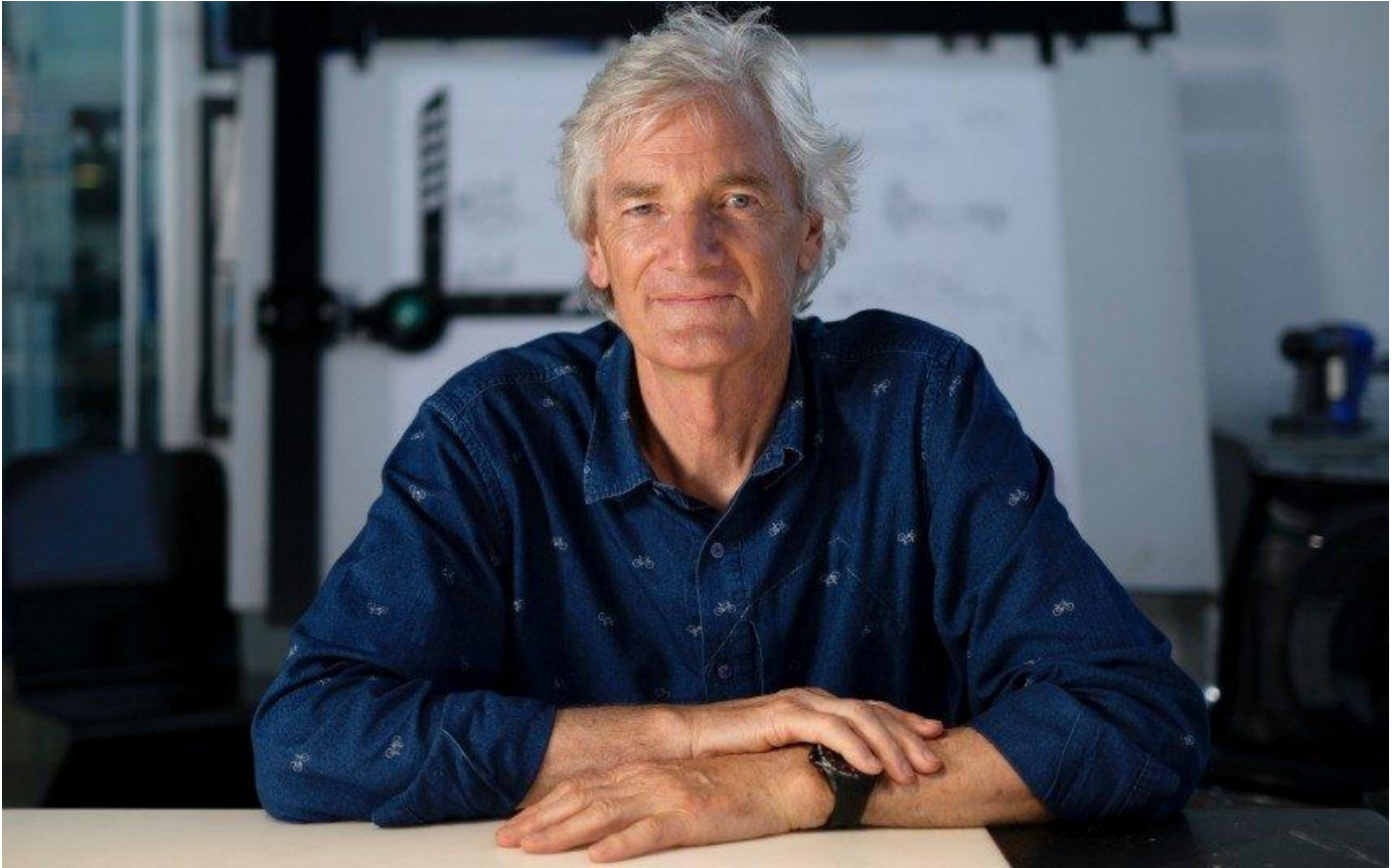


The Telegraph

Sir James Dyson: 'So if we leave the EU no one will trade with us? Cobblers...'



Sir James Dyson: 'We're not allowed to employ immigrants unless they're from the EU' CREDIT: CHRISTOPHER PLEDGER FOR THE TELEGRAPH

By [Allison Pearson](#)

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In a top-secret, padded room at the [Dyson](#) research and development facility in Wiltshire, there are several microphone stands at different heights. They could be waiting for the Jackson Five to show up and sing Rockin' Robin.

But, no: this is a semi-anechoic chamber where new products are tested. It was here that engineers refined the tiny motor that lives inside the handle of [Dyson's new Supersonic hair dryer](#), launched in Selfridges this week.

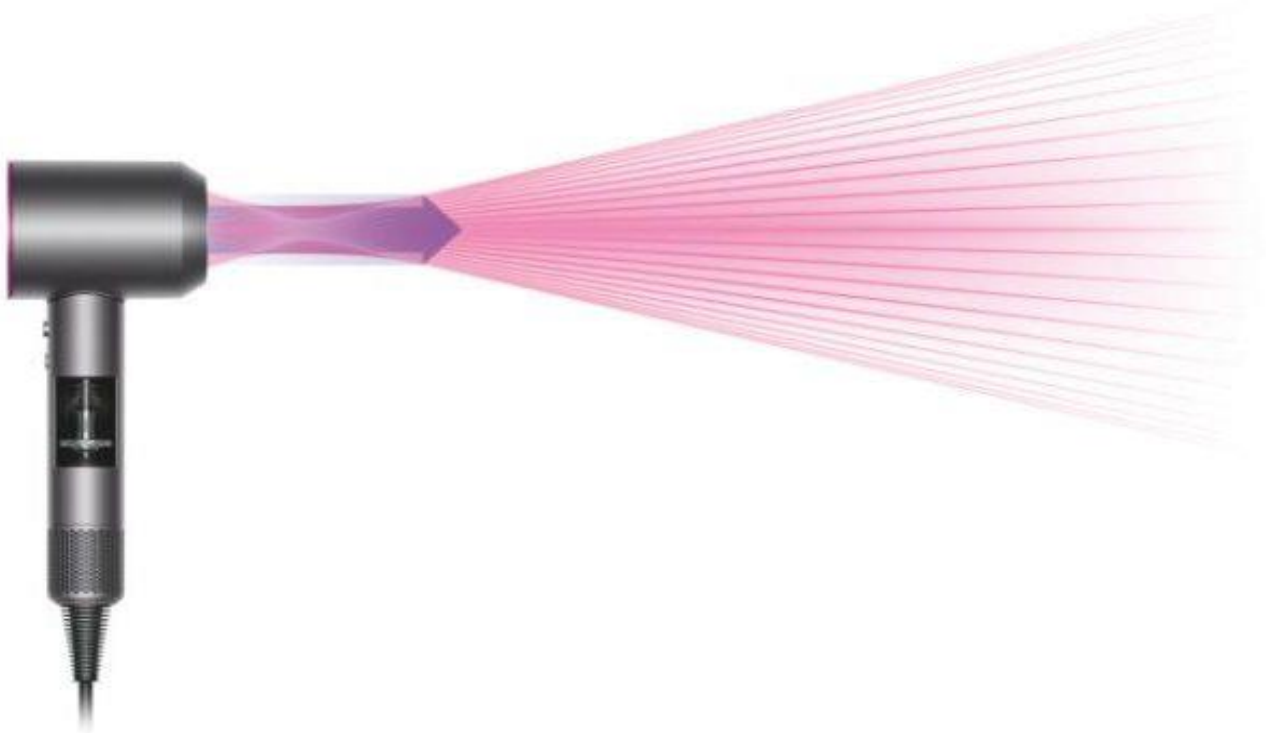
The motor impeller was making what its inventor calls "a dreadful racket" until they figured out that if you put 13 blades on it instead of the usual 11, one tone in the motor would be pushed above the audible range for humans. Basically, what I hold in my hand is the first blow-drying tool that doesn't make your arm ache until it's about to drop off and can only be heard by Labradors.

It took 103 engineers, four years and £71 million to produce and I want one right this minute, even though it [retails at a hair-raising £299](#). Unfortunately, letting one drop accidentally into my bag is not an option as we're in a high-security zone. I am asked to

initial a statement that I will not disclose anything I have seen. That's easy. I don't understand anything I've seen, but am utterly in awe. Three-dimensional shapes emerge from chalky sarcophaguses, drawn in thin air by lasers. It feels a bit like science, and a lot like magic.

Merlin himself, white of hair and puckish of countenance, with exceptionally fine blue eyes, is to be found in his large, glass office on the first floor. Propped against the walls are things that were once called Hoovers, but which future generations will know as Dysons.

It's quite something to become a noun; few men manage it. If anyone deserves it, it's Sir James Dyson, Order of Merit, Fellow of the Royal Society, Knight Bachelor, husband of Deirdre (since 1968), father of three, grandfather of six and – oh, yes, I nearly forgot – net worth of £3.2billion. Come on, he can spare one hairdryer, can't he?



Dyson's Supersonic hairdryer

The glorious campus we can see through the windows, Californian in its scale and vibe, was built on Dyson's ability to turn work-horse household devices into thoroughbred objects of desire. He invented the iconic Dual Cyclone Bagless Vacuum Cleaner because he got fed up with the family Hoover losing suction when it filled up with dust.

Things that don't work properly really bug him, which is why we are here to talk about the European Union. After much thought, [Dyson is coming out passionately for Brexit](#). In fact, he has worked out that, should we vote to leave in 12 days' time, we could be much better off, both in spirit and in wallet.

"When the Remain campaign tells us no one will trade with us if we leave the EU, sorry, it's absolute cobbles. Our trade imbalance with Europe is running at nine billion a month and rising. If this trend continues, that is £100bn a year."



Sir James Dyson: 'The EU would be committing commercial suicide to impose tariffs' CREDIT: CHRISTOPHER PLEDGER FOR THE TELEGRAPH

He jabs at a graph. “If, as David Cameron suggested, they imposed a tariff of 10 per cent on us, we will do the same in return. We buy more from Europe than they buy from us, so we would be the net beneficiary and based on these numbers it would bring £10bn into the UK annually. Added to our net EU contribution, it would make us around [£18.5bn better off each year if we left the EU](#),” he concludes with quiet triumph.

To a non-billionaire, that sounds quite a good deal. Enough to buy me a Supersonic Dyson hairdryer, perhaps?

“Anyway,” he hurries on, strangely not taking the hint, “the EU would be committing commercial suicide to impose a tariff because we import £100bn [of goods] and we only send £10bn there – I didn’t want to get too graphy, but here are a few graphs.” He’s not kidding. The man is nothing if not meticulous.

Dyson exports far more to the rest of the world (81 per cent) than Europe (19 per cent). “We’re very pleased with the European market – we’re number one in Germany and France – but it’s small and the real growing and exciting markets are outside Europe.”

He says the much-trumpeted single market isn’t really a single market at all. “They have different languages which, for an exporter, means that everything from the box to the instruction manual has to be in a different language. The plugs are different. The laws are different. It’s not a single market. The only communality is that there’s no tariff, but the pound going up against the euro is far more damaging than any tariff. If the pound rises, £100 million is quickly wiped off.”

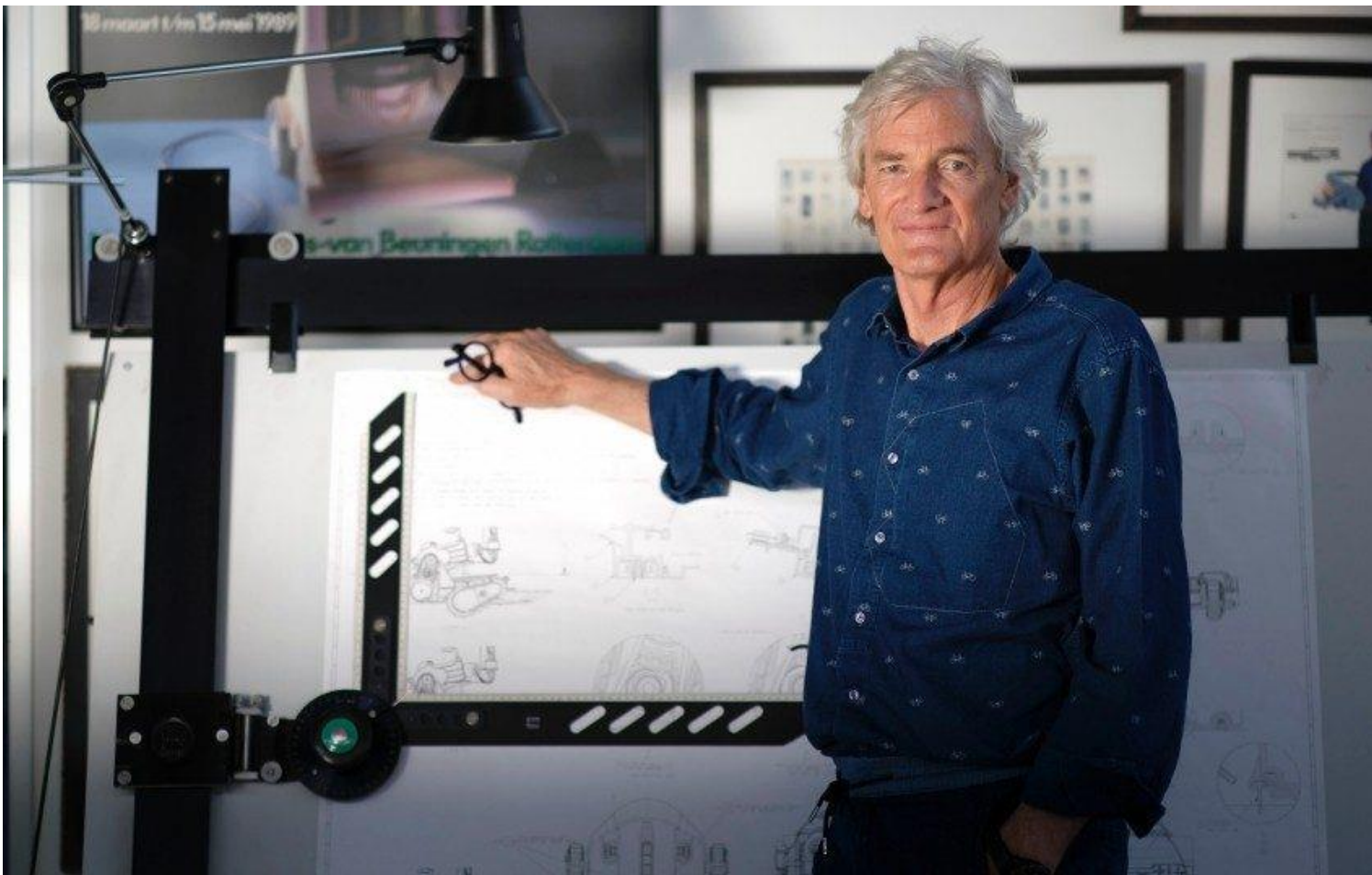
The problem with the EU’s free movement of people is that it doesn’t bring Dyson the brilliant boffins he needs. “We’re not allowed to employ them, unless they’re from the EU. At the moment, if we want to hire a foreign engineer, it takes four and a half months to go through the Home Office procedure. It’s crazy.”

He produces another staggering fact. “Sixty per cent of [engineering undergraduates at British universities](#) are from outside the EU, and 90 per cent of people doing research in science and engineering at British universities are from outside the EU. And we chuck them out!” He gives a trodden-puppy yelp.

So hiring a low-paid barista from Bratislava is no problem, but a prized physicist from Taiwan is a logistical nightmare. The Government claims that, if a non-EU citizen gets a job within two months of finishing their research, then they can stay here for two years. “The point is that it’s completely mad not to welcome them,” he says, “why on earth would you chuck out researchers with that valuable technology which they then take back to China or Singapore and use it against us?”

Softly spoken, Dyson’s Home Service Received Pronunciation tones become incensed when he talks about what he sees as our disloyalty to Commonwealth countries. “They fought for us in two world wars. So that particularly upsets me. We’re missing out on all those people who have helped us and with whom we have a great affinity, often a common language.

“Culturally, it’s all wrong. We’re not only excluding them from our country, we’re charging them import duty because we’re forced to by the EU. And the food’s cheaper, too.”



Sir James Dyson: 'We will create more wealth and more jobs by being outside the EU than we will within it and we will be in control of our destiny' CREDIT: CHRISTOPHER PLEDGER FOR THE TELEGRAPH

His views on Brussels have been shaped by bitter experience. Dyson sits on several European committees. “And we’ve never once during 25 years ever got any clause or measure that we wanted into a European directive. Never once have we been able to block the slightest thing.”

Ah, so it's a bit like the [Eurovision Song Contest – Royaume-Uni, nul points?](#)

"If only!" He laughs. "At least they have voting at Eurovision. These sessions are dominated by very large companies who agree on their approach before the meeting and so vote together as a bloc. And that's why we never get anywhere. We think that's anti-competitive practice and we would love to prove it but..." he gives a helpless shrug.

Years ago, when a practically penniless James was tugging his first vacuum cleaner round Europe, he came up against what he brilliantly calls "vossn't-invented-here syndrome". Nothing changes.

His wife calls him stubborn and he must be because several times he has joined battle against the multi-headed hydra at the European Court.

In one notorious case, Dyson argued that vacuum cleaners should be tested in real homes, just as consumers would use them, in line with what the EU claimed it wanted. His competitors, who make machines with paper bags which clog, insisted the tests should take place in laboratories with brand new bags and filters. And no dust. Guess who won?



Dyson's new supersonic hairdryer

“The court said there isn’t a test for home use, which is a complete...” he searches for a kinder word, “...untruth. So it’s a politically motivated court of justice. Politically motivated to protect vested interests. I know what they’re like. I know how we have [absolutely no control of what goes on in the EU](#) and it’s starting to affect what we do here.”

Dyson’s slight hesitation in speaking out is that he thinks that David Cameron and George Osborne are good at their jobs and would like them to stay on after the referendum.



Sir James says he started the company because he was frustrated at existing technology

“It’s just that on this issue I think they’re fundamentally wrong. I don’t just mean from the business point of view, I mean from the point of view of sovereignty and our whole ability to govern ourselves. We will create more wealth and more jobs by being outside the EU than we will within it and we will be in control of our destiny. And control, I think, is the most important thing in life and business.”

He says [what he fears is staying in](#). “There is no status quo. Europe’s going to change. We all take risks, but they’re very calculated risks. The last thing I would ever want to do is to put myself in somebody else’s hands. So for me the risk is in putting ourselves in the

hands of Europe. Not just the other countries, but the Brussels bureaucrats. What I simply can't understand is why anyone would want to put themselves under their control."

The Brussels he describes sounds like Franz Kafka adapted by Monty Python. "Really, you wouldn't believe it."



The Supersonic design is in keeping with other Dyson products

Oh, I would if James Dyson told me. One of our greatest living Britons, his vision and his hopefulness are a huge asset to Brexit. After all, this is the inventor of a vacuum cleaner that made men fight their wives to do the hoovering. [The man's a bloody genius](#). Plus he's quite the nicest billionaire I've ever met.

Honestly, if Dyson designed a country, you would want to live in it because it would be beautiful and fun, and, above all, it would work.