

Alex Salmond arriving in China today



First Minister Alex Salmond will arrive in Beijing today (Sunday) to convene a 30 company trade delegation focused on increasing trade in the oil and gas and construction sectors and deepening the friendship between Scotland and China.

The First Minister will begin talks in the Chinese capital on Monday, meeting State Councillor Yang Jie Chi, the Chinese Government's principal foreign minister, before undertaking a Scotland innovation showcase that will demonstrate Scotland's expertise in a range of industry sectors.

On Tuesday, Mr Salmond will carry out education talks with Hanban, the body responsible for promotion of Chinese learning and language teaching across the globe, before undertaking a keynote economic speech at Tsinghua University. During the Beijing leg of the visit, the First Minister and trade delegation will also hold senior-level industry talks with Chinese companies.

The First Minister will then transfer to Hong Kong, undertaking a full day of business in the region on Wednesday that will include education research and development talks focused on life sciences and energy and meetings with energy industry representatives.

The visit will conclude on Thursday with a keynote speech to the Financial Times International Financial Centers Forum, focused on financial services and Scotland's place in the global economy.

Speaking ahead of the visit, the First Minister said:

“It is hugely important that, in an increasingly global economy, Scotland is able to engage with international economic giants such as China, identifying further opportunities for our innovative companies to export their expertise and high-quality products and drive sustainable economic growth at home.

“The trade mission I will convene in China this weekend will focus on two crucial industry sectors, with high-level government, education and trade talks examining opportunities for Scotland in the oil and gas and constructions sectors as well as wider opportunities around strengthening education links that are already bringing great benefits to both countries.

“During the visit I will also promote the excellent food and drink produce that China already adores, with notable successes for Scottish salmon and Scotch whisky contributing to a hugely encouraging rise in overall exports to China from £265m to £498m, between 2007 and 2012.

“And I will deliver two keynote economic speeches, examining Scotland’s place in the world and the challenges nations in the east and west face in building a sustainable and balanced economic recovery.”