

[Press release: Putting a stop to town hall boycotts](#)

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid today (13 February 2017) unveiled [further steps](#) which seek to prevent councils from boycotting companies and countries if it is against the government's position.

The move aims to stop councils from introducing restrictions on the companies and countries they use – particularly by introducing boycotts on goods from Israel.

These latest plans would require local authorities by law to treat suppliers fairly and in line with the British government's policies. It would mean no council could boycott any country or industry unless restrictions have already been put in place by the government. This follows rules set by the World Trade Organisation requiring all member countries to treat suppliers equally and without prejudice.

Rules were introduced earlier last year which prevented councils from using local government pension policies to introduce boycotts. New Cabinet Office guidance was also introduced in February 2016, which govern the procurement of goods and services by public bodies.

Today's announcement applies to councils, and would make following the British government's foreign policies a legal requirement when buying goods and services – effectively outlawing locally-imposed boycotts.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

We need to challenge and prevent divisive town hall boycotts which undermine good community relations.

No council should be boycotting any company or country unnecessarily – instead their main focus should be delivering the value for money taxpayers rightly expect.

We will clampdown on these inappropriate and needless boycotts once and for all.

Stopping boycotts which damage Britain

Councils also have a clear duty to make sure they deliver value for money for their residents and to maintain a high quality of service.

Mr Javid also confirmed that he would look to put government guidance published last February on a legal footing to make clear that councils should not introduce boycotts of countries or companies when making procurement decisions. Similar boycotts have led to the removal of Kosher food from the

shelves of supermarkets, or calls for Jewish films to be banned.

This will mean public authorities have to treat suppliers equally, and not discriminate on geographical or other grounds when buying goods or services, unless they are in line with existing restrictions put in place by the government.

Further information

Public sector procurement law applies to central government, executive agencies, non-departmental public bodies, the wider public sector, local authorities and NHS bodies.

The [best value guidance](#) provides powers for the Secretary for State to intervene in a council if it is in breach of the regulations or statutory guidance.

These new measures are in line with the World Trade Organisation Government Procurement Agreement, which requires its members to treat suppliers from another member country no less favourably than its domestic suppliers.

[News story: The Armed Forces Covenant working on the ground through Eastern England VAPC](#)

If you have served in our armed forces, your regional [Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committees](#) are ready to help.

These committees are independent non-departmental bodies of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and are made up of experienced volunteers who have an interest in the welfare of ex-service people. Formerly known as the War Pensions Committees, they advise and liaise with veterans, their families and relevant organisations on their needs, issues and general welfare matters.

A large part of their responsibility is to raise awareness and ensure implementation of the [Armed Forces Covenant](#).

Here is one example of how the Eastern England VAPC assisted one young man in Cambridgeshire. Penny Kingham JP (one of our brilliant VAPC members in the East of England) had been approached by a young man who is in the process of leaving the army, although still currently serving. He had sustained an injury whilst serving and unfortunately now has to walk with a stick. He was having great difficulty in obtaining registration at his local doctors surgery. He became very frustrated and reminded them of the covenant. They said they were at full capacity and were therefore unable to see him at the

surgery.

Penny had asked what we could do to get help and in consultation with the Chairman of the Eastern VAPC, Jonathan Jelley MBE JP and Veterans UK, it was felt that we had to explain to him that the covenant was not designed to give those serving or who have served advantage in social provision, but rather more to ensure equality and no disadvantage because of military service.

With that, Penny then relayed this information back to the young man and his mother and showed them the precise relevant part of the covenant which they copied. She suggested to them that they go back to the surgery to explain.

Armed with this, they did indeed return to the surgery concerned to calmly explain the full situation. It seems that the young soldier had been registered with the surgery since childhood. His wife and his own child continue to be registered at the surgery. They explained that he had only left the surgery when joining the army and now wanted to return. Upon hearing this, the Practice Manager became involved and agreed that had he not joined the army, he would still have been registered and therefore under the covenant they took him back onto their list.

What an excellent demonstration of where the covenant can help and how VAPCs can help to ensure favorable outcomes on the ground. This military family although unprepared to make any public comment were delighted with the outcome. This was due to Penny Kingham JP acting in her capacity as an Eastern England VAPC member with a clear sense of purpose and commitment. As Penny said:

If it helps just one more person it will be worth the effort.

If you or someone you know is a veteran who needs help then please do contact your local [VAPC](#).

Speech: Minister Harriett Baldwin's address to the Make In India Conference

It's an absolute honour to be back here in India speaking at the Make in India Conference.

And it's great to be in Bengaluru –the aviation capital of India. I was excited to learn that almost two thirds of India's aerospace Industry is concentrated here in Karnataka and I'm hugely looking forward to seeing the

best of it for myself when the Aero India 2017 Air Show starts here tomorrow.

What a great way to mark my first visit to India as Minister for Defence Procurement –and I look forward to many more engagements to come.

Collaborative Past

But whilst this trip is a first for me as Defence Minister – I'm very conscious it fits into an ambitious agenda of collaboration between our two countries, exchanging ideas, expertise and technology that really produces a benefit for our two countries, but also globally.

We have fed off each other from business and cuisine to cricket...a game that we might have invented in the UK but one that you've unequivocally cornered the market in.

Which makes me wonder...how can we persuade Virat Kohli to become a fast jet pilot instead?

It goes without saying that our two nations enjoy a strong relationship: The UK diplomatic network in India is one of the largest in the World.

India is the third largest investor in the UK, whilst the UK is the largest G20 Investor in India. In fact one in 20 private sector jobs in India is in a UK company.

And India/UK bilateral trade in goods and services was an impressive £17.5billion in 2015 and growing at 3 per cent a year.

Just last Thursday the Indian Civil Aviation Minister and UK Aviation Minister signed a new deal to boost tourism and trade between Britain and India.

And of course our close bond was demonstrated at the highest levels in November, when our Prime Minister came to India on her first bilateral visit outside Europe.

Collaborative Present

But perhaps some of the best examples of our valuable bilateral partnership can be seen in the Defence Aerospace Sector.

The UK has been a partner of the Indian defence aero sector since the very beginning – giving us an unrivalled pedigree when it comes to the transfer and exchange of aero technology and skills between our countries. British aero companies, many of whom are now part of BAE Systems, have been active in India for almost one hundred years; and Rolls-Royce was among the first to work with Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) in the early days.

In recent years, HAL has built over 100 Jaguars and nearly as many Hawks with the assistance of BAE Systems powered by Rolls Royce engines –and a relationship that as we've just heard continues today and one that I hope will flourish.

Meanwhile, both Rolls Royce and BAE Systems have explored or established joint ventures with Indian partners, to deliver support to the their products in India.

And I am delighted to announce and welcome today a joint venture between MBDA and L&T, a perfect example of the UK's willingness to invest in Indian Industry.

But what really excites me is not our collaborative past or present, but our future –which brings me to my main point today and indeed the point of your conference.

Collaborative Future

What makes the UK the ideal 'Make In India' partner in the Defence Aerospace domain is our nation's collaborative potential.

The opportunities are enormous. And we'll get a glimpse of them this week when we see BAE Systems and HAL unveil their Advanced Hawk Ground Demonstrator at Aero India 2017.

And there's more where that came from –with huge opportunities for India and the UK to work together on the Advanced Multi-role Combat Aircraft (AMCA) Engine as well the Starstreak Missile.

These are the perfect examples of the next stage of Make in India –industry working together across borders to design and manufacture new technology rather than simply transferring it from one country to another.

New technology that will not only offer both partners defence benefits, but that will create export opportunities and joint economic growth and jobs.

These are the types of projects that really excite us in the UK –because in this increasingly complex and competitive world, the difference between surviving and thriving will be nations' willingness to pool their resources.

Not just its critical technologies, but the innovative thinking, the skills and intellectual capital that drive them. And the good news is that our two nations are creating the mechanisms to do just that.

Mechanisms for Future Success

Our Capability Partnerships across the land air and maritime domains are giving our two nations an unprecedented opportunity: To develop a truly productive defence relationship through partnering on a range of strategic capabilities – including Aircraft Carriers, Frigates and Armoured Vehicles.

Underpinning those partnerships is our Defence Equipment Cooperation Memorandum of Understanding – an agreement that we're in the process of refreshing and expanding...moving it away from simply looking at transactions and towards genuine joint capability development.

And shortly our Secretary of State for Defence, my boss, will travel to India

to sign that refreshed Memorandum of Understanding as well as chair our nations' annual Strategic Defence Dialogue: a dialogue that will build on the progress we've made to date in our Capability Partnerships.

Finally, but no less crucially, our countries are enjoying a close Defence Science and Technology relationship that is yielding results – one that has seen our two world class Defence research and development bodies: DSTL in the UK and DRDO in India –working closely alongside each other to distil ideas into reality...ideas that will ensure we can maintain our critical edge on the global stage.

This ambitious programme comes at a point when we are aligning even more closely, according with political and economic dynamics in our two countries and in the regions in which we are operating.

Just at the very moment when you are inviting the world to 'Make in India'—and specifically today to "Make in Karnataka"—we in the UK are expressing our desire to be a more global Britain –an outward facing nation – one that champions business, innovation and free trade around the world.

As our Prime Minister Theresa May said when she met Prime Minister Modi in November: "More trade, more investment and fewer barriers between our two countries will make us all more prosperous, peaceful and secure. And with this unique partnership there is so much potential for us to advance those things."

So yes, the UK may be leaving the EU, but we are stepping up our role in the world. I'm proud that the UK economy, the fastest growing major economy in Europe, is the most diverse on earth.

Conclusion

So, there you have it.

The UK Government and UK Industry stand ready, hand in hand, to work as your partners.

India and the UK are not just as strong, but indeed are an unbeatable combination.

Time and time again, we've proved our ability to innovate, develop, make and grow together.

And it's my – and my Government's – ambition to see our partnership become stronger and more successful than ever before.

So, I hope my visit here today will play its small part in achieving just that...

Helping us to become more secure and more prosperous...

Enabling us to realise our shared potential...

And allowing us to soar ever higher into the skies of our shared future.

[News story: Biotechnology innovation: apply for business funding](#)

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UK businesses can apply for a share of £2 million for biotechnology projects to reduce global dependence on fossil resources.

Innovate UK has up to £2 million to invest in business projects as part of the European ERA-NET cofund on biotechnologies.

The funding will support UK businesses in joint projects with organisations from other countries to investigate how biotechnology could support sustainable industrial development.

The aim is to help transform the global economy from dependence on fossil raw material to use of more sustainable, bio-based resources.

Projects are expected to include at least one of the following processes:

- synthetic biology
- systems biology
- bioinformatic tools to identify and use metabolic pathways
- biotechnological approaches (possibly in combination with chemical ones)

They should also cover one of the competition's specific research topics, which include:

- sustainable production and conversion of different types of feedstocks and bioresources
- new products, value-added products and supply services
- sustainable industrial processes
- the competition is open, and the deadline for submitting pre-proposals is midday on 2 March 2017
- projects are expected to last up to 3 years and must include at least 3 partners from different contributing countries
- businesses could attract up to 70% of their project costs

[News story: GC collaborates in research about dangers in food supplements](#)

Hidden ingredients in food supplements

Food supplements of herbal origin are now commonly used by many people as part of their personal healthcare regimens and there has been a tremendous growth in the supplies and sales of supplements. However, food supplements are at risk from contamination on a global scale with illegal ingredients.

According to a team of experts from Queen's University Belfast, Kingston University and the Government Chemist at LGC that included Emeritus Professor Duncan Burns, Dr Michael Walker and Professor Declan Naughton, many food supplements contain hidden pharmaceutical ingredients that could be causing serious health risks.

Their research, outlined in a peer-reviewed paper, found that over-the-counter supplements – commonly advertised to treat obesity and erectile dysfunction problems – are labelled as fully herbal but often include potentially dangerous pharmaceutical ingredients, which are not listed on the label.

Professor Burns, Queen's University, explained:

Our review looked at research from right across the globe and questioned the purity of herbal food supplements. We have found that these supplements are often not what customers think they are – they are being deceived into thinking they are getting health benefits from a natural product when actually they are taking a hidden drug.

These products are unlicensed medicines and many people are consuming large quantities without knowing the interactions with other supplements or medicines they may be taking. This is very dangerous and there can be severe side effects.

Health consequences

The research raises serious questions about the safety of slimming supplements (Sibutramine, withdrawn from license in 2010) and undeclared ingredients in erectile dysfunction supplements (Tadalafil, sulfoildenafil). These ingredients can react with other medications, for example those containing nitrates, and cause serious health problems.

Professor Burns noted:

This is a real issue as people suffering from conditions like diabetes, hyperlipidemia and hypertension are frequently prescribed nitrate containing medicines. If they are also taking a herbal supplement to treat erectile dysfunction, they could become very ill.

Next steps

The research paper describes the laboratory methods and techniques that can help with supplement testing in the future to ensure the safety of consumers. It highlights the vital role research and, in particular, techniques like data-mining, can play in informing regulators about current trends in supplement contamination.

Dr Michael Walker commented:

The laboratory tests we describe in our paper will assist regulators to tackle this problem proactively to protect consumers and responsible businesses.

Professor Declan Naughton explained:

This is very important to ensure effective testing strategies and, ultimately, to help keep the public safe.

The research described has been published by the Journal of the Association of Public Analysts (online) and can be accessed [here](#).