

BSA Chairman's Dinner 2018

Check Against Delivery

Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen

May I start by adding my welcome to you all for this BSA Chairman's Dinner.

Thank you Laura [Barlow] and the NatWest team for your continuing membership and support of the BSA.

I also want to thank Mark and the BSA team for the tireless contribution they have made, traveling the length and breadth of the country, making the BSA truly national. The BSA in Scotland has really taken off and the Chairman was singing your praises to me only last week. Of course what has stood out was the amount of common sense that has been voiced in what has been a very challenging year. Thank you.

Thank you too Minister for taking time to be with us this evening.

Since taking over the Cabinet Office, with all the responsibility that job entails, you have shown a consistent interest in how to improve public service delivery, looking afresh at how to renew the trust in the partnership between the public sector, on the one hand, and the private and voluntary sectors on the other. Your attention to this at a time, when you have so much else to consider, is appreciated and valued by all of us.

Minister, we note with interest that you hold a PhD in the politics of Tudor England - a period in our nation's history noted for its fluid politics, a significant national break with our European cousins and the ruthlessness of those in power. We note, with admiration, that this is your 26th year as a Member of Parliament and that you have served six leaders of the Conservative Party and three Prime Ministers - so far.

Minister we welcome you.

And it's great to see so many senior colleagues here tonight.

As business looks back on the last year or so, and forwards to the next, it's fair to say, this isn't a time for the fainthearted.

Brexit from the outset was a political decision. Today, business looks to our political leaders to achieve the best possible outcome for all. The Agreement the Government has published, looks as though it will provide the clear and stable path we need in business, to plan and invest. We understand that this Brexit Agreement is but one part of a much bigger picture and that this is but a stepping-stone on the way to securing a permanent trade settlement with the European Union. That, surely, is the bigger prize we need to focus on. On that basis and in that spirit we wish you well.

But the focus tonight, Minister, is on one of your other areas of responsibility.

The issue of who helps to deliver our public services is rightly a question for political debate.

Clearly we in the BSA are in favour of having the widest number of options available - the public sector itself, small and larger businesses, the voluntary sector and social enterprises should all be part of the mix.

Business-to-business outsourcing accounts for 70 per cent of the sector's work. It is thriving and growing, pioneering and investing in new and innovative ways to provide services.

In the public sector, which accounts for about 30 per cent of the UK market there is too a huge amount of really good work done, but clearly this is a more challenging area.

We all want to see refreshed and renewed public sector markets - involving a wider range of businesses, charities and other groups, offering the public sector a wider and more vibrant range of options from which to choose. The work that you have initiated between your officials and the industry is a positive step in the right direction. Such shifts in direction can only be delivered by Ministers and we welcome the work being done.

In response, we in the industry must be responsible and innovative, open and transparent, a force for good.

So when businesses or the voluntary sector help deliver services and infrastructure projects, we leave a lasting legacy, in every place we work...

We leave the small businesses with whom we partner, bigger and stronger than when we started...

We make sure the three million people our sector employs across the private and public sectors are better trained and better able to provide for themselves and their families... with decent pay and conditions....

And we develop services which are more innovative, more productive and which serve people better.

Being socially responsible is at the heart of what we aspire to deliver and healthy and vibrant markets are key to enabling this to be done. If goods and services are procured solely on a lowest cost basis then the result will always and inevitably be a lowest cost product. Across the private, public and voluntary sectors we need to challenge that culture and that ethos, because it is destructive for all of us.

The BSA team has been busy covering all these issues in the last few years and have worked across government, nationally, regionally and indeed at European level in doing so.

I know Minister, that's what you will be talking about tonight.
So please join me in welcoming Minister for the Cabinet Office,
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and de facto Deputy Prime
Minister, the Rt Hon David Lidington MP.

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