfully entered overseas markets to join this community and help guide other firms on to their first international sale.

Northern Ireland is a cornerstone of the UK economy and plays a vital role in securing the United Kingdom's shared prosperity. That's why my international economic department offers a full range of services to exporters from Northern Ireland, including £33 million of UK Export Finance support last year alone, which has already resulted in more than £46 million worth of overseas sales – underpinning jobs and growth.

At the historic meeting in Belfast, Dr Fox will also present six firms with Board of Trade Awards (BOFTAs) for their exceptional performance in international trade.

A hallmark of quality, these awards have become a globally-recognised certificate of excellence, shown on product labels of successful businesses from every part of the UK.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, The Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP, said:

I am delighted the Board of Trade is being held in Northern Ireland. We have so many fantastic local companies that already export overseas – worth an impressive £8.9 billion in 2018.

Our aim is to support many more businesses with global potential to expand and export across the world. That is why these events are so important and vital to boost continued growth and global impact for Northern Ireland.

The six companies presented with BOFTAs today are:

- **STATSports:** STATSports combines cutting edge GPS technology and patented sports science to change the way elite sport is played, coached and measured.
- **CDE:** The world's largest company dedicated to the wet processing of materials in the sand & aggregates, mining, construction and demolition waste recycling, industrial sands and environmental sectors.
- **Datactics:** Belfast-based Datactics provides RegTech solutions for the banking and financial services sector to comply with regulatory requirements for managing and reporting of large quantities of data.
- **Deluxe Group:** The Portadown company specialises in the design, manufacture and fitting of leisure, entertainment, hospitality, theme parks and prime residential developments.
- **First Derivatives:** First Derivatives provides specialist software development and consulting services that address the capture and analysis of large volumes of real time data.
- **MJM Marine:** Headquartered in Newry, MJM Marine has become a leading global maritime fitting company delivering innovative interior fit-outs to the majority of the world's cruise, ferry and superyacht companies.

Ahead of receiving their BOFTA, STATSports CEO and co-founder Alan Clarke said:

We are thrilled to be presented with this exclusive award. This is a hugely exciting time for us at STATSports as we embark on the next stage of our journey.

We have already established our performance monitoring technology with some of the biggest and best-known sporting organisations in the world and this international recognition will help us to expand our reach even further in both the elite and everyday field sports sector.

Three new advisers will also be appointed to the Board of Trade to be the 'eyes and ears' of the modern business community, ensuring that the benefits of free trade are spread equally across the UK.

The new advisers to the Board of Trade are Manufacturing Northern Ireland CEO Stephen Kelly, Scotch Whisky Association CEO Karen Betts and former International Trade Minister The Rt Hon Greg Hands MP. They will join the existing twenty advisers, drawn from a cross section of business, industry and nations of the UK.

Dr Liam Fox commented:

Karen, Greg and Stephen bring first-hand experience of working in industry and sitting around the table where decisions which have a big impact for exporters are made. Their contribution will strengthen the Board of Trade's expertise even further.

The other advisers and I look forward to working with them as we take the Board around the country to ensure that the benefits of free trade are spread to every part of the UK.

Dr Fox will present businesses with BOFTAs alongside a former student of last year's National Trade Academy Programme (NTAP) which took place in Northern Ireland.

In June and July this year, NTAP will run its 2019 International Trade Summer School across Scotland, the Midlands and the South West for 16-18 year olds students to develop business skills, meet innovative exporters and participate in a national competition.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- Latest statistics from the ONS show UK firms sold more overseas in the 2018/19 financial year, £639.9 billion, than at any time since records began
- The UK has now achieved 36 consecutive months of export growth on an annual rolling basis
- Separate OECD data shows UK exports grew faster than Germany, France and Italy between 2016 and 2018

The Department for International Trade (DIT) helps businesses export, drives inward and outward investment, negotiates market access and trade deals, and champions free trade.

We are an international economic department, responsible for:

- supporting and encouraging UK businesses to drive sustainable international growth
- ensuring the UK remains a leading destination for international investment and maintains its number one position for international investment stock in Europe
- opening markets, building a trade framework with new and existing partners which is free and fair
- using trade and investment to underpin the government's agenda for a Global Britain and its ambitions for prosperity, stability and security worldwide.

The 15 existing Northern Ireland Export Advocates:

- iSensing
- Woodwin Catering Ltd (Holmes Bakery)
- Shnuggle Ltd
- Creative Composites
- Sixteen South Studios
- Denman
- Cloud M
- Sensoteq
- Vita Liberata Limited
- Rademon Estate distillery
- BM Steel Fabrications Ltd
- Shortcross Gin
- Golden Popcorn Ltd
- Quigg Golden
- Slate Supplies NI Ltd

About the six companies being presented with Board of Trade Awards (BOFTAs):

- **STATSports:** Founded in 2007, Newry-based STATSports has changed the way elite sport is played, coached and measured by combining cutting edge GPS technology and patented sports science. The company already counts many of the world's top sports clubs and franchises as clients – including English Premier League teams Manchester United, Liverpool, Arsenal, Manchester City and Champions League teams. STATSports recently secured a long-term partnership with the Chinese Football Association to provide all Chinese national teams with its devices.
- **CDE:** For over 25 years, CDE has designed, manufactured and commissioned more wet processing plants than any other company in the world. CDE's headquarters in Cookstown, Northern Ireland, is the world's largest campus dedicated to the wet processing of materials in the sand & aggregates, mining, construction and demolition waste recycling, industrial sands and environmental sectors.
- **Datactics:** Belfast-based Datactics provides RegTech solutions for the banking and financial services sector. These enable financial institutions to comply with regulatory requirements associated with managing and reporting of large quantities of data. Datactics has ambitious growth plans for Europe and the USA and revenues forecast to grow by around 50% in the current year.
- **Deluxe Group:** Established in 1969, Deluxe Group specialises in the design, manufacture and fitting of leisure, entertainment, hospitality, theme parks and prime residential developments. The company currently employs over 100 employees in its 50,000 sq ft site in Portadown, Northern Ireland.
- **First Derivatives:** The Newry-based company provides specialist software

development and consulting services that address the capture and analysis of large volumes of real time data. Today, First Derivatives has offices in 14 countries globally with plans to grow from 2,400 staff to 3,400 staff by 2021. Building on its international network, the company has plans to enter markets including Singapore, China, Hong Kong, USA and Canada.

- MJM Marine: Headquartered in Newry, MJM Marine has become a leading global maritime fitting company delivering innovative interior fit-outs to the majority of the world's cruise, ferry and superyacht companies. Established 35 years ago, the company now employs close to 600 people in Northern Ireland and operates across the USA, Europe, Singapore, Japan and China.

[Press release: New boost for UK ambition to lead the world in zero emissions vehicles](#)

- Coventry based UK Battery Industrialisation Centre will be a new national centre of excellence creating high skilled jobs and attracting inward investment
- Comes as the West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy is launched to drive growth and create opportunities across the region – the first in the country

Coventry will be home to a new national centre of excellence in developing the latest electric car battery technology, backed by millions of pounds in Government investment.

Business Secretary Greg Clark will today announce a new £28 million investment in the UK Battery Industrialisation Centre, providing a stepping stone for our ambition for a Gigafactory in the UK – a large-scale battery technology factory for electric vehicles.

The investment, through our modern Industrial Strategy's Challenge Fund, comes on top of £80 million initial investment in the centre, which will provide world-leading testing facilities for new battery technologies. This investment will also provide practical training to upskill people in battery manufacturing.

The Business Secretary will make the announcement on a tour of the UKBIC site to mark new funding alongside Mayor of the West Midlands Andy Street, as they also unveil the new Local Industrial Strategy for the West Midlands – the

first in the country.

The Local Industrial Strategy sets out a long-term vision for the region to increase productivity – including how the West Midlands can harness the next developments in automotive technologies, such as electric vehicles and driverless cars.

Business Minister Andrew Stephenson said:

Putting the UK at the forefront of the design and manufacturing of zero emission vehicles is at the heart of our plans – creating jobs, growth and opportunity across the country.

Driven by the potential of fast-paced development of battery technology, this investment puts the UK – amongst a handful of countries around the world – on the next step to meet the challenge by the future of mobility.

Our investment of £28 million in this new facility will support the UK's world-leading automotive industry to compete internationally, attract further investment and establish supply chains for new electric vehicle battery design and development.

Mayor of the West Midlands Andy Street, said:

For Coventry to boast the UK's Battery Industrialisation Centre is a major coup for the city and the wider West Midlands.

This £108 million facility will give the city and the region a huge boost in the race to lead the world in the production of electric vehicles, which is an increasingly important market as we look to tackle air pollution and climate change.

The Local Industrial Strategy being launched today also highlights advanced manufacturing, medical research and the creative and digital industries as distinct strengths of the West Midlands. The Strategy will build on these strengths and other opportunities so we have a strong and resilient economic future that can benefit all communities across the whole region.

Jeff Pratt, Managing Director of UK Battery Industrialisation Centre, said:

It is fantastic to see construction starting on UKBIC and we are looking forward to working with all our partners on this project which will have huge significance on the next generation of battery systems.

Tony Harper, Faraday Battery Challenge Director at UK Research and Innovation, said:

This new world-class facility will allow the UK to rigorously prepare our home-grown battery technologies for global competitiveness. This additional investment will mean its ambitious facilities will be expanded and improved to meet the soaring demand of the electric vehicle global market.

Jonathan Browning, chair of the CWLEP, said:

This is an exciting step in creating the UKBIC which will have a vital role in helping the UK to become a global leader in the design, development and manufacture of batteries through collaborative research and development between industry and academia.

Coventry and Warwickshire is renowned for our innovation and expertise and this is an important milestone in establishing a new centre which will influence this sector throughout the world.

Coventry City Councillor Jim O'Boyle cabinet member for jobs and regeneration, and a director of the CWLEP, said:

The petrol engine changed the world in a way people would not have thought possible. And now the march of electric vehicles is about to do the same again and I'm delighted that Coventry is once again leading the way.

The construction of the UK Battery Industrialisation Centre puts Coventry and the wider area at the heart of this new technology which will transform the way we travel, create skilled jobs for local people and help to protect the environment.

West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy launched

The West Midlands is a region currently going through a renaissance. Designed in the West Midlands in collaboration with government , the West Midlands

Local Industrial Strategy builds on the region's core strengths, sectors at the heart of the region like automotive and advanced manufacturing and life sciences, and aims to create new opportunities for people and businesses.

Together, government and UK Research and Innovation, have provided extensive support to businesses and groups in the West Midlands, including investing over £1 billion in the region since 2016.

Productivity in the West Midlands grew at twice the rate of the UK average in 2018 and this new strategy sets out how leaders from across the West Midlands will work in partnership with Government to:

- deliver on our Future of Mobility Grand Challenge, which aims to be at the forefront of the development of cleaner, safer, easier and more reliable future modes of transport, cementing the West Midlands' position as the UK's automotive heartlands;
- play a leading role in the UK's trials of connected autonomous vehicles, with the West Midlands aiming to deploy the first fully operational connected autonomous vehicles in advance of the 2022 Commonwealth Games;
- drive investment into electric vehicle manufacturing in the region, completing the UK Battery Industrialisation Centre and maximising the impact of the Faraday Battery Challenge;
- put the West Midlands at the heart of transport innovation in the UK by delivering the UK's first large-scale 5G testbed;
- help meet the Artificial Intelligence and Data Grand Challenge by supporting the development of a West Midlands Translational Medicine and Med-Tech commission to accelerate the 'lab to patient' ecosystem; and Grow the strong creative and digital industries and business and professional services sector.

The West Midlands is the fastest growing UK region for goods exports and this Local Industrial Strategy will help accelerate the economic growth in the area. The Government's national Industrial Strategy is further supporting economic growth and boosting local businesses through investments including:

- £20m for the West Midlands towards it becoming the UK's first Future Mobility Zone, covering Birmingham, Solihull and Coventry – introducing new technologies to encourage more seamless and efficient journeys;
- Up to £50m to put the region at the forefront of 5G developments as the innovative new home to the UK's first multi-city 5G testbed. This trial of new high-speed connectivity will pave the way for a rollout across the country;
- £332m from the government's Transforming Cities Fund which is working to extend the city-region's metro system, with an initial focus on extending the system to connect cities with the towns between Wednesbury and Brierley Hill in the Black Country; *A Skills Deal with the government that could unlock up to £69m to help equip people in the region with the right skills for the jobs and industries of the future; and
- The most funding for any UK region from the government's flagship fund for research and development, the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, which has so far invested £286m into projects in the region.

This is the first Local Industrial Strategy in the country – Greg Clark will be showcasing this ambitious plan alongside Mayor of the West Midlands Andy Street and other local leaders from across England at our first-ever Industrial Strategy Conference, at London’s Mansion House. Those attending will include representatives from the 38 Local Enterprise Partnerships, and young entrepreneurs from each of these areas.

The Strategy also comes as the Government holds the next round of bidding for its flagship Strength in Places Fund, a £236 million fund bringing together research organisations, businesses and local authorities to develop pioneering ideas that will deliver local economic growth and create high-value jobs.

Notes to editors

UKBIC

- UKBIC is one of three strands of the Faraday Battery Challenge, part of the government’s Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund programme to develop cost-effective, high-performance, durable, safe, low-weight and recyclable batteries. The other strands are Innovate UK’s collaborate R and D and the Faraday Institution.
- UKBIC was established after a national competition run by the Advanced Propulsion Centre (APC) and supported by Innovate UK, which was won through a joint bid by Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG), at the University of Warwick, Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Coventry City Council.

JCB electric digger

- The battery packs inside JCB’s first electric digger, the 19C-1E, are designed and manufactured by Hyperdrive Innovation. The High Energy Density Battery Project, in partnership with Nissan and funded by the Advanced Propulsion Centre, enabled the latest battery technology to be brought to market.

[Press release: Leading experts appointed to AI Council to supercharge the UK’s artificial intelligence sector](#)

Leaders from business, academia and data privacy organisations have joined an independent expert committee created to help boost growth of AI in the UK, promote its adoption and ethical use in businesses and organisations across

the country.

The line-up includes online-only retailer Ocado's Chief Technology Officer, Paul Clarke, Dame Patricia Hodgson, Board Member of the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation Dame Patricia Hodgson and Alan Turing Institute Chief Executive, Professor Adrian Smith. Other representatives are AI for good founder Kriti Sharma, UKRI chief executive Mark Walport and Founding Director of the Edinburgh Centre for Robotics Professor David Lane.

The AI Council members are already leading the way in the development of AI – from using it to personalise the shopping experience of Ocado orders while predicting demand, detecting fraud and keeping consumers safe, to the Alan Turing Institute building on the great British pioneer's legacy by identifying and overcoming barriers of AI adoption in society, such as skills, consumer trust and ensuring the protection of sensitive data. These experts will help put in place the right skills, ethics and data so the UK can make the most of AI technologies.

Digital Secretary Jeremy Wright will announce line-up of the Council during his speech at Vivatech Summit, Paris, where he will speak about the importance of responsible tech and bang the drum for British tech, in particular highlighting the innovation taking place in the UK's 'tech for good' sector.

Digital Secretary, Jeremy Wright, said:

Britain is already a leading authority in AI. We are home to some of the world's finest academic institutions, landing record levels of investment to the sector and attracting the best global tech talent, but we must not be complacent.

Through our AI Council we will continue this momentum by leveraging the knowledge of experts from a range of sectors to provide leadership on the best use and adoption of artificial intelligence across the economy.

Under the leadership of Tabitha Goldstaub the Council will represent the UK AI Sector on the international stage and help us put in place the right skills and practices to make the most of data-driven technologies.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

The use of Artificial Intelligence is becoming integral to people's everyday lives, from companies protecting their customers from fraud to smart devices in our homes.

The outstanding expertise of those joining our new AI Council will be invaluable as we look to develop this ever-changing industry into one that is world-leading, attracting the brightest and best

to work in new highly-skilled jobs.

This AI Council follows our ground-breaking AI Sector Deal, and is a key part of our modern Industrial Strategy – investing now to secure the UK’s position on the world stage in these cutting edge technologies both now and long into the future.

Tabitha Goldstaub is the co-founder of CognitionX, an online platform which provides companies with information and access to AI experts to boost their businesses. She also runs CogX, one of the largest gatherings of AI experts in the world. She will have oversight of the Council and advise government on how to work with and encourage businesses and organisations to boost their use of artificial intelligence.

Tabitha Goldstaub, AI Council Chair and AI Business Champion, said:

I’m thrilled the AI Council membership has been announced, convening a brilliant mix of experts who have agreed to offer their time, experience and insight to support the growth and responsible adoption of AI in the UK.

If we are to grasp the full benefits of AI technologies it is vital all of the AI community comes together and works with the AI Council to create an open dialogue between industry, academia and the public sector, so we can see social and economic benefits for all of society.

Dame Wendy Hall, Regius Professor of Computer Science at the University of Southampton and AI Skills Champion, said:

It is wonderful to see the recommendations of the AI Review that I co-authored coming into reality with the announcement about the AI Council. I am delighted to be joining the Council as the UK’s AI Skills Champion.

AI is hugely important to the UK’s growth and global reputation, and the work of the Council will seek to improve the understanding of AI across the UK to encourage diversity across the sector.

Sue Daley, Associate Director of Technology and Innovation, techUK:

Realising the full potential of AI is not something that government, industry, academia or civil society can do alone. Working together is how we will make the UK AI ready and increase the adoption and use of AI technologies that can make a real difference to people’s lives. That’s why today’s announcement of the AI Council members is another important step forward.

The Council has a key role to play in ensuring the UK government has access to the insights, input and expertise we need to remain a world leader in AI. techUK looks forward to working with the Council to drive the development and adoption of AI in a way that benefits everyone across society.

The intention is for the AI Council to cultivate and encourage a much wider representation of experts to focus on specific topics which will initially include, but not limited to, data & ethics, adoption, skills and diversity. This will allow the broader AI community to work together to drive towards solutions and engage in making the UK a leader in the AI and data revolution.

Confirmation of the AI Council memberships comes on the first anniversary of the AI Sector Deal, a billion-pound joint government and industry deal to put the nation at the forefront of emerging technologies.

Since the launch in 2018, the AI Sector Deal has:

1. Established the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, a body convened to provide independent, expert advice on the measures needed to enable and ensure safe, ethical and innovative uses of AI and data-driven technologies.
2. Announced 16 new Centres for Doctoral Training at universities across the UK delivering 1,000 new PhDs over the next five years.
3. Offered new AI Fellowships to attract and retain the top AI talent led by the Alan Turing Institute.
4. Confirmed the first wave of industry-funding for new AI Masters places at leading UK institutions.
5. Agreed five new centres of excellence across the UK for digital pathology and imaging, including radiology and using AI medical advances.
6. Announced new research projects that will consider how AI can be applied in the legal and accountancy sectors
7. Partnered with the Open Data Institute to explore the potential of data trusts, tackling illegal wildlife poaching and reducing food waste.

Notes to editors:

Following wide engagement across industry, academia and the public sector,

the chair of the AI Council, Tabitha Goldstaub, worked closely with Digital Secretary Jeremy Wright, Business Secretary Greg Clark and the Office for AI to bring together leaders from a broad range of backgrounds and expertise to join the Council.

This includes:

- Wendy Hall – Professor of Computer Science at the University of Southampton
- Professor Adrian Smith – Institute Director and Chief Executive, Alan Turing Institute
- Alice Bentinck – Cofounder, Entrepreneur First
- Alice Webb – Director for Children’s and Education at the BBC
- Ann Cairns – Executive Vice Chair of Mastercard
- Professor Chris Bishop – Microsoft Technical Fellow and Director of the Microsoft Research Lab in Cambridge, UK
- Dr Claire Craig – Chief Science Policy Officer, Royal Society
- Professor David Lane – Professor & Founding Director of the Edinburgh Centre for Robotics
- Kriti Sharma – AI for good founder
- Marc Warner – CEO, Faculty
- Professor Máire O’Neill – Principal Investigator at Queen’s University Belfast’s Centre for Secure Information Technologies (CSIT) and Director of the UK Research Institute in Secure Hardware and Embedded Systems (RISE)
- Sir Mark Walport – Chief Executive, UKRI
- Martin Tisne – Managing Director, Luminata
- Mustafa Suleyman – Co-Founder, DeepMind
- Professor Neil Lawrence – Professor at the University of Sheffield and Director, Machine Learning at Amazon
- Professor Nick Jennings – Vice-Provost Research and Enterprise, Imperial College
- Dame Patricia Hodgson – Board Member Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation
- Paul Clarke – Chief Technology Officer, Ocado
- Professor Pete Burnap – Professor of Data Science & Cybersecurity at Cardiff University
- Priya Lakhani – Founder of edtech AI platform CENTURY Tech
- Rachel Dunscombe – CEO, NHS Digital Academy

The AI and Data Grand Challenge

The Industrial Strategy sets out Grand Challenges to put the UK at the forefront of the industries of the future, ensuring that the UK takes advantage of major global changes, improving people’s lives and the country’s productivity. Artificial intelligence and data is one of the 4 Grand

Challenges which will see AI used across a variety of industries and put the UK at the forefront of the AI and data revolution. Exploring the best skills package to equip people with the expertise to make the most of AI was a key commitment of the AI and Data Grand Challenge's £950 million Sector Deal.

[News story: Major progress on northern green transport after record investment](#)

- more than £600 million investment has supported sustainable and low-carbon transport initiatives right across the region
- expansion of green transport and infrastructure includes almost 100 ultra-low emission buses
- Transport Secretary calls on local councils and businesses to apply for further funding available

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling will today (16 May 2019) celebrate record levels of investment in green transport in the north but will make clear that action to tackle transport emissions cannot stop there.

Speaking at the Northern Transport Summit in Manchester, the Transport Secretary is expected to set out how this government has overseen the investment of over £600 million in green transport across the north. However, he will point out that millions in funding is still available through a range of green schemes and will call on local councils, businesses and consumers to take full advantage of this.

Schemes running include funding for public, home and workplace chargepoints; an e-cargo bike fund to help businesses make cleaner deliveries; and a range of schemes and funding for mayoral combined authorities to test transport innovation.

Only 2 local authorities in the north have bid for funding from the [On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme](#) in 2019/20 so far. This funding is a key part of the government's plan to make the UK the best place in the world to own and use an electric vehicle.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

We're determined to make our transport greener than ever, and through the [Transforming Cities Fund](#) and investment in improving electric vehicle infrastructure, we're making great strides in achieving that across the region.

But local authorities and businesses have a key role to play if we want to accelerate the use of low-carbon transport and clean up our air. I urge them to take advantage of the funding available as we move together towards a zero-emission future – and to a Green Northern Powerhouse.

Through the Transforming Cities Fund, £576 million has already been invested across the north-west, north-east, and Yorkshire and the Humber to support public and sustainable transport infrastructure, encouraging an increase in journeys made by low-carbon modes across the region.

Alongside this, £57 million has been invested this year to expand green infrastructure and vehicles in towns and cities across the north, resulting in the installation of hundreds of new electric taxi chargepoints and over 90 new ultra-low emission buses.

These schemes will help to address air quality issues where people live, shop and work, and help encourage the use of cleaner vehicles.

Major successes include:

- through the Go Ultra Low Cities grant, Fastned and the North East Combined Authority have recently delivered the UK's first 350kW ultra rapid charging hub in Sunderland, near the factory where the Nissan Leaf is produced for the entire European market
- the recent [Ultra Low Emission Taxi Infrastructure competition](#) will help deliver over 200 chargepoints that will support the introduction of an estimated 515 ultra-low emission Hackney Carriages and 2,600 ultra-low emission private hire vehicles across Newcastle, Manchester, Lancaster and Sheffield
- the [Ultra-low emission bus scheme](#) will help deliver 93 electric buses and support charging infrastructure across the region
- Liverpool's City Region is using Transforming Cities funding to transform busy commuter corridors into green bus routes, and to deploy 25 hydrogen-powered buses
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority invested £243 million of their Transforming Cities allocation in their Bee Network walking and cycling network and in additional Metrolink trams across the city to increase frequency of services
- 30 double-decker fuel cell buses and 2 hydrogen refuelling stations are being installed in Merseyside, and 2 hydrogen refuelling stations in the Tees Valley.
- cycling infrastructure projects are being supported with Sustrans, including in Whitby and Huddersfield

Funding remains available in 2019/20 through schemes including:

The Transport Secretary's call for local authorities, businesses and consumers to engage with these funds comes following the publication of the comprehensive £1.5 billion [Road to Zero Strategy](#) in 2018, which sets out the government's ambition to end the sale of new conventional diesel and petrol

cars and vans by 2040.

[Press release: UK signs trade continuity agreement with Colombia, Ecuador and Peru](#)

The United Kingdom has today (Wednesday 15 May) signed the UK-Andean Countries Trade Agreement in Quito, Ecuador.

Government Ministers from the three Andean countries were present at the signing, including: President Moreno of Ecuador; Colombian Vice Minister of Trade, Laura Valdivieso; Ecuadorian Minister of Commerce, Pablo Campana and Minister of Foreign Trade and Peru's Minister of Tourism, Edgar Manuel Vásquez Vela.

Once in force, the agreement will help to protect a trade flow of £2.1 billion and bring continuity for both businesses and consumers, safeguarding British jobs. In 2017, there were 1,500 British businesses exporting goods to Colombia, 600 exporting goods to Ecuador and 1,300 exporting goods to Peru. Between 2008 and 2018, UK exports of goods and services to the region grew by 58% and imports from the region grew by 24%.

This trade continuity agreement has been agreed in preparation for the UK's departure from the EU. The agreement will allow businesses to trade as freely as they do now, without any additional barriers or tariffs.

Minister for Trade Policy George Hollingbery said:

The agreement signed today with Colombia, Peru and Ecuador will give added assurances to UK businesses trading with the region. Businesses will be able to continue trading like they do today after we leave the EU, with consumers and investors continuing to enjoy the benefits.

We look forward to further strengthening our ambitious trade and investment relationship with the Andean Countries as we continue to work closely together in the future.

The UK is seeking to provide continuity for existing EU free trade agreements covering around 70 countries that account for around 11% of UK trade.

The UK-Andean Countries trade continuity agreement replicates the existing

trading arrangements as far as possible.

This agreement will not enter into force while the EU-Andean free trade agreement continues to apply to the UK.

Notes to editors

- So far agreements have been signed with 10 countries and regions.
- Total exports from the UK to Andean Countries was worth £853m in 2018. There were 1,500 British businesses exporting goods to Colombia, 600 exporting goods to Ecuador and 1,300 exporting goods to Peru in 2017.
- £2.1bn covers total trade between the UK and Andean countries in 2018.
- The agreement will now be laid before Parliament under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.
- Source of trade statistics: ONS: UK total trade: all countries, non-seasonally adjusted October to December 2018 release.