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Moderator questions in Bold, Respondents in Regular text.

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Nicola Bruno: It's lovely to be here today. I'm Nicola Bruno and I'm the Head of the Queen's Awards for Enterprise Office, and-

Will Arndt: Hi there, everyone, I'm Will Arndt, I am the Deputy Head of the Queen's Awards for Enterprise Office, and thank you for having us here today.

Nicola Bruno: Okay, so we're going to going to take you through the Queen's Awards for Enterprise. So, as already has, has already been mentioned, they are the most prestigious awards for UK businesses. They are a globally recognised global seal of approval for UK companies. They started off, actually, back in 1965 and they were then known as the Queen's Award to Industry. As you can imagine, in those 50-odd years, they've gone through many changes and they really are relevant to today's business, and you've heard already about the four categories that we recognise businesses in. Since the award's inception, we've recognised over 7,000 companies. So, that's just a personal quote from Her Majesty, which just really shows the very close engagement that she still has with he award. We had a few recent changes, which you might imagine, to respond to the volatility in the market. Again, just trying to ensure that we really do help companies through this process and understand that you all have been affected by certain things, such as the pandemic. So, Her Majesty is closely engaged on recent changes. This slide just talks you through the four categories. They've already been mentioned, we're going to go into a little bit more detail about what they all mean and some top tips to apply for them.

So, the benefits of women we've already heard, are, actually, they're globally recognised. So, when winners receive the Royal Emblem, they're allowed to use it on their packaging, on their social media channels, and it really does put them on the global stage. So, we hear all the time from winners who have been able to break into Europe, they might have achieved an international trade award, and then they come back to us and tell us that, actually, now we've been able to access new clients and markets, particularly in the US, in Japan, in China, and in emerging economies. It really does put people on the global stage. So, we had Matt Circle (ph 02.28) up in Scotland who said to us that they actually did very well in Chatterley, but the local community weren't actually aware that they existed, and having, flying, sort of, the Queen's Royal Emblem actually gave them that local recognition as well. So, it, it really is feedback from winners and just telling us that it's such a boost to staff morale, and this is why we see large companies still wanting to achieve the Queen's Award, because it really does boost the morale of everyone. Typically, at the presentations, also, people tend to invite not just their employees, but their supply chain and their stakeholders, and it really is a sort of a celebration throughout the whole business.

So, the eligibility criteria. So, you must be based in the UK, you must be a self-contained enterprises, you must be fully compliant with HMRC and you must have at least two full-time employees, or part-time equivalent, and of course being a Queen's Awards winner, we expect exemplary behaviour in corporate social responsibility. You can find out all of the eligibility criteria on Gov.UK, but we're going to go into the specific criterion for each award category a little bit later. So, the award cycle, so as you can see here, the application process is managed by our team. The applications opened on the first of May, it's an online application only, but you can download the application form. This enables you to plan your responses. You can add collaborators to the system, so you might well get your accountant, your marketing, or PR agency involved in collaborating on the responses to the application form. We are a really small, friendly team. There's only five of us in London. People often think of the Queen's Awards Office as this big, grand outfit, but we're a very small section of the Department for Business. We operate a helpline, we sometimes speak to people throughout the entire summer who want question-, want questions answered on specific parts of the application form. We've put a huge amount of online guidance on that application form and it's available under the question, so where you actually need that extra bit of guidance, and we really take care to stress on that application form that, 'Answer this to the best of your ability.' Obviously, this form is for all types of companies across all different sectors and all different sectors, so if you're very small, please don't be put off by those questions, it is a case of just answering it to the best of your ability.

So, what happens when the applications are received? So, we have about a six-week period of assessment. They, at is performed by external, independent assessors who are experts in the fields that we've mentioned before of international trade, innovation, sustainable development and social mobility. Once that shortlist is drawn up, we will then notify the shortlisted applicants. Now, what we're really asking then is for them to provide independent verification of the figures that they've submitted. Now, this is really important because whilst you've put forward your commercial success, we just need to verify that. So, we ask that you do that with an independent accountant or auditor. Now, a really important change this year, which we're really pleased with, is that we're only asking for applicants for Innovation in International Trade to do that verification. It's, it really the only part of the whole award process that you may incur a cost for with your accountant, but we've decided and we've had it agreed that for sustainable development and promoting opportunity, there's no need now to verify your figures. The reason for that is, we're really trying to just establish the viability of the business and it's not really so much the commercial success of those interventions, it's much more about are you operating a viable business and we're looking, really, at those real impacts that you've had on the community and in your workforce.

So, also at that time, we do conduct due diligence checks, and this is a really key, important part of the process. So, what we would stress to you is to have a look at the way that you're operating, talk to your accountant, your legal team, and just think about have you been fully compliant? Are all your records up to date? Are you filing tax returns? Are you filing returns with Companies House? Anything that you think maybe you need to be sorted out, please try to rectify those before you apply. We do get some disappointed applicants who have been shortlisted but unable, we're unable, we're unable to take that

further because there's certain outstanding issues there. Again, if in any doubt, please ring the helpline, we're more than happy to talk you through this. So, once we, once you've passed due diligence, we then go to the panel of judges, and this is where Anne and other senior business leaders from, well, leaders from academia, and business, and the public sector help us to judge those applications. We had a winner, Willmott Dixon, recently said to us, 'It was just amazing to know that we have had our applications scrutinised by these senior leaders,' and it really made the difference in them because actually, you're obtaining an industry award, is marvellous, however having experts scrutinise an application from outside of your sector, they really just felt it was a wonderful thing, a huge achievement for them.

So, once we have the panel of judges, we then also have the Prime Ministers Advisory Committee, so again, these are senior leaders from business, academia and the public sector, and they advise the Prime Minister. He personally sits down and looks at the list of proposed winners, and then he conveys that to Her Majesty the Queen and she also personally sits down and approves the winners. We receive it back to us and then we're able to notify the winners, which is a huge achievement and it's one we really feel so pleased for the companies when we're able to talk to them, and because we've helped many all the way through the process, it's such a nice feeling in the team as well, to be able to share that news with them. I should just pause here and say that if you are unsuccessful, applicants do receive really comprehensive feedback in March. Now, the reason for this is, it might seem like quite a long time, so you've done the application form in September, however that's at the point when our assessors are able to have that, sort of, dedicated time to really offer you the strengths and weaknesses of your application form. What I would just say is please don't be put off by this.

Again, people feed back to the helpline and say to us, 'It was really great to have that feedback,' we've had all sorts of people say, 'It felt like the assessors really understood my business,' I've had many people say, 'We really took note of the feedback, responded to it and we went onto win the Queen's Award,' and so many people say to us that actually, the questions on the form are really quite thought provoking and they actually make business leaders stand back and think, 'Actually, I'm doing quite a lot on sustainable development,' or, 'Actually, I'm, you know, all the things that I'm doing in regards to my workforce and wellbeing, and employee engagement,' people often don't have that chance as leaders, particularly if you're in a small company, you don't often have that chance to really reflect, have that time out to do that. So, even just filling in the application form, we hear from winners that it's actually a really good, reflective process for them. I'm just going to hand over to Will now who's going to talk you through the next slides.

Will Arndt: Thank you so much, Nicky. So, we now want to talk about our 2022 winners. So, this year, as was mentioned earlier, we had 232 winners across the UK, seven double award winners. So, to speak on that point slightly, you can apply in one year for more than one category, so you could, for example, win in the same year Innovation in International Trade, or Sustainability and Promoting Opportunity, any combination of the four categories is absolutely possible. And, another thing that's really important, actually, highlighting is that 90% of the winners were SMEs. Now, our definition of SMEs, as I was asked this at an event I did yesterday, is the UK Government definition of SMEs, and I can't quote it to

you right now but that's what it is.

Nicola Bruno: 250 or less.

Will Arndt: 250 or less, thank you so much, Nicky, and then speaking on the last point here, you know, as we mentioned earlier, any business of any size can apply as long as you have the equivalent of two full-time employees. So, in this, this year, we've had 35 winners who have 10 employees or less, so essentially micro-businesses. So, we want to really highlight, any business, any size, big corporates, small little operations going out of your garden shed, anyone is welcome to apply. Moving onto the next slide, we announced the winners as part of the Queen's birthday celebrations and these businesses are leading the way in a broad range of industries, from creative industries to agro-tech solutions, sustainable food production and innovative electrical components. Companies can apply-, sorry, apologies. So, I want to break down the awards by category. So, as you can see, we had 141 winners of International Trade this year, 51 in Innovation, 31 in Sustainable Development, and nine in the Promoting Opportunity category. So, International Trade is generally our most popular category, as it were, but we still have a very solid foundation in the other three categories, though would always welcome more applications across those three.

Now, I'd like to speak a little bit about winners by region. As you can see, this is kind of a ranked list of winners in, winners across the UK, and unfortunately, Northern Ireland, you're not up at the top yet, but we want to get you up to the top if possible. There is a bit of a way to go, but I'm sure we can get you there in the end. To talk a little bit about this years winners in Northern Ireland. So, there were four winners in Northern Ireland this year, three which are primarily based here, and then also GNL Scientific who are, technically count as a Buckinghamshire-based business but have a very large presence here, and I'd like to say on behalf of Nicky and myself, we'd like to congratulate all of the winners personally to you today. We don't always get the opportunity to do it face to face, so we're doing that now. So, moving onto the next slide.

So, over the last five year-, ah, here are our businesses. EDGE Innovate, FinTrU Limited, SendMyBag, and also GNL Scientific. So, these are a couple of examples of businesses that have won in previous years, so you can see there's a really wide range of businesses who have won. Certain individuals have won quite a lot, as you see, sort of going back to the statistics side of how many winners we have per category, it's a very large number of International Trade winners, and also a couple of Sustainable Development, so that's 2020-2021, 2018-2019, again we see a lot of International Trade and Innovation, and a bit of Innovation, and as you can see Calvatec have won multiples times, which is sort of a really good example of how many times people can win an award and that people, you know, they enjoy winning the award so much and see the benefits of winning the award so much, they come back and apply for multiple years.

So, now we want to talk about the statistics of people that apply, so kind of conversion rates. So, if I apply for the award, what's the likelihood that I win? So, as you can see, there were eleven who applied, eight were not recommended, and three companies won, but I would like to highlight again that those eight companies received ally comprehensive feedback, written feedback, and we can also offer help and assistance with the feedback on the telephone line. So, now, some of the reasons why people aren't recommended for an award. So, some of the reasoning behind it is that poor percentage of growth in overseas earnings in years one to two was insufficient to demonstrate outstanding short-term growth. So, this is examples taken directly from a company's feedback, obviously we've anonymized them for today. Generally, the application is light on detail and any future application could consider how to present the information required with more clarity. What input what provided by the academics? What difficulties were encountered in developing the product? How was the p-, p-, problem approached with new skills that have been learned and are transferable? Now, I won't practice my telecom skills any further, but it just gives you a really good example of what feedback you can receive as a business and there is, obviously far more examples that we can show.

Now, I think we're going to move onto the application guidance. So, as I'm relatively new to the team, I will hand over to Nicky to go through some of that guidance for you.

Nicola Bruno: Thank you, I just, should just say Will just joined us a month ago, so well done, Will, for picking this up so quickly. So, application guidance. So, generally, what are we looking for? Okay, so this is one of the most popular questions that we hear when we pick up the helpline. So, some of the top tips, so as we've mentioned, register on the system, go to Gov.UK, click 'apply now', you have to fill in the registration, then you're faced with an eligibility checklist. This is a really quick way just to check that you're eligible, you don't waste any time then in trying to fill out parts of the form, it's just a simple yes, no, then if you're eligible, you will get through to the form. If you're not eligible, please, again, pick up the helpline, talk it through with us, we're here to help. So, as I've said, you can download the application, this aids your planning, you can add collaborators. Please use plain English. So, many of you might have quite technical businesses, and whilst our assessors are experts, they're not experts in every single sector and sometimes it's quite hard. We had one that was like underwater yacht lighting, that's quite a niche thing, and so we had to then go to the company just to ask them to clarify exactly why that was particularly unique and why it was particularly, sort of, innovative and really what the demand was out for that. So, if you can kind of break it down into what was the challenge? Why did you do this certain, particularly on Innovation, and you know, why is it particularly innovative or successful?

Provide evidence, again you can use, you can use qualitative and quantitative evidence to support statements. I can't emphasise enough that it's really important to tell your own story. Now, there will be, if you Google the Queen's Award, there are a number of agencies that will offer to help you with your application form. Whilst you're free to do that, we, again, offer the helpline. It is free, please call that number because we really want to hear your personal journey. Some of you today might be really small, family-run businesses, and there's no better person to talk us through your personal journey than you, and also we really get a sense of that leadership that you're driving forward in your company, so things like

why did you start the business and the key drivers for you in making it successful. We've talked about adding collaborators already, and again, allow sufficient time. It may seem like a long time until September, 99% of people leave it until the last minute and we get a huge amount of calls on the day asking for deadline extensions. So, please, just plan it, allow time. You can save it and submit, and then you can go back to it. You can save it as many times as you want and add to it. If you submit and there's something else you want to do, up until that deadline, again, please call us, we're here to help and we can ensure that you are able to edit your application form.

So, moving onto-, oh, I clicked the wrong button there. Innovation. So, I've just touched on this, really, so what we're looking for is why is the innovation unique and how has it benefited your business' customers and others. It's really important for us to know what issue your innovation has solved and the challenges you have overcome in developing or distributing it. So, a really good example is Calvatec, who are here today, so we will be hearing from them later. Sorry. So, International Trade, I'm going to hand over to Will who's going to talk us through that.

Will Arndt: Fantastic. Thank you, Nicky. So, you talk a little bit about International Trade, so if you're applying for an International Trade award, it's important to tell us about your export strategy, explain why penetration of a particular market is an achievement. So, things you want to kind of think about if, when you're writing these applications, your application, are you the first, leading, fastest-growing business or UK exporter in this market? Why is your performance better than that of your competitors? And, what challenges have you faced in your trade and how have you overcome these challenges? Another really good example of a winner in International Trade is George Lowden Guitars Limited who won in 2021. They design and make their own guitars and they have been employed by names such as Eric Clapton, Ed Sheeran and Foy Vance, and Damien Rice, so quite a cool business there. What we also want to see from you is substantial growth in overseas earnings with a minimum of £100,000 in overseas sales in the first year of your entry and demonstrate steep year on year growth.

Now, I'll talk a bit about Promoting Opportunity. So, Promoting Opportunity has been refocused to organisations engaged in an enterprise whose core activity is not social mobility but have a programme that supports it. So, for example, not a charity whose sole aim is getting people into work or something like that, it would be something where it's an aside, as it were. The award is not aimed at those whose core purpose, as I said, is to improve social mobility, not for profit social enterprises, and charities are still welcome to apply, though. This category recognises businesses and organisations that are providing a high-quality social mobility initiative and programmes that specifically reach out and support people from disadvantaged backgrounds in order to inspire and guide the best talent into their organisation and beyond. Applications should tell us a story of what motivated the organisation to have social mobility as a core aim and why they've decided to develop or create a product or a service which helps this.

Assessors and judges really want to see, for this category, what was the situation before the application

created the programme, the product, etc., and how has the organisation helped socially disadvantaged individuals? Another really important question you should be asking yourself when you're writing these applications is how has the workforce benefited-, how has the work benefited your organisation, community, staff, and workforce? And finally, another question that is really important to bear in mind when making this application is how has your organisation benefited the participants and improved the employability in the people engaged in your programme? So, very much impact-based. So, a 2022 example includes, it's a Kent example, Nicky and I both hail from Kent in England, is Cook Trading Ltd from Sittingbourne for their raw talent programme, helps people into meaningful work after prison, homelessness, or other big personal challenges, such as addiction. I will hand back to Nicky to talk about the final category of the awards, Sustainable Development.

Nicola Bruno: Thanks. So, this is the one that we receive the most questions on, people feel that it's quite hard to really understand what this award is about and traditionally, we've seen quite low numbers of people applying. We've changed that. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales actually helped us to refocus this, he's done a special video message for us on this particular award category which you can access on Gov.UK. So, what we've done is we've moved away from awarding businesses who are just simply demonstrating the, sort of, the recycling reduce, reuse model of sustainability. So, what we're now looking, and this may seem like quite a big, aspirational goal, but we've drawn on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and we want businesses to have a look at those and see how they have embedded sustainability. What we're really looking for is leaders who have really embedded that at the heart of their business. So, you don't have to have a sustainable product, it could just be that you're a website building company and there are three employees, but you've really looked at your building, maybe water harvesting, you might have looked at the food and the refreshments that you supply, and we had a really good example of a winner who had just looked at that. They didn't have a sustainable product, but it was their whole ethos and method. So, again, this category, so we are going to recognise, as we've said, products, model or approaches, and services.

I thought it's probably best to just give you a few examples of those just to really illustrate that. So, a winner from Northern Ireland was ATG Services, waste management and environmental consultants. I've already mentioned Willmott Dixon, so just to draw on that example, so they are the UK's only carbon-neutral construction company. All their offices are powered by 100% clean, renewable energy, and from 2018 so too are all of their construction sites. They also invest in numerous employee schemes aimed at the health and wellbeing of employees and also in staff development and personal training fund for employees. So, what, kind of, what does a service look like? Well, a business in England is called Liftshare, so they are a service provider and they enable individuals to reduce their carbon footprint by matching those travelling to the same areas together and, finally, a product, it's called in Incognito and it's a range of highly effective insect repellents which also combines sunscreen, moisturisers into a sugarcane tube. It has the lowest environmental footprint possible in terms of the formulation, the production, packaging, and the distribution, 100% natural, biodegradable, and organic ingredients that do not pollute local ground water, unlike conventional insecticides. So, there's a real range of businesses there and what we would urge you to do, if you're a serious contender for this category is have a look at the Queen's Award magazines that are here and the Queen's Award press book, there's lots of examples in there at which you can have a look to inspire you on that side.

So, how to apply. Go to Gov.UK, and you can Google, you can search Queen's Awards for Enterprise, and as we've said here, it's free, all applications must be made online, you can apply for more than one category, the closing date this year is 6th September and we realise, though, that many people have been affected by lots of different things that have made it quite difficult for you to operate successfully, including the pandemic. So, during these uncertain times, it's really important that we still recognise the best UK businesses. So, we've made some positive amendments to the process. So, firstly, Promoting Opportunity category criteria remains the same except for the ones that we've just set out with Promoting Opportunity which is that we're not, we're no longer accepting applications for people whose sole purpose is social mobility because this is an enterprise award, it has to be linked back to enterprise. There are many other different avenues in which charities who do social mobility can be recognised.

So, on International Trade, you can now manually input your financial years. So, we know that some people have seen a real boom during COVID, we had one winner who manufactured recording studio equipment and lots of the famous artists in the US contacted him during COVID and he was shipping out huge amounts of this equipment. So, he's obviously seen a real boom, however many of you may have been affected negatively. So, you don't have to give us those figures during those difficult and challenging years, you can simply manually input the years that you want to portray. We're not asking you to wind back, sort of, five years, but just certainly up until you were affected by, particularly COVID for example. So, again, ring the helpline for help on this but you can submit. So, you might look at your figures for international trade and you might decide to give us the picture over three years instead of over six years, and for Innovation, you might decide to opt for a two-year commercial figures rather than five years. We have given greater discretion to our judges and to assessors when we evaluate commercial success. We are aware that each sector was affected quite differently, so there's no sort of hard and fast rule that we're applying, it's very much we will understand the nuances of each sector, and we're not comparing an application against another. That's really important. We're assessing you on the merit of your business achievement, and I'm just going to hand over to Will to close.

Will Arndt: Amazing, so, I'm here to finish us up. So, these are our contact details here. So, you can email our shared mailbox, queensawardsoffice@bais.gov.uk, you can call us on the helpline. Dennis normally heads that up but you can speak to any one of the five of us, generally, we all have access to it. Dennis is amazingly helpful, though, I will shout him out every chance I get because he really does take the time to really give you the customer service that you deserve and really help out. Please follow us on social media, so we've got our Twitter there, we've got a LinkedIn, we've got an Instagram, we have blogs, this can all be found by going through the .go.uk website, and another thing I will say as well just before we finish it out, if you would like a little bit more of information or contact details from us, there are a couple of leaflets at the back and there's also a Queen's Award magazine from last year which will give you an example of all of the winners from last year and sort of what types of business there are, which might be slightly inspirational and may help you think, 'Oh, yes, our business fits into that sort of category,' but thank you so much for having us, thank you for listening to us for so long and, yes, thank you.

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