

# **Press Release**

**14<sup>th</sup> October 2016**

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## **Headline speakers-**

**Sir John Peace, Chairman of the Midlands Engine**

**Lord Marland, Chairman , Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council**

**Paul Kehoe- CEO Birmingham Airport, Chairman of Marketing Birmingham, President Birmingham Chambers of Trade**

**Ruth Lea CBE, Economic Advisor to Arbuthnot Bank**

## **Birmingham Commonwealth Association - Commonwealth Trade Conference 18<sup>th</sup> October**

**Birmingham Commonwealth Association will be sending out a clear message at its trade conference on 18<sup>th</sup> October that Birmingham and Greater Birmingham is open for business**

The Commonwealth Trade Conference - which takes place at the Council House, in Victoria Square, Birmingham on 18 October – will advise businesses how to optimise opportunities within the Commonwealth.

Businesses and stakeholders will hear how trading within the Commonwealth can not only provide an international trading platform, but also enable companies access savings of up to 15 per cent.

Confirmed conference speakers include:

- **Sir John Peace**, Chairman of the 'Midlands Engine', Standard Chartered plc and Burberry Group plc.
- **Lord Marland**, Chairman of the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council
- **Paul Kehoe**, CEO, Birmingham Airport
- **Mark Sankey**, Head of International Trade Team, Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce
- **Peter McLintock**, Corporate Partner, Mills & Reeve
- **Ruth Lea CBE**, Economic Advisor to the Arbuthnot Banking Group
- For details of the full programme, please visit [www.distinctlybirmingham.com](http://www.distinctlybirmingham.com)

The High Commissioner for Uganda will also be attending.

*Keith Stokes-Smith, chairman of Birmingham Commonwealth Association, said: Why are we ignoring a market that once represented much the same percentage of our exports as the EU does today - the Commonwealth? This is the question we hope to answer at our Commonwealth Trade Conference next month."*

*"We need to adjust to our new relationship with the EU, whatever that might be, and indeed with the world and to think positively and make things happen. This means supporting businesses in creating wealth, improving productivity, creating jobs, supporting businesses in making a profit,*

*because without profit, there is no business.”*

**Commenting upon the conference Sir John Peace said:**

“The West Midlands’ current top 5 export partners are USA, China, Germany, France and the Irish Republic. As Birmingham and the Midlands continue to grow, it’s time to expand our reach – and the markets of the Commonwealth offer a huge and exciting opportunity to our regions’ businesses and entrepreneurs. It is vital that Birmingham continues to build on its rich history of industry and international trade and remains able to make a significant contribution to the UK economy as a whole.”

**Quote from Lord Marland**

‘As the power house behind the industrial revolution and still, the heartland of our manufacturing sector today – the Midlands are in prime position to take advantage of the trading opportunities that Britain’s exit from the European Union will now present. Birmingham can use its unique attributes – its capacity for innovation, advanced manufacturing expertise and vibrant Commonwealth diaspora communities – to become a leading gateway for Commonwealth business.’

Unable to attend the Conference but wishing it success, The Rt Hon Liam Fox MP said “I hope the event is a success and results in more businesses becoming more aware of the opportunities offered by exporting to the Commonwealth”

*Mr Stokes-Smith added: “There is no use burying our heads in the sand about the EU referendum result. Our conference is aimed at business leaders and companies who want to export - and should be exporting – to motivate and familiarise delegates about trading with the Commonwealth, using specific case studies where possible.*

*“We need to start thinking ahead and looking to see what we can do, must do, to put the Midlands on a stronger footing in the light of the expected impacts Brexit will have on the region. This conference will offer some enlightenment in this respect.”*

For more information, and to book your place on the conference, please visit:

<http://distinctlybirmingham.com/bca-conference-todays-commonwealth-exploring-export-opportunities/>

**ENDS**

Notes to editors:

- Commonwealth countries represent 2.2 billion of the world’s population, including well established economies like Australia and Canada, as well as many with growing economies and populations.
- Many of these countries have growing wealth to spend, with some infrastructures ripe for replacing
- Similarly there are many where Gross Domestic Product is on the up

- Synergies in language, legal systems, cultures and above all, often a wish to buy British.
- Whatever the outcome of our future trading relationships with EU members, it is highly likely that more doors will now open to establish trade or higher levels of trade with our Commonwealth colleagues and as a result the Commonwealth itself will receive a well-deserved, higher profile.

