Sole ambition: How Vivobarefoot boosted global sales through government-backed finance

26.3.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

UK Export Finance supports footwear pioneer to grow exports across five continents.

- Footwear company Vivobarefoot has grown its sales by 85% over 4 years from £49m to £91m thanks to UKEF's backing
- Growth fuelled by over £16 million in government-backed finance between 2022 and 2025
- The company supports over 120 jobs across Bristol and London

Vivobarefoot, a British pioneer in sustainable footwear, has doubled its annual turnover from £49 million to £100 million in just four years, supported by over £16 million in loans issued by HSBC UK and backed by UK Export Finance (UKEF), the government's export credit agency.

Founded by cousins Galahad and Asher Clark, seventh-generation cobblers from Somerset, Vivobarefoot began in 2012 with a mission to create the world's most sustainable and innovative footwear. Their patented sole designs, engineered to protect the foot while enabling natural movement, quickly established the brand as a leader in minimalist footwear.

Soon after launch, the business attracted a diverse international clientele with shipments and deliveries reaching all five continents, including the US, Europe, Australia, Japan, and South Africa. However, as overseas orders grew, so did pressure on working capital, a common challenge for fast-growing exporters and SMEs.

In 2022, HSBC UK issued Vivobarefoot a £3.8 million loan supported by UKEF's General Export Facility (GEF), a financial guarantee tailored to unlock working capital for growing UK exporters. HSBC UK then provided two further GEF-guaranteed loans of £5.7 million in 2024 and £6.7 million in 2025, bringing the total amount of government-backed finance to over £16 million.

With this financial backing, Vivobarefoot was able to capitalise on rising international demand, achieving 85% sales growth within four years of first receiving a UKEF-backed loan. With this growth, Vivobarefoot has continued to invest in innovation, sustainability and waste reduction, while also supporting over 120 jobs across Bristol and London.

Colin Hawes, Export Finance Manager for London City & East at UKEF, said:

> We're proud to support pioneering UK firms like Vivobarefoot. By unlocking working capital through our General Export Facility, UKEF has helped Vivobarefoot sustain jobs and long-term growth, while achieving new milestones in innovation and sustainability – they're a brilliant example of British ingenuity thriving on the world stage.

John Collins, Chief Financial Officer at Vivobarefoot, said:

> Vivobarefoot currently exports all over the world and we are a very working-capital intensive business, so UK Export Finance gave us the opportunity to take advantage of the growth opportunities that we saw overseas.
>
> I would say to any companies that think they could avail of UK Export Finance to get on it and to get on it fast. It allows you to completely focus on the commercial opportunity.

Imelda Vyshka, Relationship Director at HSBC UK, said:

> At HSBC UK, we're committed to supporting high-growth businesses as they scale both domestically and internationally.
>
> Through a relationship-led approach, we help clients find solutions such as timely working capital with the additional peace of mind provided by government-backing.

Vivobarefoot's growth story reflects UKEF's broader mission to ensure no viable UK export fails for lack of finance or insurance, and the government's overall commitment to backing British SMEs in seizing global opportunities.

This announcement follows the landmark £11 billion SME lending commitment made by the UK's five leading banks with UKEF's support, with HSBC UK committing total lending up to £3 billion to support working capital financing for UK exporters.

UKEF is backing small businesses, making it easier than ever for them to access finance through our digital services, quicker response times and targeted support, helping them to harness the power of international markets. Over the last financial year, UKEF have provided a record £14.5 billion in new financing, helping over 667 UK companies to export and grow, supporting up to 70,000 jobs.

UKEF's General Export Facility is a government-backed guarantee scheme designed to help SMEs access trade finance from banks worth up to £25 million. It enables businesses to take on new export orders and to grow their exports with repayment terms of up to five years.

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/sole-ambition-how-vivobarefoot-boosted-global-sales-through-government-backed-finance