

[News story: Business Minister hosts diversity and the industrial strategy roundtable](#)

Employers, community groups and small business owners from across the North East today met Business Minister Margot James to discuss how diversity and inclusion can strengthen the Government's Industrial Strategy.

As part of the ministerial country-wide engagement tour, Margot James hosted a roundtable event at Stockton Council to find out directly from business how the Industrial Strategy can support diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

In its green paper, 'Building our Industrial Strategy', the Government outlines 10 key pillars of focus to be discussed as part of a 12-week consultation, inviting contributions from industry, businesses, community groups and workers across the North East and the rest of the UK.

The Government's commitment to create an economy that works for everyone and today Margot James urged employers at the event to take seriously their responsibilities to create diverse and inclusive workplaces, giving everyone the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Business Minister Margot James said:

"Diversity and inclusion are key to the UK economy maximising its potential. Through our modern Industrial Strategy and investment in the Northern Powerhouse, we are building an economy that works for everyone and I enjoyed talking to employers in the North East about how we can work together to build on the regions strengths, raise living standards and create new, well-paid jobs in other industries and sectors."

The roundtable follows this week's publication of the Baroness McGregor-Smith review on black and minority ethnic (BME) labour market progression, which found the economy could receive a £24bn-a-year boost if people from ethnic minority backgrounds progressed in work at the same rate as their white counterparts.

As part of the Government's response to the findings, Margot James announced she will chair the new Business Diversity and Inclusion Group. It will bring together business leaders and organisations to coordinate action to remove barriers in the workplace and monitor employers' progress.

The group will meet every quarter at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and will also bring together the leaders of three industry-led diversity reviews:

- Baroness McGregor-Smith

- Sir Philip Hampton and Dame Helen Alexander, who are leading a review aimed at increasing female leadership in FTSE companies
- Sir John Parker, who today concludes a consultation on recommendations to increase BME representation in the boardroom, to participate in the group

The Government has issued an open invitation to all industries, businesses, workers and local groups in the North East to visit the GOV.UK website and help set the priorities for a modern Industrial Strategy.

The consultation is open until 17 April, after which the Government will consider responses before publishing a white paper later in the year.

Notes to editors:

. Among those in attendance at the roundtable were:

- ARC Stockton
- Association of Colleges
- Catalyst
- Cultures
- Daisy Chain
- EDF Energy
- Education Development Trust
- Groundwork NE & Cumbria
- Mencap
- Morrison Trust
- New Walk
- Nifco Ltd
- Recognition Marketing & PR LLP
- Shaw Trust
- Stockton Inclusion & Training Group, Cultures
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- Teeside University

[News story: £15 million boost for UK lamb exports](#)

UK lamb will soon be back on dinner plates across Kuwait following a new deal worth up to £15 million, Food Minister George Eustice announced today.

The re-opened trade route was announced during the minister's visit to the Gulf to promote British food and drink and strengthen the UK's trading

relationship with this rapidly growing market.

Three major UK suppliers are already set to benefit from the five-year deal – with shipments prepped to leave soon.

The UK exported £625 million worth of food and drink to the region last year, including £80 million of cereal and £22 million of cheese.

Food Minister George Eustice said:

British lamb has a fantastic reputation around the world for its taste and quality and I'm delighted this export success will now be available for diners in Kuwait.

This move to re-open the market for UK-produced lamb is another example of how we are working hard to tap into international markets and build stronger relationships with trading partners around the world.

Total lamb exports from the UK reached £330 million in 2016, up from £300m the previous year, and this latest deal is a further boost to government's commitment to open more international markets.

The trade mission included a visit to Gulfood in Dubai, where cereal brand Mornflake from Cheshire and a mozzarella producer from Durham were among around 100 UK food and drink companies exhibiting at the world's largest annual trade show.

Jean-Pierre Garnier, head of export trade development at the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) said:

We have found for some time a high level of appetite from Kuwaiti importers and distributors for British lamb and are delighted to be able at last to supply this market.

We are committed to expanding sales of meat and dairy products in the Gulf region and support the Government's export work. Our presence at the important Gulfood exhibition with meat and dairy stands testifies our willingness to grow sales and open new markets.

As part of the minister's visit he witnessed the signing of two Memorandums of Understanding allowing greater collaboration between the UK government and Gulf on projects in aquaculture, fisheries, climate change and marine environments. The first was with the UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment and the second was with the Gulf-wide Regional Organisation for Protection of the Marine Environment.

To find out how to export click [here](#)

You can read the full International Action Plan for Food and Drink on [here](#)

The ban on UK lamb was introduced by Kuwait due to concerns around scrapie – a degenerative disease that affects the nervous systems of sheep and goats. Government vets provided the necessary evidence to allay concerns and demonstrate the world-leading approach we take to protecting animal health in the UK.

[News story: Track workers struck by ballast, Chathill](#)

Track workers struck by ballast thrown from the track bed by a passing train near Chathill, Northumbria, 16 February 2017.

At around 10:10 hrs on 16 February 2017 two track workers were struck by flying ballast. This was thrown from the track bed by a train on which a flexible hose had become detached at one end and was dragging on the ground. Neither track worker suffered significant injury.

We have undertaken a [preliminary examination](#) into the circumstances surrounding this accident. Having assessed the evidence which has been gathered to date, we have decided to publish a [safety digest](#).

The safety digest will shortly be made available on our website.

[Conservative Ministers are out of ideas and have no long-term plan to fix the cost of housing crisis – John Healey](#)

John

Healey MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Housing, responding to new figures released today showing that home-ownership has fallen to the lowest rate in 30 years, said:

“These

new government figures show yet another fall in the home-ownership rate in England to the lowest rate in more than 30 years. There are now almost 200,000 fewer home-owning households than in 2010 when Conservative Ministers first took charge.

“Meanwhile, the number of people stuck in an insecure and increasingly expensive private rented sector has grown dramatically over the last seven years. Since 2010, the number of households renting privately as ballooned by over a million.

“After seven years of failure on housing, not only has home-ownership fallen, but affordable housebuilding has hit a 24 year low and rough sleeping has more than doubled. The truth is Conservative Ministers are out of ideas and have no long-term plan to fix the cost of housing crisis.

“Theresa May says she wants a country that works for everyone, so she should back Labour’s plans to build thousands more affordable homes to rent and buy, improve rights for renters and end the scandal of rough sleeping.”

[The CQC’s stark warning that our NHS stands on a ‘burning platform’ must be at the forefront of the Chancellor’s priorities ahead of next week’s Budget – Jonathan Ashworth](#)

Jonathan

Ashworth MP, Labour’s Shadow Secretary of State for Health, commenting on the CQC’s State of Hospitals report, said:

“The CQC’s stark warning that our NHS stands on a ‘burning platform’ must be at the forefront of the Chancellor’s priorities ahead of next week’s Budget.

“Our hardworking and stretched NHS staff cannot be expected to pick up the pieces from this Government’s failure to properly fund our NHS and social care system.

“After
the worst winter crisis in years, in which nine out of ten hospitals were
left
dangerously overcrowded, the public expects urgent action to rectify years of
damaging Tory neglect.”