

Cambridge exporter recognised in New Year's Honours List 2021

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss MP has congratulated UK exporters, business leaders and DIT staff who have been recognised with Honours for their exceptional and outstanding service to international trade, investment, and exporting.

Those honoured represent a diverse range of businesses, from sourcing PPE for the pandemic, green energy, trade policy negotiations and to services exports in the creative industry such as cross-cultural theatre productions.

The New Year's Honours List also recognises the work and dedication undertaken by those who worked during the pandemic to keep the country safe.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

All those being honoured have made a terrific contribution to the UK over the past year, whether it be leading the fight against coronavirus or helping champion free and fair trade across the world. We owe them a debt of gratitude for their hard work.

More trade and investment is vital to delivering the jobs and economic growth we need to recover from the pandemic and build back better. Our innovative and go-getting exporters are critical to that, and we will continue to support them as they look to sell more of their wares overseas this coming year and beyond.

Exporters recognised in the list include Stuart Gibbons, DIT Export Champion and Managing Director of Le Mark Group, an international family-run business base in Cambridgeshire that supplies products to the arts and entertainment industries, including labels, floors and crew wear. The Houghton-based company sells directly and supports a global network of over 150 distributors. It has a turnover of £6.5 million, with exports accounting for approximately 20%.

Le Mark's export growth was significantly supported by the Department for International Trade. Before working with DIT, Le Mark primarily supplied UK domestic clients. Through DIT's export initiatives such as Passport to Export, the company began its strategic growth into export markets. International Trade Advisers' support over the years enabled funded research projects that took Le Mark to new continents. Adopting the strategy to use native language speakers overseas supported the company's growth into non-EU countries such as Russia and was vital to strengthen business relationships.

The company has built a reputation for product excellence and award-winning British design and innovation. Stuart Gibbons, in his role of DIT Export

Champion, now also continues to encourage and advise British regional companies to embark on the path of exporting, which significantly increased his company's turnover.

Stuart Gibbons, Managing Director at Le Mark:

To be noted and honoured for what I consider to be a personal passion of mine, was something I had never imagined.

I have had the privilege to work on some excellent projects with talented people both at Le Mark and around the world. I will continue to support British exporting companies wherever I can. What an incredible and positive way to start 2021.

Antonia Romeo, Permanent Secretary at the Department for International Trade, said:

I am extremely proud of DIT colleagues recognised for their hard work for the Department on international trade issues.

It is also excellent to see so many British exporters and business leaders recognised in the 2021 New Year Honours List, showcasing the success of British exports abroad.

Many congratulations to them, and to all recipients.

Exporters and business leaders in the New Year's Honours List 2021 include:

- Kirsty Hamilton; Associate Fellow, Chatham House (OBE)
- Stuart Paul Gibbons; Managing Director, Le Mark Group (OBE)
- Sharon Pursey; Co-Founder, SafeToNet (OBE)
- Steve Crane; Chief Executive Officer, business Link Japan and Executive Director of Export to Japan (OBE)
- Matthew Hurn; Chief Financial Officer, Mubadala Investment Company, Chairman, Association of Corporate Treasurers, Middle East (OBE)
- Ella Spira, Co-founder, Sisters Grimm (MBE)
- Piertra Mello-Pittman, Co-Founder, Sisters Grimm (MBE)
- Laura Bounds, Managing Director, Kent Crisps (MBE)
- Manoj Varsani, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Hammock (MBE)
- Paul Jonathan Morris, Founder and Chief Executive Addmaster UK Limited (MBE)
- Zoe Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, Sparkol (MBE)
- Daniel Leigh Brooks, Chief Executive Officer, Virtual Human Resources (MBE)

Staff from the Department for International Trade (DIT) have also been recognised in the 2021 New Year Honours list, including:

- Matthew Davies; Deputy Director, Trade Agreements Continuity Programme (OBE)
 - Deborah Clarke; Country Director, Department for International Trade Malaysia (OBE)
 - Ruchi Nanda – Lately Account Manager, Trade, Investment and Business Support (MBE)
 - Jasmine Baker – Head of Insurance and Asset Management British Embassy Beijing (MBE)
 - Chris Dunn – Head of Infrastructure and Environment (China), Energy, Infrastructure, Creative and Sports Directorate (MBE)
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Self Assessment customers use online tax payment plans to help spread the cost

Almost 25,000 Self Assessment customers have set up an online payment plan to manage their tax liabilities in up to 12 monthly instalments, totalling £69.1 million, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has revealed today (13 January 2021).

In October, HMRC increased the threshold for self-serve Time to Pay arrangements from £10,000 to £30,000 for Self Assessment customers. Once they have completed their 2019 to 2020 tax return and know how much tax they owe, customers can use the self-serve facility to set up monthly direct debits and spread the cost of their tax bill.

The 31 January Self Assessment deadline is less than 3 weeks away but for almost 25,000 customers, who have completed their tax returns and set up an online payment plan since 1 October 2020, they can start 2021 knowing their tax liabilities are under control.

Karl Khan, HMRC's Interim Director General for Customer Services, said:

We know the past year has been tough for many businesses and self-employed people, which is why we're helping them spread the cost of their tax bill into monthly payments.

Self Assessment customers can use the self-serve Time to Pay facility for amounts up to £30,000 with almost 25,000 customers already benefiting from the service.

The self-serve Time to Pay threshold was increased to help businesses and individuals who have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Supporting Self Assessment customers to manage their tax bills can help ease their financial commitments into more manageable monthly payments. To date, the average value of payment plans set up online is £2,821.

Customers can [apply for the payment plan via GOV.UK](#). However, they must meet the following requirements:

- they need to have no:
 - outstanding tax returns
 - other tax debts
 - other HMRC payment plans set up
- the debt needs to be between £32 and £30,000
- the payment plan needs to be set up no later than 60 days after the due date of a debt

Customers who are required to make Payments on Account, and know their bill is going to be lower than the previous tax year, can reduce their payments. Visit GOV.UK to [find out more about Payments on Account and how to reduce them](#).

Be aware of copycat HMRC websites and phishing scams. Customers should always type in the full online address www.gov.uk/hmrc to get the correct link for their Self Assessment tax return online securely and free of charge.

They also need to be alert if someone calls, emails or texts claiming to be from HMRC, saying that they can claim financial help, are due a tax refund or owe tax. It might be a scam. Check GOV.UK for information on how to [recognise genuine HMRC contact](#).

Find more information on [Self Assessment](#).

The Self-serve Time to Pay data is online payment plans created between 1 October 2020 and 11 January 2021.

Customers using self-serve Time to Pay will be required to pay any interest on the tax owed. Interest will be applied to any outstanding balance from 1 February 2021.

If your Self Assessment debts are over £30,000, or you need longer than 12 months to pay your debt in full, you may still be able to set up a Time to Pay arrangement by calling the Self Assessment Payment Helpline on 0300 200 3822.

Follow the National Cyber Security Centre's 6 essential steps to keep yourself and your business secure online by visiting CyberAware.gov.uk.

[The future for environmental regulation: Green growth not red tape](#)

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[Record number of Armed Forces personnel help with Covid response](#)

The record 5,300 personnel committed to winter and Covid operations are today supporting 56 different tasks in the UK and abroad – this includes the vaccine rollout, NHS support and community testing across the length and breadth of the UK.

This is the largest peacetime resilience operation ever undertaken by the UK Armed Forces and is drawing on every corner of expertise of the military.

Personnel are also working inside NHS hospitals, with around 50 medics now committed to hospitals in Kent and Essex to ensure there is workforce resilience to cope with increasing demand. In Essex, Combat Medic Technicians (CMTs) are supporting a 'step-down' facility for those recovering from Covid-19.

A further 1,600 military medical professionals work in the NHS every day, from intensive care nurses to specialist surgeons, providing their skills on a permanent basis to support our health service. This means that very few defence medics are not currently deployed or working in the NHS.

In Manchester, 800 personnel are deploying from nine regiments across the British Army at the request of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) to support targeted asymptomatic testing of specific populations that may be at a higher risk of infection including social care staff, key workers, public facing occupations such as bus drivers, and those in high risk environments such care homes and shared accommodation for the homeless.

Over 2,155 personnel are deployed on community testing tasks, including in Lancashire, Derbyshire, Yorkshire and Kent. Local authorities are still able to apply for support from the Armed Forces to establish community testing programmes if required.

The Armed Forces are also helping with ongoing haulier testing to ensure the smooth movement of people and goods across our borders, with 515 operating over 30 testing sites across the country. Since 23 December over 45,000 tests have been conducted, keeping millions of tonnes of freight moving between the UK and Europe.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Our country faces an unprecedented challenge and our Armed Forces are working hand in hand with the NHS. We will continue to bolster those on the front line as they protect and care for the most vulnerable.

The sheer scope of the work undertaken by our Armed Forces, both in the UK and overseas, is a real testament to their resilience and willingness to be there when our country needs it.

An experienced military team is also supporting the management and logistics at the Excel Nightingale hospital in London, ensuring it is ready to receive patients if required. As part of prudent planning, additional specialist medical personnel and those able to fill general duties are being held at readiness to ensure that any future requests for military assistance can be fulfilled.

Alongside specific support to NHS trusts, the UK Armed Forces have committed over 300 personnel to support the vaccine rollout in England, in addition to 90 personnel who have deployed to Wales and are already administering vaccines to the public.

The Vaccine Quick Reaction Force (VQRF) makes up the majority of the support in England, consisting of 21 teams of 6 personnel assigned to the 7 NHS England regions. The Force is able to provide surge support to the vaccine roll-out if required by local health authorities and may be stood-up to administer vaccines if and when directly asked by the NHS.

Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Nick Carter said:

These are really challenging times for everyone at the moment. We all have a role to play in supporting those on the frontline in the fight against the virus. As ever, the Armed Forces are there to play our part in this collective national enterprise. We are proud to do what we can to provide our expertise wherever it is most needed.

The military is also working alongside the Department for Education to ensure that staff, vulnerable children and children of key workers can continue to attend their school or college and so far, personnel have assisted across 36 schools and colleges.

Military planners and liaison officers are embedded in local authorities, government departments and the devolved nations providing planning advice, and crucially feeding in early where military support is most effectively used so resources can be deployed quickly and efficiently.

[UK Export Finance appoints renewables specialist for north England](#)

Based locally, Rachel Ashley will work directly with energy companies in the North of England to support them in securing finance for export contracts and connecting them to overseas renewable and clean tech projects through UK Export Finance's (UKEF's) growing network of international trade experts.

The North plays an important role in energy innovation in the UK, with the development of electric vehicles by Nissan in Sunderland, the H21 City Gate Project in Leeds, the Smart Grids Centre based in Newcastle and the Siemens offshore wind turbine factory in Hull.

Gordon Welsh, Head of UKEF's Business Group said:

The UK's energy sector is a significant source of skilled jobs and UKEF is committed to helping companies make the transition to renewable energy and to sustain clean growth. Rachel has a keen understanding of the financing challenges faced by the energy sector and I look forward to her supporting UKEF's work in this sector.

Rachel Ashley, UKEF Export Finance Manager, said:

The North has a global reputation for innovation and excellence in the energy sector dating back to the Industrial Revolution. It is now fitting that it is at the forefront of a green energy revolution. Home to the world's largest Offshore Wind Farm and with easy access to a growing pipeline of North Sea renewable energy opportunities, the North is ideally positioned to meet the growing demand for renewable energy overseas. I want to help Northern companies tap into that potential and continue to strengthen their position on the world stage.

Renewables account for around a third of global energy capacity and businesses based in the North West, East and Yorkshire & The Humber regions have the expertise needed to play a leading role in supplying overseas markets as they transition to clean energy.

Rachel will be dedicated to helping these companies fulfil this potential by identifying opportunities for clean growth exports that boost the renewable supply chains in the North of England. She will join Alistair McMillan, who has taken up the same role to support businesses in Scotland, and becomes part of UKEF's regional network of [Export Finance Managers](#), specialists based in all four nations of the UK, who provide tailored export finance guidance to UK businesses.

Rachel has worked with a range of organisations including both start-ups and large corporates, with particular experience in R&D and innovation in the energy sector. Rachel's breadth of knowledge and experience means she is ideally placed to help businesses in the North of England win, fulfil and get paid for export contracts in the renewable energy sector.

This appointment follows the allocation of £2 billion of direct lending to green projects in the [latest budget](#). This additional finance will support clean growth projects as global economies shift away from fossil fuels to renewable and low carbon solutions.

[UKEF](#) is the UK's export credit agency and a government department, working alongside the Department for International Trade as an integral part of its strategy and operations.

It exists to ensure that no viable UK export should fail for want of finance or insurance from the private market. It provides finance and insurance to help exporters win, fulfil and ensure they get paid for export contracts.

UKEF supports exporters with a range of products that include:

- Bond insurance policy
- Bond support scheme
- Buyer and supplier credit financing facilities
- Direct lending facility
- Export insurance policy
- Export refinancing facility
- Export working capital scheme
- Letter of credit guarantee scheme

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