

Mutually beneficial opportunities

By RT HON ED VAIZEY MP

PRIME MINISTER'S TRADE ENVOY TO VIETNAM, CAMBODIA AND LAOS



ED VAIZEY

was first elected to parliament in 2005. From 2010 to 2016 he served as Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries with responsibilities in the Departments for Culture, Media and sports and for Business, Innovation and Skills. He previously served as the Shadow Minister for Culture under David Cameron from 2006 to 2010. He was appointed a member of the Privy Council in July 2016 and at the same time left Theresa May's government to return to the backbenches. He currently serves as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

2018 is a special year for the UK-Vietnam relationship. This year marks 45 years since the commencement of diplomatic relations between our two countries. From education to infrastructure, technology and smart cities, the UK-Vietnam partnership has gone from strength to strength.

I will shortly be visiting Vietnam for the second time since my appointment as Trade Envoy last year and I am hugely looking forward to it. On my last visit I was hugely impressed by the vibrancy of the country and the level of expertise on display throughout all businesses and projects I visited.

Almost 25,000 UK businesses export to the ASEAN-4 (Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam) – the UK's second-largest global export destination, after the United States. Among those, Vietnam in particular has cause to be optimistic. It continues to be one of the fastest growing economies in the region with a 6.8 per cent growth in GDP in 2017 and 7.3 per cent in Q1 2018 – the highest in the last 10 years.

I am pleased that our two countries are now working together on Prosperity Fund programmes: Economic Reform; Low Carbon; Future Cities; Infrastructure; Health; and the Global Trade Programme. Following the success of the UK-Vietnam JETCO chaired by Greg Hands in Manchester, I was very pleased to see Baroness Fairhead's visit to Vietnam. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed with the Ministry of Construction is a particularly welcome commitment from the Vietnamese government to developing strategies to facilitate the digital economy and industrial revolution 4.0.

Bilateral cooperation of Building Information Modelling, delivered through the British government's Prosperity Fund Global Infrastructure Program, has been very successful. The MOU will allow similar programmes to continue for the next three years.

Vietnam has a huge demand for the development of both private and public infrastructure. The UK has considerable expertise in this area, not just in digital

construction, but also in areas including planning, architecture, legal services and project consultancy. With our experience of delivering high quality infrastructure projects globally, UK companies will be able to help Vietnam to deliver infrastructure and construction projects in the most productive and sustainable way.

At its best, UK-Vietnam cooperation can achieve great things, like the recently completed *Landmark 81*, a perfect example of the partnership between our two countries. Atkins, Arup and Mace, all British companies, have had a leading role in the project.

Education is another area in which our two countries are working in partnership. For several years, the Department of International Trade, Foreign Office and British Council have been working together with Vietnam to develop its education sector, from school education through to further and higher education and now technical and vocational education and training. English has become a critical skill for the 21st century; and the Education Minister's efforts to improve English teaching and his prioritisation of English and teacher training are particularly impressive.

Online and blended teacher-training and language-learning materials are critical for Vietnam as they provide best value for money and allow the Ministry of Education and Training to reach far more teachers and learners in a more efficient manner. British expertise has helped deliver large scale English Language Teacher Training on a scalable model and I know we will be working closely with the Vietnamese government on the National Foreign Languages Project 2020.

The UK is keen to strengthen cooperation in education and training to contribute to the development of education in Vietnam through an exchange in experience and expertise in areas of strategic interest.

I look forward to the forthcoming visit of His Excellency Pham Binh Minh and demonstrating first hand the expertise the UK has to offer. I am very pleased with the continued partnership between our two countries and I can only see it strengthening in the years to come.' **E**

Ho Chi Minh City's *Landmark 81*, Southeast Asia's tallest building

