

Government launches taskforce to boost women starting fast-growing companies

- Minister for Women and Equalities, Liz Truss, launches taskforce chaired by Anne Boden, CEO and founder of Starling Bank
- Government aims to increase the number of female entrepreneurs by half by 2030
- Launch follows package of initiatives to level up employment opportunities for women

Launching today, the taskforce will use its convening power to influence high growth investors, the wider business community, and to raise the aspirations of the next generation of female entrepreneurs, especially looking to encourage women based outside of the capital.

Only 1 in 3 UK entrepreneurs is a woman – a gender gap equivalent to 1.1 million missing businesses, and male-led SMEs are five times more likely to scale up to £1 million turnover than female-led SMEs.

Minister for Women and Equalities, Liz Truss, said:

“This country can only grasp its full potential by ensuring everyone, regardless of their background or where they live, has the opportunity to succeed.

“We want women to be at the heart of the recovery effort, and we’ll do that by helping more women start a business, by getting them into higher paid work, by focusing on skills.”

Anne Boden, CEO and founder of Starling Bank said:

“More women than ever are starting new businesses and many of them are scaling-up their companies. The Taskforce aims to give women entrepreneurs the tools to take their businesses to the next level: access to finance and growth capital, technology adoption and leadership skills.

“The Taskforce’s work will provide a blueprint for all entrepreneurs to follow.”

The Chair, Anne Boden, and its members, will use their combined expertise and connections to work collaboratively with organisations across the UK to support the Government’s overall target of increasing the number of female entrepreneurs by half by 2030 (equivalent to nearly 600,000 female entrepreneurs) with a particular focus on driving change in the area of growth capital.

The taskforce will build on the work of the Rose Review, which found that breaking down the barriers for women entrepreneurs could boost the economy by £250bn. While there is encouraging evidence of a pipeline of innovative woman-led start-ups, more help is needed in supporting women in high-growth

business.

Today's launch follows a package of initiatives announced on International Women's Day, to level up employment opportunities for women. This includes a pay transparency pilot to help businesses who want to go even further in attracting women to their companies. Evidence shows listing a salary range on a job advert and not asking applicants to disclose salary history provides a firm footing for women to negotiate pay on a fairer basis.

Further information:

More information on the Government's pay transparency pilot can be found [here](#)

The FTSE Women Leaders Review report can be found [here](#)

Taskforce members:

- [June Angelides](#), MBE: Investment Manager, Samos & CEO and Founder, Mums in Tech
- [Alexandra Depledge](#) MBE: CEO and Founder, Resi
- [Poppy Gustafsson](#) OBE: CEO and Co-founder, Darktrace
- [Judith Hartley](#): CEO of British Patient Capital & British Business Investments, British Business Bank
- [Zandra Moore](#): CEO and Co-founder, Panintelligence
- [Deepali Nangia](#): Partner, Speedinvest and Co-founder Alma Angels
- [Jan Putnis](#) – Partner, Slaughter and May
- [Angela Scott](#) : Founder and Chief Operating Officer, TC BioPharm Ltd
- Emma Sinclair](<https://uk.linkedin.com/in/ecsincclair>) MBE: Co-founder and CEO, EnterpriseAlumni
- [Helen Steers](#): Partner, Pantheon Ventures
- [Sam Smith](#): Founder and CEO at finnCap Group Plc
- [Francesca Warner](#) : Co-founder and Partner, Ada Ventures

Triumvirate of ministers to attend G7 Climate, Energy and Environment Ministerial hosted by Germany to push for accelerated action on climate and the clean energy transition

- COP President Alok Sharma will represent the UK government together with Greg Hands, Minister for Business, Energy and Clean Growth, and Zac Goldsmith, Minister for the Pacific and the International Environment
- They will urge G7 member nations and the global community to pick up the pace on delivering on their commitments in the Glasgow Climate Pact
- The G7 event in Berlin comes less than six months before COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh

UK Government ministers will push the G7's leading economies to drive forward progress on climate change, biodiversity and the clean energy transition at this week's climate and environment ministerial.

COP President Alok Sharma will be in Berlin (26 to 27 May) with Greg Hands, Minister for Business, Energy and Clean Growth and Zac Goldsmith, Minister for the Pacific and the International Environment representing the UK.

Mr Sharma will emphasise that current global crises relating to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and rises in the cost of living should increase, not diminish, countries' determination to deliver on the Glasgow Climate Pact, and the Carbis Bay declaration, agreed at the conclusion of the UK's 2021 G7 Presidency.

As the 2022 G7 President, Germany's agenda for the G7 presents an opportunity for countries to demonstrate that, while the world has changed since the Pact was signed at COP26, their resolve to combat the chronic danger of climate change has not. Delivery requires an international effort to accelerate implementation and drive momentum ahead of COP27.

G7 energy ministers have already set out their view that the most important contribution towards energy security is an accelerated clean energy transition. The new reality imposed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine underscores the critical choices facing us on our energy systems and the sectoral action we need to take in the relevant industries, including power

and transport.

G7 environment ministers will be building on the historic G7 Nature Compact agreed by G7 leaders in Carbis Bay last year, ahead of the critical global biodiversity conference UN CBD COP15 later this year.

This comes ahead of the G7 Leaders Summit next month, which will take place from 26 to 28 June at Schloss Elmau in the Bavarian Alps.

Ahead of the Ministerial, Alok Sharma, COP26 President, said:

Now more than ever, countries must urgently show global leadership, work together and honour the commitments made both at COP26 in Glasgow and in Carbis Bay last year, where G7 leaders committed to protect our planet by supporting a green revolution that creates jobs, cuts emissions and seeks to limit the rise in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees.

This Ministerial can help to accelerate the shift to clean power generation and break our dependence on fossil fuels, and protect consumers and businesses from price volatility.

I look forward to meeting with colleagues from across the G7 nations, and working to deliver on the Glasgow Climate Pact as we continue to build momentum ahead of COP27 in Egypt later this year.

Minister Hands will also represent the UK at the Ministerial. He will emphasise the need for countries to advance their transitions to green energy. This follows the precedent set by the UK's recently unveiled British Energy Security Strategy, especially in light of the current energy crisis and the necessity to reduce dependence on Russian hydrocarbons.

Greg Hands, Minister for Business, Energy and Clean Growth, said:

Fulfilling the Glasgow Climate Pact isn't only essential for the future of our planet, it also makes strong economic sense.

Our Energy Security Strategy steps up the pace of our shift to green renewables, creating jobs and opportunities. I call on the G7 and the global community to seize the moment and join us in stepping up a green transition.

Lord Goldsmith will also attend on behalf of the UK and will call on the G7 to build on the commitments made last year to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and make progress on the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use when over 140 leaders committed to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030.

He will also stress the urgent need to continue to close the nature finance

gap to meet international climate change, biodiversity, and land degradation targets and highlight the UK's progress through its landmark Environment Act which includes a legally binding target to halt the decline in species by 2030.

Zac Goldsmith, Minister of State for the Pacific and the International Environment, said:

At COP26, we brought nature from the margins of the global climate debate into the heart of our response, because the beauty of protecting and restoring nature is that it helps us tackle so many of the greatest challenges we face – biodiversity loss, hunger, poverty, pollution, even pandemics, and the causes and impacts of climate change.

This year, we must make the UN biodiversity conference nothing less than a Paris moment for nature.

So I call on the G7 and the global community to rapidly scale up the finance for nature that is critical to getting an ambitious, robust agreement over the line – mobilising new investment from all sources, aligning our spending and overseas aid with the recovery of the natural world, and using every lever we have to help the market take nature into account.

The Glasgow Climate Pact sets out a clear framework for progress ahead of COP27 including:

- Calling on countries to phase-down unabated coal power and phase-out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies.
- Requesting that countries revisit and strengthen their 2030 emissions reduction targets, as necessary, to align with the Paris temperature goal by the end of this year.
- Urging developed countries to scale-up climate finance, including delivery of the collective \$100bn joint mobilisation goal as soon as possible and through to 2025, and to double finance for adaptation by 2025 on 2019 levels.
- Underlining the central importance of adaptation, the dangers of loss and damage, and the need to scale-up action and support for both.

Find out more about the [Glasgow Climate Pact](#).

Signatories of the Carbis Bay Declaration committed to the following:

- achieve net zero no later than 2050
- halve collective emissions over the two decades to 2030
- increase and improve climate finance to 2025
- conserve or protect at least 30 percent of the world's land and oceans by 2030

The G7 Nature Compact commits world leaders to:

- Shift incentives and use all appropriate levers to address unsustainable and illegal activities negatively impacting nature, such as through tackling deforestation by supporting sustainable supply chains, and stepping up efforts to tackle the illegal wildlife trade
- Work to dramatically increase investment in nature from all sources, and to ensure nature is accounted for in economic and financial decision-making – for instance, through drawing on the Dasgupta Review for key actions
- Support and drive the protection, conservation and restoration of ecosystems critical to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and tackle climate change, such as supporting the target to conserve or protect at least 30% of global land and at least 30% of the global ocean by the end of the decade
- Hold themselves to account for taking domestic and global action for nature through driving strengthened accountability and implementation mechanisms of all Multilateral Environmental Agreements to which we are parties

Please find more information about the 2021 G7 outcomes [here](#).

The key commitments in the UK's British Energy Security Strategy are:

- a significant acceleration of nuclear, including flexible Small Modular Reactors, delivering up to 8 more reactors across the next series of projects;
- a fivefold increase in our offshore wind capacity to up to 50GW by 2030;
- a doubling of up to 10GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity by

2030, helping power industry and transport; and

- increasing the UK's 14GW of solar capacity fivefold by 2035.

Please find more information [about the British Energy Security Strategy here](#).

The UK has passed the world leading Environment Act which will protect and enhance our environment for future generations:

- The legislation will implement new legally binding environmental targets, enforced by a new, independent Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) which will hold government and public bodies to account on their environmental obligations.
- Through the Act, we will clean up the country's air, restore natural habitats, increase biodiversity, reduce waste and make better use of our resources.
- It will halt the decline in species by 2030, require new developments to improve or create habitats for nature, and help to tackle deforestation overseas.

Please find more information about the Environment Act [here](#).

Wherever there is war or armed conflict, civilians are always caught in the middle: UK Statement at the UN Security Council

Thank you very much, Madam President, and thank you again for convening us on this critical issue today. And, we're very grateful to our briefers – it was very good to hear their views on the really practical and impactful steps that this Council, but also other Member States, should take if we want to protect civilians and humanitarians.

As, I think, Mr Miliband said, this is not about us taking new initiatives, but it's about the determination to ensure the application and delivery of existing commitments. Because, wherever there is war or armed conflict, civilians are always caught in the middle.

2022 has been another devastating year for civilians in conflict, including in Myanmar, in Syria and Ukraine, and, as we heard again today, in the number of displaced, passing 100 million, a desperate threshold.

In Ukraine, Russia is targeting civilian infrastructure and attacking civilians indiscriminately. No one can escape this fact.

In Myanmar, humanitarian workers are murdered along with the women and children they are aiding. And we heard, just today, about the IRC humanitarians attacked in the DRC, and our thoughts are with the victims – but they need more than just our thoughts.

In many conflicts, access to aid is being weaponised as a military strategy, increasing the human cost of war.

And, we have also seen parties to conflict treat with increasing contempt the international rules and humanitarian law designed to protect civilians in conflict.

Only last month, this Council debated ways to help prevent the scale of conflict related sexual violence around the world.

And, if I may say to Ms Boketa, although she's not in the seat, I was really struck by the very practical response that her organisation is taking, and by the incredible stories of Solange and Chinema, but we owe them our side of the bargain as they strive to improve their own situation.

Action can also be supported in other ways by us as States, and I want to talk about three ways in which we can do that today:

The first is that States can do more on prevention by embedding civilian protections into their own domestic law and operations.

This includes putting in place appropriate legislation and institutional arrangements to comprehensively address violations and abuses of International Humanitarian Law and of human rights, and critically holding those who commit such violations and abuses accountable.

And this is the really important point – we cannot overstate the power of deterrence, or the cost of impunity.

The UK continues to produce voluntary reporting on our own domestic implementation of International Humanitarian Law, and we encourage others to do the same to establish that pattern of behaviour.

With the assistance of the British Red Cross, we are offering support to other States to produce their own reports to help identify best practice, to identify gaps in domestic law and ultimately to improve compliance.

The second area we can take action, is that we as members of this Council, as many of our briefers said this morning, can make better use of the tools we already have at our disposal for identifying and addressing threats to civilians.

That includes the tools established in Resolutions 2286, 2417 and 2573. They are designed to give us timely, evidence-based warnings when parties to conflict are blocking access, destroying indispensable civilian objects, or using starvation as a method of warfare.

As Mr Miliband said, they should not be allowed to gather dust, and we should all reflect on that.

And once the threats are identified, we have to be ready to take action. This Council must take decisions that advance humanitarian access, and, once again, we call on the whole Council to renew and expand resolution 2585, granting UN cross-border access to millions of Syrians.

And the third and final point, is that we need to do more to protect those working to aid civilians in some of the highest risk environments in the world, including through tackling, as we heard again today, the dangerous spread of misinformation and disinformation on the work of humanitarian organisations. This puts the lives of both humanitarian actors and the vulnerable civilians at risk.

And indeed, when it comes to disinformation, I'm afraid we have experts on this dangerous technique on this very Council. The Russians, today, have followed their discounted and patent nonsense about bio-labs in Ukraine with more attempts to obfuscate and distract us with further revisionist accounts of what happened in Bucha.

When it comes to the Russian delegation, fiction is stranger than the truth. But, such distraction attempts cannot obscure the blood of civilians on their hands, wrought day-after-day during this illegal invasion in Ukraine.

Frankly, it's remarkable they have thechutzpah to speak on this agenda item. And, it's no surprise they didn't address the real issues.

Madam President, this Council has adopted many resolutions calling for accountability for attacks on humanitarian workers and civilians. We need to turn these words into action and ensure those responsible for such attacks are held accountable.

But, the reality is that time and time again, Members – especially some Permanent Members of this Council – block our attempts to protect civilians. They often use spurious arguments, designed to obscure their real self-interested reasons, and when they do this, they negate the true purpose of this Council – to save civilians from the horrors of war.

And at times, the track record of some States in our work does not align with the rhetoric that they themselves make in this Chamber, and we should reflect on that too.

For our part, the UK will continue to use our seat here to do the opposite – to support those providing relief, and to use the tools we have to take steps to prevent conflicts before they begin and assist civilians and humanitarians caught up in them.

Thank you, Madam President.

[Defence Secretary meets Spanish counterpart in Madrid](#)

Press release

The Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace MP, met his Spanish counterpart today ahead of next month's NATO summit in Madrid.



The Defence Secretary inspects a guard of honour alongside his Spanish counterpart.

The Defence Secretary has met the Spanish Minister of Defence Margarita Robles Fernández in Madrid today (25 May) for talks on defence co-operation.

Spain will host the NATO leaders' summit in Madrid in June, and today's bilateral meetings provided an opportunity for the two defence ministers to discuss key issues for the Alliance, including our continued support for Ukraine in the face of Russia's unprovoked and barbaric invasion. The Defence Secretary underpinned that the United Kingdom stands with Spain in condemning Putin's actions and violation of international law.

They also discussed continued co-operation on joint defence programmes and operations, including deployments to NATO's enhanced Forward Presence on the Alliance's eastern front.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace MP said:

Across the globe, the UK and Spain are deployed helping our allies upholding our common values. Spain, as one of the leaders in European defence, is a key partner for the UK armed forces and a

vital NATO ally.

Spain and the UK have been NATO Allies for forty years and our armed forces have worked together in operations right across the world.

As we have seen through Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, this defensive cooperation matters, as we continue to support Ukraine and focus on the wider stability and security of Europe.

Spain and the UK have been NATO Allies for forty years. Our armed forces have worked together in operations across the world, including in Afghanistan, the Baltics, the Balkans, the Indian Ocean, Iraq, Mali, the Mediterranean Sea and the North Atlantic.

There are also close links between both countries' defence industries, with Spain and the UK collaborating on the Eurofighter Typhoon and A400M aircraft.

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[Increasing UK–Kenya trade and investment in the horticulture sector](#)

The Kenyan horticultural sector exports many high value products, such as vegetables, fruit and flowers, globally, including to the UK. The sector is vital for Kenyan smallholder farmer incomes, jobs, and foreign exchange, which support economic growth. As a major trading partner for Kenya, the UK imports Kenyan vegetables and flowers and supplies of finance and high-tech equipment. This 2-way trade is vital to Kenya's horticultural sector, but it has been declining steadily since 2012.

Despite previously stagnant UK retailer prices and rising freight costs, Kenyan producers have struggled to deliver consistent quality and high volumes competitively. Poor trade facilitation, depreciation of the pound and uncertainty over post-Brexit food standards requirements have further reduced their market share.

Similarly, UK exports to the Kenyan horticultural sector including eg farm machinery have declined after competition from India, China, and Turkey. This is made worse because competitive credit terms have not been available for Kenyan importers.

This short project explored specific, high potential, horticultural value chains and identified products that could meet the demand of UK retailers and consumers. It also identified UK agricultural equipment, technology and

services that could meet the demand in Kenya to optimise the productivity of horticultural value chains.

Horticulture exports from Kenya to the UK

The project considered major horticultural value chains, and reviewed 3 high-potential products that could have increased exports to the UK. The project engaged with major UK importers, buyers, and retailers of horticultural products to understand their buying criteria. It also looked at considerations British consumers made when shopping for fruit and vegetables. The 3 high potential products identified for targeted support are:

Mixed vegetables (cut and frozen)

The UK has a large export market for mixed vegetables, and Kenya is already a recognised supplier in the market. Kenya has existing large suppliers with the potential to scale up from current exports of £53 million to £120 to 150 million annually by 2030, and to generate many new jobs.

Fresh fruit

Kenya currently exports avocados worth £5 million annually but only has a low share of just 2% in a rapidly growing, health-conscious consumer market. By scaling up production of the right variety and quality of avocados, Kenya can potentially increase exports to £30 to 80 million annually by 2030. There is a smaller opportunity to enter the market for mangoes. Both fruits could generate large scale jobs for youth and vulnerable groups including women.

Value added products

The UK market for nut mixes and spreads, dried fruits and avocado oil is estimated to be around £650million annually and growing at 9 to 12% CAGR. This is driven by increasing consumer consciousness around health and wellness. With the right investment, opportunities exist for Kenyan SMEs to tap into this growing market.

UK goods and services exports to Kenya

The project identified 6 high potential areas across goods, services, and funding for boosting horticultural trade. It prioritised these based on UK competitive advantage, overall potential and development impact.

Credit facilitation and export finance

These represent the biggest opportunities for the UK to increase exports, and enable Kenyan agri-processors to buy British goods and services. Together, they could enable UK exports to the Kenyan horticulture sector to reach £1.5 billion by 2030.

Quality certification and agri-data/tech

These are other areas of UK comparative advantage. The Kenya horticultural sector could benefit by meeting UK certification standards and using technology to boost productivity and traceability.

Refrigerators and tractors

There is a smaller opportunity in refrigerators and tractors, due to UK price competitiveness challenges. However, allied technical services such as refrigeration engineering have strong potential.

Recommendations for increasing 2-way horticultural trade

During the project, the team engaged extensively with UK and Kenyan businesses, investors, government representatives and other stakeholders. These actions were identified as important to boosting the 2-way horticulture exports:

Horticulture exports from Kenya to the UK

- UK and Kenyan finance institutions should work with existing medium or large scale producers to help scale up large commercial or smart farms with supporting infrastructure. This will support reliably meeting the price, quality, and volume requirements of the UK market
- the Kenyan government should work with logistics businesses and UK and Kenyan finance institutions (for funding) towards addressing market and trade infrastructure bottlenecks (road access, cost of air freight, cold supply chain, port capacity). This will reduce the cost of production and help Kenya become price competitive
- UK and Kenyan finance institutions should help develop value-added products (shelf-stable products) and capabilities eg, processed or powdered vegetables that will not require expensive airfreight to the UK market
- the Kenyan government should designate certified processing zones. This will ensure high quality standards through robust quality checks for fruits like avocados aimed at exports to the UK and beyond
- Kenyan producers should work with UK retailers supported by the UK government to build on Kenya's competitive advantages in Environmental, Social and Governance issues (water efficiency, labour standards, and social footprint). This will align with growing demands of UK consumers, investors and regulators

UK goods and services exports to Kenya

- credit facilitation: facilitate partnerships between UK and Kenyan finance institutions to provide subsidised interest rates for local businesses
- export finance: create wider awareness of UK Export Finance (UKEF) funding through marketing campaigns and information sessions

- quality certification: pursue strategic partnerships with Kenyan quality certification organisations to promote adopting UK certification standards locally
- agri data/tech: develop strategic partnerships with Kenyan agri-producers for shared benefits from improving productivity and traceability
- refrigerators: subsidise funding to help existing cold chain companies increase operations
- tractors: not a priority focus as UK tractors are less competitively priced for Kenya and do not meet the customer demand for smaller tractors

Achieving this potential will bring both development impact in Kenya and commercial benefits to the UK. It will require focused interventions, involving private sector players, and governments from both countries. Targeted matchmaking for businesses, sharing information, policy advocacy and development programme support can catalyse the development of a strong pipeline of transaction and deal opportunities. This will help to drive trade and investment in the horticultural sector. The Growth Gateway will facilitate this through targeted market engagement, business networking events and advisory support.