

[News story: Applications open for employment tribunal fee refunds as scheme rolls out](#)

All those eligible for employment tribunal fee refunds can apply from today, following a successful opening phase of the scheme.

The refund scheme comes after Ministers committed to reimbursing those who had paid employment tribunal fees following a Supreme Court judgment. The court recognised the important role fees can play, but ruled that the government had not struck the right balance in this case.

The opening stage of the phased implementation scheme was launched in October, with around 1,000 people given the chance to complete applications. This first phase has now been successfully completed, and anyone who thinks they [may be eligible for a refund can now apply](#) on GOV.UK.

During the creation of the scheme the government has been working with trade unions who have supported large multiple claims potentially involving hundreds of claimants, and ahead of the full launch people were invited to pre-register their interest in applying.

We will continue to work with the unions to ensure those who are eligible are able to claim a refund.

[News story: UK delegation to China looks to build on IP partnerships](#)

His first visit as CEO aimed to reinforce the strength of UK-China collaboration on IP, and highlight the important role it plays in supporting innovation and creativity in both countries.

The visit, between 5th and 10th November, took the delegation to Shanghai, Hangzhou and Beijing. Tim witnessed a number of landmark agreements and new initiatives.

Tim delivered a keynote speech at the China International Industry Fair (CIIF) Innovation and Emerging Industries Development Forum in Shanghai – a major trade event with more than 2,500 exhibitors and 160,000 visitors.

He announced the launch of new practical tools for UK and Chinese researchers

and companies to ensure mutually beneficial IP protection. These included a bilingual [Non-Disclosure Agreement](#) specifically designed to support clarity on IP arrangements in cross-border collaborative research and technology projects.

Tim Moss said: “Cross-border licensing of technology creates new revenue flows, and spreads cutting-edge technology to markets and research communities around the world.

“The IP system must support international projects. Researchers and companies involved in cross-border collaboration may negotiate IP arrangements that suit their projects. This includes ownership of IP generated by joint research. Commercialisation of jointly developed technology should be transparent, this helps all contributors to benefit.”

He added:

“The new template Non-Disclosure Agreement will help British and Chinese partners develop joint research bids or a technology licensing deal. Drafted in English and Chinese, they allow equal protection to all parties, whether from the UK or China and provides legal certainty so partners can engage with confidence.”

The [Non-Disclosure Agreement](#) is part of a set of practical resources and advice we provide to British and Chinese researchers to help them effectively manage IP in cross-border projects. The visit also saw the renewal of the China-Britain Business Council (CBBC) and the [Alibaba Group Memorandum of Understanding on IP Protection](#) in Hangzhou.

It builds upon the partnership set up 3 years ago to improve IP protection on Alibaba e-commerce platforms and features improvements to this co-operation.

These included further development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) friendly notice and takedown procedures, greater use of big data and AI technology to target infringements and strengthening offline enforcement activities.

The visit included meetings with key government officials and businesses. These focused on making sure that IP is positioned appropriately in the post-Brexit UK-China trade relationship. There was strong support for improving UK business outcomes in China, including through our IP attaché-led support for UK companies.

Representatives from the UK’s Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys (CIPA) and the Chartered Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys (CITMA) also formed part of the delegation. They accompanied Tim to support the promotion of UK exports of IP legal services and to help UK patent and trade mark attorneys win business from Chinese companies filing patents and trade marks in Europe.

The UK trade delegation was led by Trade Minister Baroness Fairhead and Local Government Minister Jake Berry, Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), and featured more than 100 companies and local government officials.

The UK was [Country-of-Honour](#) at CIFF this year and several activities took place in the UK pavilion, which featured highlights from the global IP campaign “GREAT for Imagination

Statement to Parliament: Situation in Zimbabwe: Foreign Secretary’s statement, 15 November 2017

In the early hours of this morning, soldiers from the Zimbabwean army deployed in central Harare, taking control of state television, surrounding government ministries, and sealing off Robert Mugabe’s official and private residences.

At 1:26am local time, a military officer appeared on state television and declared that the army was taking what he called “targeted action” against the “criminals” around Mugabe. Several government ministers – all of them political allies of Grace Mugabe – are reported to have been arrested.

At 2:30am gunfire was heard in the northern suburb of Harare where Mugabe has a private mansion. Areas of the central business district have been sealed off by armoured personnel carriers.

Our [Embassy in Harare](#) has been monitoring the situation carefully throughout the night, supported by staff in the Foreign Office. About 20,000 Britons live in Zimbabwe and I can reassure the House that so far we have received no reports of any British nationals being injured.

We have updated our [travel advice](#) to recommend that any Britons in Harare should remain in their homes or other accommodation until the situation becomes clearer. All of our Zimbabwean and UK-based embassy staff and their families are accounted for.

And I will say frankly to the House that we cannot tell how developments in Zimbabwe will play out in the days ahead – and we do not know if this marks the downfall of Mugabe or not. We call for calm and restraint.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson updates the House on situation on Zimbabwe

[Boris Johnson statement on Zimbabwe](#)

The events of the last 24 hours are the latest escalation of months of brutal infighting within the ruling ZANU-PF party, including the sacking of a vice-president, the purging of his followers and the apparent positioning of Grace Mugabe as a contender to replace her 93-year-old husband.

Honourable Members on all sides of the House have taken a deep interest in Zimbabwe for many years – and I pay tribute to the courage and persistence of the Honourable Member for Vauxhall, who has tirelessly exposed the crimes of the Mugabe regime, visiting the country herself during some of its worst moments.

And this country – under governments of all parties – has followed the same unwavering principles in our approach towards Zimbabwe.

First and foremost, we will never forget our profound ties of history and friendship with that beautiful country, accurately described as the “jewel of Africa”.

In that spirit, all that Britain has ever wanted is for Zimbabweans to be able to decide their own future in free and fair elections.

Mugabe’s consuming ambition was always to deny them that choice. The House will remember the brutal litany of his 37 years in office: the elections he rigged and stole, the murder and torture of his opponents, the illegal seizure of land, leading to the worst hyperinflation in recorded history – measured in the billions of percentage points – and forcing the abolition of the Zimbabwean Dollar.

And all the while, his followers were looting and plundering a richly-endowed country, so that Zimbabweans today are, per capita, poorer than they were at independence in 1980, leaving many dependent on the health care, education and food aid provided by DFID.

Britain has always wanted the Zimbabwean people to be masters of their fate, and for any political change to be peaceful, lawful and constitutional.

Authoritarian rule, whether in Zimbabwe or anywhere else, should have no place in Africa. There is only one rightful way for Zimbabwe to achieve a legitimate government and that is through free and fair elections, held in accordance with the country’s constitution.

And these elections are due to be held in the first half of next year, and we will do all we can, with our international partners, to ensure this provides a genuine opportunity for all Zimbabweans to decide their own future. That is what we shall urge on all parties, and I will speak to the Deputy President of South Africa later today.

Every Honourable Member will follow the scenes in Harare with goodwill and sympathy for Zimbabwe’s long-suffering people, and I undertake to keep the House updated as events unfold.

[News story: Tax-Free Childcare to open to children under 6](#)

This includes doubling free childcare to 30 hours a week and introducing Tax-Free Childcare, which – for the first time – is available to self-employed parents, and all qualifying working parents regardless of their employer.

In April this year, HM Revenue and Customs started rolling out the childcare service; a single website through which parents can apply for both 30 hours free childcare and Tax-Free Childcare.

On 24 November 2017 we will open the service to parents whose youngest child is under 6 or who has their 6th birthday on that day. Parents can apply online through the childcare service which can be accessed via the [Childcare Choices website](#).

More than 275,000 parents have an open childcare account. Of these, more than 216,000 parents received an eligibility code for 30 hours free childcare for September.

However, while the majority of parents used the childcare service without significant problems, we recognise that over the summer some parents didn't receive the intended level of service when using the website. We have now made significant improvements.

Over the coming months, we will gradually open the childcare service to parents of older children, while continuing to make further improvements to the system. This means we can manage the volume of applications going through the service, so parents continue to receive a better experience and prompt eligibility responses when they apply – almost all parents receive a response within five working days, and most get their decision instantly. All eligible parents will be able to apply by the end of March 2018.

[News story: U.S.-UK Trade and Investment Working Group Statement](#)

UK Secretary of State for International Trade Dr. Liam Fox and United States Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer are pleased to announce the conclusion of the second meeting of the U.S.-UK Trade and Investment Working Group (the Working Group) in London. The delegations were led by officials from the Department for International Trade and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and included representatives from a wide range of U.S. and UK government agencies.

The Working Group, established in July 2017, is focusing on providing commercial continuity for U.S. and UK businesses, workers, and consumers as the UK leaves the EU and exploring ways to strengthen trade and investment ties ahead of the exit. The Working Group will also begin to lay the groundwork for a potential, future free trade agreement once the UK has left the EU, and explore areas in which the two countries can collaborate to promote open markets around the world.

The United States and the UK are working together to deepen their economic relationship. The Working Group will cover a range of topics, including industrial and agricultural goods; services, investment, financial services and digital trade; intellectual property rights and enforcement; regulatory issues related to trade; labour and environment/sustainable development; and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Some examples of areas where the United States and the UK are working closely include:

- **Promoting Small and Medium-sized Businesses:** The United States and the UK will establish a U.S.-UK Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) Dialogue, to promote closer collaboration and the sharing of best practices on policies and programs to support SME businesses and export opportunities in each country's market. The Working Group will also discuss best practices on encouraging entrepreneurship, growth, and innovation.
- **Promoting Intellectual Property:** Recognising the importance of intellectual property to their respective economies and to the bilateral trade relationship, the UK and the United States have identified short term cooperative initiatives to support each country's world-class intellectual property framework. Efforts are underway to develop joint educational tools and resources for SMEs to support the export of creative and innovative products and services between the two countries. There is also agreement to continue discussions on enforcement approaches, policy tools, and voluntary initiatives for addressing online piracy including the emerging challenge of illicit streaming devices and services.
- **Strengthening U.S.-UK Financial Regulatory Cooperation:** The United States and the UK will continue their already strong collaborative partnership on financial regulatory issues. Accordingly, the U.S. Department of the Treasury and HM Treasury will work to enhance efforts to promote global financial stability and efficient markets, and to address financial continuity issues arising from the UK's exit from the EU.
- **US/UK Technology Safeguards Agreement (UKSA) and Commercial Space Ports:** United States and UK agencies are working towards a U.S.-UK Technology Safeguards Agreement, which would establish the technical and legal safeguards to support U.S. space launch vehicle operations from UK

launch sites. U.S. and UK agencies are also exploring ways in which U.S. companies can participate in activities at UK commercial spaceports.

In September 2017, the United States and the UK also entered into an historic [Science and Technology agreement](#), which establishes a foundation for enhanced research partnerships to further world-class science and technological innovation.

Secretary of State for International Trade Dr. Liam Fox said:

Our working group underlines the shared interest in forging closer trade and investment ties between the UK and USA, and the practical steps we can take now to enable our two countries to do business with one another more easily.

The USA is our single biggest trading partner and this dialogue will help provide certainty and confidence to businesses on both sides of the Atlantic, and identify existing barriers to trade. We are also laying the groundwork for a potential future free trade agreement which will help boost our mutual trade once we leave the EU.

Our meetings have already seen agreement to focus on areas which will have a real impact on British businesses, from better enforcing their intellectual property rights to supporting the UK's SMEs.

United States Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said:

I thank Dr. Fox and his team for hosting our U.S. team in London for the second meeting of the U.S.-UK Trade and Investment Working Group.

The Working Group meetings have quickly developed into a key mechanism to deepen our already strong bilateral trade and investment relationship and to lay the groundwork for our future trade relationship. This week our teams focused on specific ways in which we can expand opportunities for our businesses and workers, including for small and medium sized enterprises. The work has deepened our understanding of our respective trade and investment systems to prepare for our future relationship once the UK has left the EU.

We look forward to building on our strong economic relationship to achieve free and fair trade and create good-paying jobs on both sides of the Atlantic.

Background

Trade between the two countries is already worth about £165 billion a year, the U.S. is the single biggest source of inward investment into the UK, and together there is around £500 billion invested in each other's economies