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## Tinubu - Starmer Talks Anchor Ports Deal, Deepen UK -Nigeria Capital Dependence

- Financing Involves the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), the Federal Ministry of Finance, and United Kingdom Export Finance
- Targeting upgrades to critical maritime infrastructure

*The recent engagement between President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer reflects a critical moment in Nigeria's ongoing effort to address its infrastructure deficit through external partnerships. The £746 million ports rehabilitation deal extends beyond bilateral diplomacy, pointing to a deeper pattern in how the country finances large-scale projects. As Nigeria seeks to improve trade efficiency and reposition its maritime gateways, the agreement underscores both the urgency of reform and*

*the continued dependence on foreign capital, framing the key questions around sustainability, value capture, and long-term economic resilience, as Enam Obiosio examines...*

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu recently held bilateral talks with Keir Starmer, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, in London, culminating in a £746 million export finance agreement for the rehabilitation of Lagos Port Complex and Tin Can Island Port Complex.

The financing involves the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), the Federal Ministry of Finance, and United Kingdom Export Finance, targeting upgrades to critical maritime infrastructure.

President Tinubu stated that Nigeria is undergoing "very strong reform of the economy" and called for expanded trade relationships, while Starmer described the engagement as an opportunity "to take that to another level with the agreements... on exports."

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President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (left), with Keir Starmer, Prime Minister of the UK, during Nigerian President's recent visit to the UK.

**Duplo Licensing Deepens Tax Automation, Exposes Compliance Burden For Businesses**

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**Nigeria-UK Art Showcase Elevates Soft Power, Avoids Structural Creative Economy Issues**

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# Renewed Hope Plan Framework Reflects Ambition, Highlights Implementation, Financing Questions

By Kingsley Ani

The Honourable Minister of State for Budget and Economic Planning, Doris Uzoka-Anite, has recently convened a session with Directors of the Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning to advance work on the Renewed Hope National Development Plan (2026–2030).

Uzoka-Anite stated that the plan prioritises “a comprehensive and forward-looking framework” integrating agriculture, infrastructure, technology, climate resilience, and social welfare. She emphasised the need for “a credible baseline” and a blended financing model combining public and private capital.

The initiative is positioned as a continuation and refinement of existing national development frameworks aligned with the Federal Government’s \$1 trillion economy target.

## DECISION HIGHLIGHT

The federal government is developing a multi-sector national plan anchored on blended finance and data-driven baselines to support long-term economic expansion.

## DECISION MEMO

The Renewed Hope National Development Plan reflects continuity in Nigeria’s planning architecture, multi-sector integration, long-term horizon, and alignment with macroeconomic growth targets. However, its distinguishing claim lies in improved execution through better baselines and financing models.

Uzoka-Anite’s emphasis on a “credible baseline”



Dr. Doris Uzoka-Anite, Honourable Minister of State for Budget & Economic Planning

addresses a persistent weakness in Nigeria’s planning cycles. Previous development plans have often suffered from unreliable data, weak monitoring frameworks, and limited feedback loops. Establishing accurate baselines is therefore not a technical detail but a structural requirement for policy credibility.

The proposed blended financing model signals a shift away from exclusive reliance on public funding. Given fiscal constraints, including revenue volatility and debt pressures, the integration of private capital is necessary. However, this introduces a parallel challenge, aligning public policy objectives with private sector return expectations. Infrastructure and social investments often lack the immediate returns required to attract private investors without guarantees or subsidies.

The plan’s sectoral breadth, agriculture, infrastructure, technology, climate resilience, and social welfare, reflects ambition but also risks dilution. Multi-sector plans in Nigeria have historically struggled with prioritisation, leading to fragmented implementation and limited measurable outcomes. The inclusion of multiple sectors without clear sequencing may replicate this pattern.

The reference to “building on existing frameworks” suggests incremental reform rather than structural overhaul. This approach may preserve institutional continuity but does not inherently resolve entrenched issues such as policy inconsistency, bureaucratic inefficiency, and weak inter-agency coordination.

The \$1 trillion economy target functions as a strategic anchor but lacks immediate operational clarity. Achieving such scale requires sustained productivity growth, industrial expansion, and capital inflows over multiple cycles. The plan’s success will depend less on its design and more on its enforcement mechanisms, funding certainty, and governance discipline.

The core tension remains unchanged. Nigeria’s planning frameworks are typically robust at the conceptual level but constrained at the implementation stage. The Renewed Hope Plan attempts to address this through improved data and financing strategies, but execution capacity remains the decisive variable.

## DATA BOX

- Plan, Renewed Hope National Development Plan (2026–2030)
- Core sectors, agriculture, infrastructure, technology,

CONT. ON PG 7

# Tinubu - Starmer Talks Anchor Ports Deal, Deepen...

## CONT. FRM COVER

## DECISION HIGHLIGHT

Nigeria is leveraging export credit financing from the United Kingdom to modernise port infrastructure, reinforcing a model where external capital underwrites domestic infrastructure gaps.

## DECISION MEMO

The £746 million ports deal reflects a familiar pattern in Nigeria’s infrastructure financing, external capital as a substitute for domestic fiscal capacity. While the transaction addresses an urgent need, port inefficiency remains one of Nigeria’s most binding trade constraints, it also reinforces structural dependence on foreign-backed financing mechanisms.

President Tinubu’s framing of economic reform and expanded trade partnerships signals intent, but the reliance on United Kingdom Export Finance indicates limited internal capacity to fund large-scale infrastructure independently. Export credit structures are not neutral, they often tie financing to foreign contractors, equipment, and services, potentially limiting domestic value capture.

Starmer’s emphasis on scaling export agreements reflects the United Kingdom’s strategic positioning, facilitating capital deployment that supports both Nigerian infrastructure and British commercial interests. This dual objective is typical of export finance arrangements, where development outcomes and national economic interests are intertwined.

The inclusion of the NPA and Federal Ministry of Finance suggests institutional alignment, but execution risk remains significant. Nigeria’s port system has historically suffered from congestion, inefficiency, and governance bottlenecks. Infrastructure upgrades alone do not resolve operational inefficiencies, regulatory fragmentation, or logistics chain disruptions.

The assertion of Honourable Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Mr. Adegboyega Oyetola, that the project will strengthen Nigeria’s position as a maritime hub is directionally correct, but contingent on complementary reforms in customs processes, inland transport connectivity, and port governance. Without these, physical upgrades risk being absorbed into an inefficient system.

Tinubu’s linkage of economic challenges to broader issues such as climate-driven conflict introduces a wider macro context, but does not materially alter the financing structure of the deal. The core issue remains, Nigeria is importing capital to fix infrastructure that underpins its trade competitiveness.

## DATA BOX

- Financing size, £746 million
- Infrastructure targets, Lagos Port Complex, Tin Can Island Port Complex
- Financing source, United Kingdom Export Finance
- Nigerian institutions involved, Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), Federal Ministry of Finance
- Strategic objective, port modernisation and trade facilitation

## WHO WINS / WHO LOSES

### Winners

United Kingdom exporters and contractors linked to the financing structure

Nigerian Ports Authority, with upgraded infrastructure capacity

Trade-dependent businesses benefiting from potential efficiency gains

### Conditional winners

Nigerian economy, dependent on whether upgrades translate into reduced port congestion and lower trade costs

## Losers

Domestic contractors if project execution is externally dominated

Importers and exporters if structural inefficiencies persist despite upgrades

## POLICY SIGNALS

The deal signals continued reliance on bilateral export credit frameworks to finance infrastructure. It also reflects a policy preference for externally anchored partnerships over domestically financed capital projects.

There is limited evidence of a parallel strategy to strengthen internal revenue mobilisation for infrastructure funding.

## INVESTOR SIGNAL

Nigeria remains open to large-scale infrastructure investment, particularly through sovereign-backed and export credit structures. However, investor participation is still mediated through government-to-government frameworks rather than purely market-driven financing.

## RISK RADAR

Execution risk within historically inefficient port systems

Dependence on foreign financing structures with tied conditions

Limited domestic value capture from externally financed projects

Policy inconsistency affecting long-term infrastructure outcomes

Macroeconomic volatility impacting repayment and fiscal sustainability

The agreement advances infrastructure capacity, but also reinforces a structural reality. Nigeria is modernising critical assets through external capital, not internal financial strength.

# CBN Reform Narrative Signals Stability Gains, Faces Test Of Capital Conversion

By Johnson Emmanuel

The Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Mr. Olayemi Cardoso, has stated at the Africa Capital Forum in London that ongoing monetary and financial reforms have strengthened Nigeria's resilience to external shocks and improved investor confidence.

Cardoso disclosed that foreign investors accounted for about 28 percent of inflows into the banking sector recapitalisation programme, adding that reforms have "created stronger capacity to withstand shocks." Mr. Wale Edun, Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, said that government requires partners to provide "sticky equity capital" to sustain growth.

Jonny Baxter, British Deputy High Commissioner to Nigeria, emphasised that the next phase should convert "renewed investor interest into long-term sustainable investments," while Steve Gray of United Kingdom Export Finance noted that reforms are "providing transparency and building confidence."

## DECISION HIGHLIGHT

The CBN is shifting from stabilisation to capital mobilisation, positioning macroeconomic reforms as a platform to attract sustained foreign and domestic investment.

## DECISION MEMO

The reform narrative presented at the Africa Capital Forum reflects a transition from crisis management to investment positioning. The CBN is asserting that macroeconomic stabilisation, inflation moderation, foreign exchange reforms, and banking recapitalisation have collectively restored a baseline level of confidence.

Cardoso's claim that reforms have strengthened "capacity to withstand shocks" is supported by improvements in foreign reserves, exchange rate stability, and policy transparency. The reported 28 percent foreign participation in bank recapitalisation is a measurable signal of external confidence. However, this confidence remains conditional, it is early-stage capital, not yet long-duration commitment.

The distinction raised by Baxter is critical. Investor interest and capital deployment are not equivalent. Nigeria has historically attracted episodic inflows during reform cycles, but struggled to convert them into sustained investment pipelines. The challenge is not entry, it is retention.

Edun's emphasis on "sticky equity capital" reflects this constraint. Short-term portfolio flows and opportunistic capital cannot finance long-term growth. Nigeria requires patient capital, yet the domestic environment, regulatory uncertainty, currency volatility, and policy reversals, has historically discouraged such commitments.

Gray's observation that transparency is improving highlights one of the reform programme's core achievements. The unification of the foreign exchange market and the introduction of clearer policy frameworks have reduced opacity. However, transparency alone does not eliminate risk. It only makes risk more visible.

Cardoso's broader positioning of Nigeria as moving from stabilisation to capital mobilisation assumes that macroeconomic stability is sufficiently anchored. This assumption remains fragile. Inflation trends, exchange rate pressures, and fiscal constraints continue to present downside risks.

The digital finance agenda and payments system vision indicate forward-looking positioning, particularly in fintech and cross-border payments. Yet, these are secondary to the primary issue, whether



Mr. Olayemi Cardoso, Governor of CBN

the macroeconomic framework can sustain investor confidence beyond the initial reform cycle.

The presence of global institutions such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) reinforces external validation of Nigeria's reform trajectory. However, such validation is typically contingent on continuity. Reform credibility in Nigeria has historically been undermined by policy reversals across political cycles.

The central tension is clear. Nigeria has improved its investment narrative. It has not yet conclusively improved its investment certainty.

## DATA BOX

- Foreign participation in recapitalisation, 28 percent
- Foreign reserves, above \$50 billion
- Inflation trend, decline from 34 percent to 15 percent (reported)

cent (reported)

- Banks meeting recapitalisation requirements, 30+
- Forum theme, From Stabilisation to Capital Mobilisation

## WHO WINS / WHO LOSES

### Winners

- Central Bank of Nigeria, reinforcing credibility through reform signalling
- Foreign investors, accessing early-stage opportunities in a stabilising market
- Domestic banks, benefiting from recapitalisation

and improved confidence

Conditional winners

Nigerian economy, dependent on sustained capital inflows and reform continuity

### Losers

Short-term speculative capital if policy discipline reduces arbitrage opportunities

Domestic sectors unable to attract investment despite macro reforms

## POLICY SIGNALS

The reforms signal a shift toward transparency, policy coordination, and market-based mechanisms, particularly in foreign exchange management and banking regulation.

However, the emphasis on external capital mobilisation indicates continued reliance on foreign investment to drive growth.

## INVESTOR SIGNAL

Nigeria is repositioning as a reform-driven investment destination with improving macroeconomic fundamentals. Early indicators, including foreign participation in recapitalisation, suggest renewed interest.

However, investors are likely to remain cautious, prioritising policy consistency, currency stability, and long-term regulatory clarity before committing significant capital.

## RISK RADAR

Reform reversal risk across political cycles

Currency volatility affecting investor returns

Inflation persistence despite reported declines

Dependence on foreign capital for growth financing

Gap between investor interest and actual long-term capital deployment

The reform narrative has improved Nigeria's positioning. The unresolved issue is conversion, turning confidence into sustained, long-term investment.

**Nigeria has improved its investment narrative. It has not yet conclusively improved its investment certainty**

## Fix Power Now, Not Promises: Nigeria Cannot Run On Excuses

**W**e must be direct, because the situation demands it. Nigeria's power sector is not merely underperforming, it is failing in ways that are now economically dangerous and socially unsustainable. The federal government must move beyond assurances and urgently fix the structural dysfunction that keeps millions of Nigerians in darkness.

The latest explanation, gas supply constraints, is not new. It is a recurring excuse dressed as a fresh development. When power generation drops below 4,000 megawatts in a country of over 200 million people, we are not dealing with a temporary setback. We are confronting a systemic breakdown.

The Honourable Minister of Power, Adebayo Adedun, says "concrete measures" are being implemented and that Nigerians will "soon witness the full benefits." We have heard this language before. We must ask, how soon is soon? And why do these assurances consistently arrive after the system has already deteriorated?

We cannot ignore the numbers. Thermal plants require approximately 1,629.75 million standard cubic feet of gas per day to function optimally. What they receive is less than half of that. At about 692 million cubic feet per day, the deficit is not marginal, it is crippling. This is not a technical fluctuation. It is a supply failure tied directly to unresolved debts, estimated at N3.3 trillion, owed to gas suppliers.

This is where the problem becomes inexcusable.

A power system dependent on gas cannot function if its suppliers are unpaid. We cannot expect continuity of supply in the absence of financial discipline. The federal government cannot continue to manage a sector where obligations are ignored while output is expected. That model has collapsed, and it is collapsing in real time.

We must also reject the framing of this crisis as a transitional inconvenience. Nigerians are being asked, once again, to exercise patience. But patience is not a policy. It is not a solution. It does not power homes, sustain businesses, or protect livelihoods.

Across the country, households are forced to rely on generators at increasingly unsustainable fuel costs. Businesses are absorbing energy expenses that erode margins and reduce competitiveness. Small enterprises are shutting down. Productivity is declining. The broader economy is paying the price for a power system that cannot deliver.

We must state this clearly: Nigeria cannot achieve economic growth, industrial expansion, or digital transformation on an unreliable power foundation. It is not possible. Every sector, manufacturing, technology, services, depends on consistent electricity. Without it, all other reforms are undermined. The federal government must act with urgency on three fronts.

First, the financial impasse in the power value chain must be resolved immediately. The debt

owed to gas suppliers is not just a liability, it is the central trigger of the current crisis. Without clearing or restructuring these obligations, supply will remain unstable.

Second, gas-to-power coordination must be treated as a national priority. Power generation cannot be held hostage by fragmented agreements and weak enforcement. There must be a clear, enforceable framework that guarantees supply to generation companies.

Third, infrastructure protection and operational efficiency must be enforced rigorously. It is not enough to classify assets as critical national infrastructure. That classification must translate into real protection, accountability, and uninterrupted operations.

We acknowledge that reforms are underway. We acknowledge that structural changes take time. But we reject the normalisation of failure while reforms are being discussed. Nigerians are not asking for perfection. They are demanding reliability.

This is not a sector that can be fixed gradually while the economy absorbs continuous shocks. It requires decisive intervention, financial discipline, and execution at speed. We must be clear in our conclusion.

Nigeria's power problem is no longer a technical challenge. It is a governance test. And until it is treated as such, the cycle of promises, breakdowns, and renewed assurances will continue. The time for reassurance has passed. The time for resolution is now.

### EDITOR'S NOTES

## Why StakeBridge Exists

**N**igeria does not suffer from a lack of information. It suffers from a lack of clarity. Every reform cycle produces volumes of data, statements, and commentary, yet ordinary readers, investors, and decision-makers are often left asking the same questions, what actually changed, who gained, who lost, and what happens next.

StakeBridge Media exists to answer those questions without noise.

We are not economists writing for economists. We are journalists who believe that policy, markets, and corporate decisions should be explained in plain language, anchored in evidence, and framed around consequences. Our reporting begins where traditional coverage often stops, at the decision point.

That is why we practise Decision Memo Journalism.

Each story asks a simple set of questions. What decision was made. Why it mattered. Who benefited. Who bore the cost. What signal readers should watch next. This structure is not a style choice. It is a discipline.

Nigeria's economy is too important for vague optimism or abstract critique. Citizens deserve reporting that respects facts without hiding behind jargon. Investors deserve context without hype. Policymakers deserve scrutiny without hostility.

StakeBridge is a bridge between data and meaning. We did not chase headlines. We traced outcomes. We showed how inflation slowed but food prices stayed high. How FX calmed but confidence remained conditional. How reforms stabilised the system but jobs lagged behind.

This is the work we will continue to do.

Not to predict the future, but to clarify the choices shaping it.

Enam Obiosio

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# Abia's Palm Oil Bet Reopens Old Playbook, Challenges Execution Capacity



Dr. Alex Otti, Governor of Abia State

By Olumide Johnson

**A**bia State Government is moving to formalise a \$200 million investment agreement with Presco Plc to develop a 14,000-hectare oil palm plantation and processing hub. The transaction, advised by Afrinvest (West Africa) Limited, is positioned as a revival of large-scale plantation agriculture anchored on public-private partnership structuring.

Dr. Alex Otti, Governor of Abia State, confirmed that an agreement in principle has been reached, with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) expected ahead of project flag-off. Olakanmi Rashed Sarumi, Chairman of Presco Plc, disclosed the firm's readiness to deploy capital into plantation development, processing infrastructure, and downstream integration.

## DECISION HIGHLIGHT

The state is prioritising land-backed agro-industrialisation, committing to facilitate land acquisition and provide security guarantees, while Presco Plc assumes capital deployment and operational execution. The scale, 14,000 hectares at entry, signals a phased expansion model rather than a one-off estate buildout.

## DECISION MEMO

This is less a greenfield agricultural investment than a policy attempt to reconstruct a dismantled regional comparative advantage. The explicit reference to Michael Iheonukara Okpara's farm settlement era is not rhetorical, it is a signal that Abia is reverting to plantation economics as an industrial policy tool.

However, the structure reveals a familiar Nigerian constraint. Land access and security remain sovereign risks, not operational variables. Otti's commitment to "facilitate the land acquisition... and provide the necessary security support" is

effectively the state underwriting the two most binding constraints to agricultural capital formation.

Sarumi frames the investment as catalytic, "a major oil palm processing hub... to serve the Southeast region," but this assumes functional midstream and downstream absorption capacity. Without parallel industrial offtake, refining, consumer goods, oleochemicals, the risk is upstream oversupply with limited value capture.

Afrinvest's advisory role suggests financial structuring discipline, yet the transaction still leans heavily on execution credibility rather than institutional guarantees. Dr. Ike Chioke, Group Managing Director of Afrinvest (West Africa) Limited, noted that the deal followed first-quarter 2025 engagements under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) framework, indicating some process integrity, but not necessarily delivery assurance.

The underlying thesis is straightforward, scale production, rebuild value chains, and internalise import substitution. The weakness is equally clear, Nigeria's historical inability to sustain plantation-scale agriculture beyond political cycles.

**The weakness is equally clear, Nigeria's historical inability to sustain plantation-scale agriculture beyond political cycles**

## DATA BOX

- Investment size, \$200 million
- Land allocation, 14,000 hectares (initial phase)
- Job creation, over 5,000 direct and indirect roles
- Projected GDP impact, multi-billion naira annually
- Locations identified, Bende, Arochukwu, Umuahia North

## WHO WINS / WHO LOSES

### Winners

Presco Plc secures land scale and regional processing dominance

Abia State Government gains fiscal upside and political capital

Local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and logistics operators benefit from value chain expansion

### Conditional winners

Host communities, dependent on compensation, inclusion, and land governance transparency

### Losers

Smallholder farmers, if land aggregation displaces informal holdings without integration models

Competing regional producers, if Presco achieves processing scale advantages

## POLICY SIGNALS

The state is signalling a shift from fragmented SME agriculture to coordinated agro-industrial clusters. Land is being repositioned as an economic asset class, not merely a social resource. The PPP route indicates a preference for private capital-led development, with government acting as enabler rather than operator.

There is also an implicit import substitution agenda, palm oil remains a strategic commodity where Nigeria underperforms relative to historical capacity.

## INVESTOR SIGNAL

The transaction indicates renewed subnational competition for agribusiness capital. Abia is attempting to differentiate through land availability, policy alignment, and historical narrative positioning.

For investors, the signal is cautiously positive, structured advisory involvement and defined scale improve bankability. However, the investment case remains exposed to execution risk in land titling, security, and infrastructure linkage.

## RISK RADAR

Land acquisition disputes remain the primary flashpoint, especially across multiple host communities

Security guarantees are policy statements, not enforceable instruments

Infrastructure gaps, roads, power, evacuation logistics, could erode processing efficiency

Commodity price volatility may affect long-term returns

Policy continuity risk if political leadership changes before project maturity

In narrow terms, the deal is attractive. In structural terms, it is a test of whether Nigeria can operationalise large-scale agricultural capital without reverting to the cycle of stalled ambition.

# Afreximbank Adjustment Fund Highlights AfCFTA Gains, Throws up Transition Costs

By Olumide Johnson

The African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) recently convened a stakeholder engagement in Lagos to position African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Adjustment Fund as a financing instrument supporting the implementation of the AfCFTA.

Dr. Jumoke Oduwole, Honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, chaired the session, while Kanayo Awani, Executive Vice President, Intra-African Trade and Export Development at the Afreximbank, emphasised the Fund's role in enabling intra-African trade and export development. Jean Louis Ekra, former President of Afreximbank, and Emmanuel Assiak, Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Fund for Export Development in Africa (FEDA), also participated in advancing the Fund's positioning among Nigerian institutional investors.

The Fund is designed to support countries and businesses facing short-term disruptions arising from trade liberalisation.

## DECISION HIGHLIGHT

The African Export-Import Bank is deploying the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund as a risk-mitigation mechanism to manage transition costs associated with continental trade integration.

## DECISION MEMO

The AfCFTA Adjustment Fund reflects an acknowledgement of a structural tension within trade liberalisation, long-term gains are accompanied by short-term disruptions. The Fund is positioned as a compensatory mechanism to absorb these shocks, particularly for governments and industries exposed to tariff losses and competitive pressures.

Awani's framing of the Fund as a tool for intra-African trade expansion aligns with Afreximbank's broader mandate. However, the underlying premise is corrective rather than purely developmental. The Fund exists because the transition to a single market imposes measurable costs that could otherwise slow or reverse policy adoption.

The scale of Afreximbank's commitment, \$1 billion in financing and \$10 million in grants, signals intent but also highlights proportional limitations. Relative to the size of Africa's trade and fiscal systems, the funding envelope is modest. This suggests that the Fund is catalytic rather than comprehensive, intended to unlock additional capital rather than fully offset adjustment costs.

The focus on institutional investors, particularly pension funds, introduces a strategic shift. By positioning the Fund as an asset class, Afreximbank is attempting to crowd in domestic capital into continental trade integration. This reduces reliance on external financing but introduces new constraints, pension funds require predictable returns and low

**By positioning the Fund as an asset class, Afreximbank is attempting to crowd in domestic capital into continental trade integration**



Dr. Jumoke Oduwole, Honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment

risk exposure, which may not align with early-stage adjustment interventions.

Ekra's involvement reinforces institutional continuity, but also reflects the longstanding challenge of translating policy frameworks into executable financial instruments. The AfCFTA itself has faced slow implementation due to regulatory misalignment, infrastructure gaps, and political hesitation. The Adjustment Fund is designed to address these frictions, but its effectiveness depends on uptake by both governments and private sector actors.

The identification of risks, tariff revenue losses, supply chain disruptions, and increased competition, is critical. These are not transitional anomalies but structural consequences of market integration. The Fund can mitigate but not eliminate them.

The broader implication is that AfCFTA implementation is moving from policy advocacy to financial engineering. The success of the single market will depend less on agreements and more on the availability of capital to manage transition costs and enable competitive adjustment.

## WHO WINS / WHO LOSES

### Winners

African Export-Import Bank, strengthening its role in continental trade finance

Institutional investors, gaining access to a new asset class

Businesses able to access adjustment financing

### Conditional winners

African economies, dependent on effective utilisation of the Fund

### Losers

Industries unable to adapt to increased competition

Governments reliant on tariff revenues without diversification

## POLICY SIGNALS

The initiative signals a shift toward financial mechanisms supporting trade integration, moving beyond policy frameworks to capital-backed implementation tools.

## INVESTOR SIGNAL

The AfCFTA Adjustment Fund introduces a new structured investment vehicle tied to continental

trade integration. Its viability depends on risk mitigation, governance transparency, and the ability to generate stable returns.

## RISK RADAR

Insufficient scale relative to continent-wide adjustment needs

Misalignment between investor return expectations and developmental objectives

Slow uptake by governments and private sector participants

Persistent structural barriers to trade integration

Dependence on additional capital mobilisation beyond initial commitments

The Fund addresses a recognised gap in trade integration. The constraint lies in scale and execution, whether catalytic capital can translate into systemic adjustment across African economies.

## DATA BOX

- Fund, AfCFTA Adjustment Fund
- Lead institution, African Export-Import Bank
- Initial financing commitment, \$1 billion
- Grant support, \$10 million
- Structure, joint venture with AfCFTA Secretariat
- Target users, governments, businesses, institutional investors
- Key risks addressed, tariff losses, competition, supply chain disruption

# AXA Mansard Revenue Growth Masks Profit Compression Amid Rising Cost Structure

By Jeremiah Obeche

**A**XA Mansard Insurance Plc has projected a profit after tax of N3.6 billion for the first half of 2026, with earnings per share of N0.40, alongside a targeted insurance revenue of N90.7 billion.

This compares to N6.7 billion profit recorded in the first half of 2025, despite expected revenue growth of 11.85 percent. The company indicated that health insurance, oil and gas, and fire segments will remain dominant contributors to revenue.

### DECISION HIGHLIGHT

AXA Mansard Insurance Plc is pursuing top-line growth while absorbing higher service, reinsurance, and operating costs, resulting in margin compression and reduced profitability.

### DECISION MEMO

The forecast presents a clear divergence between revenue expansion and profit contraction. AXA Mansard Insurance Plc is growing its premium base, but at a cost structure that is expanding faster than its earnings capacity.

The projected N90.7 billion insurance revenue suggests continued demand strength across key segments, particularly health insurance, which remains the largest contributor. However, the associated rise in insurance service expenses to N62.8 billion and reinsurance costs to N17.8 billion indicates that growth is being purchased at higher operating intensity.

The implication is margin pressure. The insurance service result is expected to rise modestly to N10.1 billion, a 10 percent increase, but this is insufficient to offset the broader cost escalation. Pretax profit is projected at N4.2 billion, significantly below the N7.7 billion recorded in the comparable period.

A key structural factor is investment income volatility. AXA Mansard Insurance Plc reported N7.002 billion in investment returns in the first half of 2025, down sharply from N26.7 billion in 2024. The forecast of N7.9 billion for 2026 suggests stabilisation but not recovery. This reduces the buffer traditionally provided by investment income to underwriting margins.

The broader financial profile shows a company transitioning from investment-driven profitability to core underwriting reliance, but without sufficient margin efficiency to sustain prior profit levels.

The balance sheet remains relatively strong, with total assets at N228.2 billion and retained earnings accounting for a majority of shareholder funds.



Market performance has also been positive, with a 67 percent share price return in 2025 and continued gains in 2026. However, equity market performance is forward-looking and may not yet reflect the emerging pressure on earnings.

The central issue is operational efficiency. Revenue growth without corresponding cost control reduces earnings quality and raises questions about pricing discipline, claims management, and reinsurance optimisation.

### DATA BOX

- H1 2026 projected revenue, N90.7 billion
- H1 2026 projected profit after tax, N3.6 billion
- H1 2025 profit after tax, N6.7 billion
- Insurance service expenses, N62.8 billion
- Reinsurance costs, N17.8 billion
- Operating expenses, N13.3 billion
- Insurance service result, N10.1 billion
- FY2025 premiums, N159.5 billion
- FY2025 claims paid, N79 billion
- Total assets, N228.2 billion
- Share price (March 2026), N15.20

### WHO WINS / WHO LOSES

#### Winners

- Policyholders, benefiting from expanded coverage and claims payouts
- Shareholders in the short term, supported by positive market performance

#### Conditional winners

- AXA Mansard Insurance Plc, dependent on its ability to convert revenue growth into sustainable margins

### Losers

- Profitability metrics, reflecting declining earnings despite revenue growth
- Investors focused on earnings quality rather than top-line expansion

### POLICY SIGNALS

The outlook reflects broader trends in Nigeria's insurance sector, increasing penetration and premium growth alongside rising claims and cost pressures. It also underscores the sector's dependence on investment income to stabilise profitability.

### INVESTOR SIGNAL

Revenue growth alone is no longer a sufficient indicator of performance. Investors must assess underwriting discipline, cost efficiency, and the stability of investment income streams.

AXA Mansard Insurance Plc remains a growth-oriented play, but with emerging margin risks that could affect valuation if sustained.

### RISK RADAR

- Sustained cost escalation eroding underwriting margins
- Volatility in investment income reducing earnings stability
- Rising claims ratios impacting profitability
- Potential mispricing of risk in pursuit of premium growth
- Market valuation risk if earnings decline persists

The forecast highlights a structural tension. AXA Mansard Insurance Plc is expanding its business, but not yet its profitability.

## Renewed Hope Plan Framework Reflects Ambition, Raises Execution ...

### CONT. FRM PG 2

climate resilience, social welfare

- Financing model, blended public and private capital
- Strategic target, \$1 trillion economy
- Institutional lead, Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning

### WHO WINS / WHO LOSES

#### Winners

- Private sector investors, potential access to structured development projects
- Government institutions, strengthened planning framework
- Development partners, alignment with multi-sector investment opportunities
- Conditional winners
- Nigerian economy, dependent on implementation

and funding execution

#### Losers

- Public sector credibility, if implementation gaps persist
- Projects lacking clear commercial viability under blended finance structures

### POLICY SIGNALS

The plan signals a shift toward data-driven planning and blended finance as core tools for national development. It also reflects continued reliance on long-term strategic frameworks to guide economic transformation.

### INVESTOR SIGNAL

Nigeria is positioning itself to attract private capital into development sectors through structured planning frameworks. However, investor participation will de-

pend on risk mitigation mechanisms, regulatory stability, and enforceable project pipelines.

### RISK RADAR

- Implementation risk due to institutional capacity constraints
- Overextension across multiple sectors without prioritisation
- Misalignment between public policy goals and private capital expectations
- Data reliability challenges affecting baseline credibility
- Funding gaps if private sector participation does not materialise

The plan reinforces Nigeria's development ambition. The constraint remains execution, converting structured frameworks into measurable economic outcomes.



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# Ovaltine Lagos Plant Signals Trade Deepening With Nigeria's Manufacturing Viability

By Kingsley Ani

**T**winings Ovaltine has commissioned a £24 million manufacturing facility in Lagos, its first production site in Africa, aimed at expanding output and exports across West Africa.

The announcement coincided with the state visit of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to the United Kingdom under the United Kingdom–Nigeria Enhanced Trade and Investment Partnership framework. Peter Kyle, Secretary of State for Business and Trade of the United Kingdom, recently stated that the partnership reflects “the power of enterprise, innovation, and education to transform lives.”

The facility, operated by Twinings Ovaltine Nigeria Limited, is projected to create over 100 direct jobs.

**DECISION HIGHLIGHT**

Twinings Ovaltine is localising production in Nigeria to capture regional demand, reduce supply chain costs, and leverage trade alignment between the United Kingdom and Nigeria.

**DECISION MEMO**

The Lagos facility is a signal of selective manufacturing confidence in Nigeria, but not necessarily a broad-based industrial shift. Foreign firms continue to enter the market where consumer demand is predictable and brand equity is already established.

The investment size, £24 million, is modest relative to large-scale industrial commitments, suggesting a calibrated entry strategy rather than a full manufacturing pivot. The objective is clear, proximity to market and export positioning within West Africa, rather than deep industrial integration.

Kyle's framing of mutual economic benefit under the United Kingdom–Nigeria Enhanced Trade and Investment Partnership reflects a diplomatic narrative of reciprocity. In practice, the asymmetry remains. United Kingdom firms are deploying

capital into Nigeria's consumer markets, while Nigerian firms' expansion into the United Kingdom is limited and sector-specific.

Tinubu's presence underscores the political dimension of the transaction. State visits often serve as signalling platforms for investment flows, but the sustainability of such flows depends on domestic conditions, power reliability, logistics efficiency, regulatory clarity, and currency stability. These remain persistent constraints within Nigeria's manufacturing environment.

The establishment of a local production facility does provide incremental value, reduced import dependence for finished goods, job creation, and potential export earnings. However, the scale of job creation, just over 100 roles, highlights a limitation. Capital-intensive manufacturing does

backward integration

**Losers**

Import-dependent distributors of finished beverage products

Domestic manufacturers unable to compete with global brand scale

**POLICY SIGNALS**

The investment signals continued reliance on foreign direct investment to drive manufacturing activity. It also reflects policy emphasis on bilateral trade frameworks as entry points for industrial capital.

However, there is limited evidence of a coordinated domestic industrial policy capable of scaling such investments into broader manufacturing



Peter Kyle, Secretary of State for Business and Trade of the United Kingdom

not necessarily translate into broad employment impact.

The deeper question is whether such investments can catalyse backward integration, local sourcing of inputs, supplier ecosystem development, or whether they remain enclave operations focused on final-stage processing and distribution.

**DATA BOX**

- Investment size, £24 million
- Location, Lagos
- Jobs created, 100+ direct roles
- Company, Twinings Ovaltine Nigeria Limited
- Trade framework, United Kingdom–Nigeria Enhanced Trade and Investment Partnership

**WHO WINS / WHO LOSES**

**Winners**

Twinings Ovaltine, gaining cost efficiency and regional market access

Nigerian consumers, with improved product availability and potential price stability

Government, benefiting from investment inflows and tax revenues

**Conditional winners**

Local suppliers, dependent on the extent of

ecosystems.

**INVESTOR SIGNAL**

Nigeria remains attractive for consumer-driven manufacturing, particularly where demand is established and export corridors exist.

However, investors are likely to adopt cautious, phased capital deployment strategies rather than large-scale upfront commitments, reflecting persistent operational risks.

**RISK RADAR**

Infrastructure constraints, particularly power and logistics, affecting production efficiency

Currency volatility impacting input costs and profit repatriation

Limited backward integration reducing local value capture

Regulatory and policy inconsistency affecting long-term planning

Concentration risk in consumer-facing sectors rather than diversified manufacturing

The facility reflects targeted confidence, not systemic transformation. Nigeria continues to attract manufacturing capital, but largely within controlled, low-exposure investment models.

# Nigeria Infrastructure Pitch Seeks Global Capital, Confronts Credibility Constraints

By Ayo Susan

Nigeria intensified efforts to attract global investment into its infrastructure sector at the Nigeria Infrastructure Investment Forum recently held at Standard Bank International Headquarters in London.

Mr. Umaru Kwairanga, Chairman of the Nigerian Exchange (NGX) Group, presented Nigeria as a “compelling investment case” anchored on its natural and human capital, while emphasising the country’s need for long-term infrastructure financing.

The engagement brought together global investors and Nigerian government representatives as part of broader capital mobilisation efforts.

## DECISION HIGHLIGHT

Nigeria is actively repositioning its infrastructure sector as an investable asset class, targeting long-term foreign capital to address structural financing gaps.

## DECISION MEMO

The London forum reflects a familiar pattern in Nigeria’s infrastructure strategy, external capital mobilisation as the primary pathway to closing domestic financing deficits. The framing of Nigeria as a “compelling investment case” aligns with longstanding narratives around population scale, resource endowment, and growth potential.

However, the challenge lies in conversion. Nigeria’s infrastructure gap is not due to lack of investor awareness, it is rooted in execution risk. Global investors are already familiar with the opportunity set. The constraint has historically been bankability, project structuring, regulatory clarity, and revenue assurance mechanisms.

Mr. Kwairanga’s emphasis on natural and human capital highlights foundational strengths, but these are not sufficient to secure infrastructure financing. Infrastructure investment is driven by predictable cash flows, enforceable contracts, and stable policy environments. Nigeria’s track record in these areas remains mixed.

The location of the forum in London underscores the continued reliance on offshore financial centres to intermediate capital flows into Nigeria. While this facilitates access to global investors, it also reinforces a structural dependence on external financing ecosystems rather than domestic capital market depth.

The focus on long-term investment is particularly significant. Infrastructure requires patient capital, yet Nigeria’s macroeconomic volatility, currency fluctuations, and policy inconsistencies have historically deterred such commitments. Investors may engage at a preliminary level, but sustained capital deployment depends on confidence in long-term stability.

The broader implication is that Nigeria is attempting to shift from a project-by-project funding approach to a more systemic investment narrative. However, without parallel improvements in project preparation, risk mitigation frameworks, and institutional capacity, the narrative may not translate into actual capital inflows.

The forum therefore represents an effort to repackage an existing opportunity, rather than fundamentally alter the conditions that determine investment outcomes.

## DATA BOX

- Event, Nigeria Infrastructure Investment Forum
- Location, Standard Bank International Headquarters, London
- Investment focus, infrastructure financing

## POLICY SIGNALS

The initiative signals continued prioritisation of foreign direct investment and external capital as primary drivers of infrastructure development. It



Mr. Umaru Kwairanga, Chairman of the Nigerian Exchange (NGX) Group

- Target capital type, long-term global investment
- Key institution represented, Nigerian Exchange Group

## WHO WINS / WHO LOSES

### Winners

Global investors, accessing a large infrastructure opportunity pipeline

Nigerian Exchange Group, positioning itself within capital mobilisation efforts

Government, strengthening its investment narrative

### Conditional winners

Nigeria’s economy, dependent on actual capital inflows and project execution

### Losers

Domestic infrastructure development, if investment remains at the engagement stage

Local capital markets, if external financing continues to dominate

also reflects limited reliance on domestic financing mechanisms.

## INVESTOR SIGNAL

Nigeria remains a high-potential infrastructure market, but investment decisions will hinge on project bankability, regulatory consistency, and currency risk management rather than macro-level narratives.

## RISK RADAR

Execution risk in project delivery and contract enforcement

Currency volatility affecting long-term returns

Regulatory inconsistency and policy reversals

Dependence on foreign capital for infrastructure financing

Gap between investment promotion and actual project bankability

Nigeria’s infrastructure pitch remains compelling in theory. The constraint is unchanged, translating investor interest into executable, bankable projects.

# NCDMB Training Targets Skills Gap, Raises Scale, Retention Concerns



Mr. Olayemi Familusi, Managing Director of MJD Oilfield Services Limited (left), with some stakeholders

By Ayo Susan

The Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), in partnership with MJD Oilfield Services Limited and Renaissance Africa Energy Company Limited, has launched a 12-month Nigerian Content Human Capital Development training programme focused on pipeline engineering, corrosion control, and integrity monitoring.

Managing Director of MJD Oilfield Services Limited, Olayemi Familusi, stated that the initiative builds on industry progress, noting “the Nigerian oil and gas industry has undergone remarkable development” with support from the Board. Tarilate Bribena-Teide, representing Felix Omatsola Ogbe, described the programme as a “strategic investment in Nigeria’s energy security.”

The programme targets 33 Nigerian graduates with a mix of theoretical and hands-on training.

## DECISION HIGHLIGHT

The NCDMB is reinforcing local content policy through targeted technical training, prioritising specialised pipeline integrity skills critical to national energy infrastructure.

## DECISION MEMO

The programme reflects a familiar policy direction, building domestic capacity to reduce dependence on foreign technical expertise in the oil and gas sector. The focus on pipeline pigging, corrosion control, and integrity monitoring is technically relevant, particularly given the scale of Nigeria’s pipeline network and recurring issues of infrastructure failure and inefficiency.

However, the intervention raises a scale mismatch. Training 33 participants in a system that requires thousands of skilled professionals suggests a pilot or symbolic approach rather than a system-wide solution. The oil and gas sector’s technical deficit is structural, not marginal, and cannot be materially addressed through small-cohort

programmes alone.

Familusi’s assertion that the industry has seen “remarkable development” under the NCDMB is partially valid in terms of local participation. Yet, technical depth remains uneven, with critical competencies still outsourced in complex operations.

Bribena-Teide’s emphasis on discipline, including a 99.9 percent attendance requirement, signals an attempt to enforce programme rigour. While this strengthens training quality, it does not address the larger issue of post-training absorption. Nigeria’s recurring challenge is not only skill acquisition but retention and deployment within a stable industrial ecosystem.

The reference to strategic assets such as the Ajaokuta–Kaduna–Kano Gas Pipeline underscores the relevance of the training. Pipeline integrity is central to energy security, yet the sector continues to face disruptions from vandalism, maintenance gaps, and operational inefficiencies. Technical training alone cannot resolve these without parallel improvements in governance, security, and infrastructure management.

The inclusion of stipends, certifications, and international exposure indicates a well-structured programme design. However, it also raises a familiar risk, trained personnel may exit to more stable or higher-paying markets, particularly if domestic conditions do not match their upgraded skill levels.

The involvement of DORET Limited as a technical partner and alignment with the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act suggests regulatory coherence. The constraint remains execution at scale and continuity across training cycles.

## DATA BOX

- Programme duration, 12 months
- Participants, 33 graduates
- Core focus areas, pipeline pigging, corrosion control, integrity monitoring
- Key infrastructure reference, 614-kilometre Ajaokuta–Kaduna–Kano Gas Pipeline
- Training structure, theoretical and practical modules

- Support package, stipends, allowances, certifications, insurance

## WHO WINS / WHO LOSES

### Winners

Selected participants gaining specialised technical skills and certifications  
MJD Oilfield Services Limited and partners, strengthening local workforce pipeline  
Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board, advancing local content mandate

### Conditional winners

Nigeria’s energy sector, dependent on effective deployment of trained personnel

### Losers

Unselected graduates in a constrained training pipeline  
Industry segments requiring immediate large-scale technical capacity

## POLICY SIGNALS

The initiative reinforces commitment to local content development through human capital investment. It also signals continued reliance on targeted training programmes rather than comprehensive sector-wide workforce strategies.

## INVESTOR SIGNAL

There is ongoing effort to deepen technical capacity within Nigeria’s oil and gas sector, which may reduce long-term reliance on foreign expertise. However, current interventions remain incremental and may not yet materially alter operational risk profiles.

## RISK RADAR

Scale limitation relative to industry-wide skill demand

Post-training attrition due to migration or limited domestic opportunities

Mismatch between training output and industry absorption capacity

Persistent infrastructure and security challenges affecting pipeline operations

Dependence on programme-based interventions rather than systemic workforce planning

The programme addresses a real technical gap but at insufficient scale. Capacity is being built, but not yet at the level required to transform the system.

**The programme reflects a familiar policy direction, building domestic capacity to reduce dependence on foreign technical expertise in the oil and gas sector**



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# Duplo Licensing Deepens Tax Automation, Exposes Compliance Burden For Businesses

By Kingsley Ani

**D**uplo, a Nigerian business-to-business (B-to-B) payments platform, has recently secured Systems Integrator and Access Point Provider licences from the Nigeria Revenue Service (NRS), enabling it to generate, transmit, and reconcile tax-compliant electronic invoices within a single system.

Yele Oyekola, Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder of Duplo, stated that the licences create “the single operational layer that finally connects payments, invoicing, and tax logic.”

The development aligns with the NRS’s phased rollout of a mandatory electronic invoicing and electronic fiscal system, extending compliance requirements from large taxpayers to medium-sized firms from July 2026.

**DECISION HIGHLIGHT**

Duplo is positioning itself as integrated tax and payment infrastructure within Nigeria’s mandatory e-invoicing regime, embedding compliance into transaction workflows.

**DECISION MEMO**

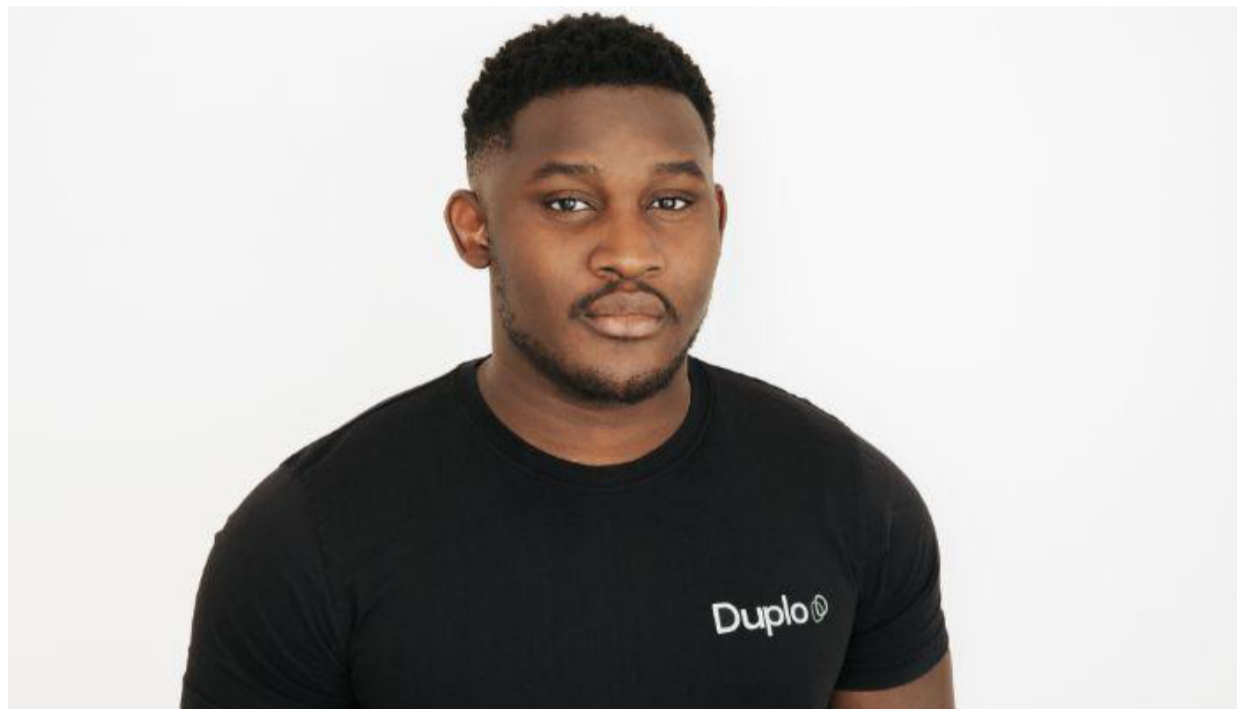
Duplo’s dual licensing represents a structural shift in how compliance is enforced and monetised within Nigeria’s financial system. Rather than treating tax reporting as a post-transaction obligation, the platform embeds compliance directly into payment execution.

Oyekola’s framing of a “single operational layer” reflects an emerging model in financial infrastructure, vertical integration across invoicing, payments, and tax reporting. This reduces friction for businesses but also centralises operational dependency within a limited set of platforms.

The broader context is regulatory tightening. The NRS’s electronic invoicing framework moves tax administration from periodic reporting to real-time validation. This fundamentally alters compliance dynamics. Businesses are no longer able to reconcile discrepancies retrospectively; transactions must be compliant at the point of execution.

The implications for businesses are significant. While automation reduces manual processes, it

**The NRS’s electronic invoicing framework moves tax administration from periodic reporting to real-time validation**



Mr. Yele Oyekola, Chief Executive Officer/Co-Founder of Duplo

increases exposure to system-level compliance risks. Errors in integration, system downtime, or misclassification of transactions can directly affect tax liabilities, input value added tax claims, and operational continuity.

The penalty structure reinforces this shift. Administrative fines, daily penalties, and a 100 percent surcharge on unreported transactions create a high-cost environment for non-compliance. This effectively converts compliance from a regulatory requirement into an operational risk variable.

Duplo’s positioning within this environment is strategic. By combining invoicing, tax transmission, and payment settlement, the company moves from being a payments facilitator to a compliance infrastructure provider. This increases its relevance but also places it within a more tightly regulated space.

Competition remains material. Other providers, including Moniepoint, Flutterwave, and enterprise platforms, are building adjacent capabilities. However, most operate in fragmented layers. Duplo’s differentiation lies in integration, though this advantage is replicable if regulatory frameworks remain open to multiple providers.

The expansion of the accredited ecosystem, including firms such as e-Tranzact, Bluechip Technologies, and Arca Payments Company, suggests that the NRS is pursuing a distributed compliance architecture rather than a single-provider model. This reduces concentration risk but increases competitive pressure.

The underlying shift is clear. Nigeria’s tax system is transitioning toward digitised, real-time compliance. Platforms like Duplo are not creating this change, they are intermediating it.

**DATA BOX**

- Licences obtained, Systems Integrator and Access Point Provider
- Regulatory authority, Nigeria Revenue Service
- E-invoicing rollout, large taxpayers completed, medium taxpayers from July 2026
- Medium taxpayer threshold, N1 billion to N5 billion turnover
- Penalties, N200,000 fine, N10,000 daily penalty, 100 percent surcharge on unreported trans-

- actions
- Platform scope, invoicing, tax transmission, payment settlement

**WHO WINS / WHO LOSES**

**Winners**

- Nigeria Revenue Service, improved tax visibility and compliance enforcement
- Duplo, expanded role as integrated financial and compliance infrastructure
- Digitally compliant businesses, benefiting from automated workflows

**Conditional winners**

- Medium-sized enterprises, dependent on successful system integration

**Losers**

- Businesses unable to digitise operations in line with new requirements
- Operators reliant on manual or informal invoicing systems

**POLICY SIGNALS**

The development signals a shift toward real-time, technology-driven tax enforcement, reducing reliance on manual reporting and increasing regulatory oversight of business transactions.

**INVESTOR SIGNAL**

Regulatory-driven fintech infrastructure is emerging as a viable investment segment. Platforms that integrate compliance into financial workflows are likely to capture sustained demand as digital tax regimes expand.

**RISK RADAR**

- Operational risk from system integration failures and downtime
- Regulatory risk as tax frameworks evolve
- Increased compliance costs for businesses
- Competitive pressure from multiple licensed providers
- Dependence on government infrastructure for validation and processing
- Duplo’s licensing aligns with regulatory direction. The constraint is systemic, ensuring that digitised compliance frameworks function reliably across a fragmented business environment.

# Nigeria -UK Art Showcase Elevates Soft Power, Avoids Structural Creative Economy Issues



President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (left), with King Charles III, the UK Monarch, taking a toast during President Tinubu's recent visit to the UK.

By Ovio Peters

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu attended a modern Nigerian art exhibition at Tate Modern in London, where he commended the creativity and resilience of Nigerian artists.

He described the exhibition as “a testament to revolution,” noting that Nigerian artists “chose to define themselves” through a blend of traditional and modern influences. David Lammy, Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, highlighted bilateral ties, stating that trade between both countries has reached £8.1 billion.

Abike Dabiri-Erewa, Chairman of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NDiCom), also referenced the contributions of Nigerians abroad, while Governors Babajide Sanwo-Olu and Dapo Abiodun were among officials present.

## DECISION HIGHLIGHT

The Nigerian government is leveraging cultural diplomacy and creative expression as a soft power instrument within broader United Kingdom engagement.

## DECISION MEMO

The Tate Modern engagement reflects Nigeria's increasing reliance on cultural capital as a diplomatic tool. Nigerian art and the broader creative economy have become globally visible, offering a narrative of identity, resilience, and innovation that contrasts with persistent economic and governance challenges.

Tinubu's framing of Nigerian modernism as a “testament to revolution” positions art as both historical resistance and contemporary relevance. However, the policy gap lies in translation. Cultural recognition abroad does not automatically translate into structured domestic industry growth.

Lammy's reference to £8.1 billion in trade underscores that cultural diplomacy operates alongside economic interests. Nigerian cultural exports enhance visibility and influence, but the financial ar-

chitecture supporting the creative sector remains underdeveloped. Intellectual property enforcement, financing access, and distribution infrastructure continue to lag behind global standards.

Dabiri-Erewa's emphasis on diaspora contributions aligns with this pattern. The Nigerian diaspora plays a central role in projecting cultural influence globally, yet domestic systems have not fully institutionalised mechanisms to capture that value within the national economy.

The presence of state governors and federal officials signals political recognition of the creative sector's importance. However, this recognition has not consistently translated into policy coherence. Nigeria's creative industries operate largely through private initiative, informal networks, and external partnerships rather than coordinated national frameworks.

President Tinubu's assertion that Nigeria is “on the path to growth” reflects broader economic optimism tied to reform narratives. Yet, within the creative economy, growth remains uneven and largely externally validated. The sector's global success often outpaces domestic institutional support.

The exhibition therefore serves more as a projection of potential than evidence of a fully developed creative economy. It highlights Nigeria's cultural strength while simultaneously exposing structural weaknesses in how that strength is monetised and sustained locally.

## DATA BOX

- Event location, Tate Modern, London
- Bilateral trade value, £8.1 billion
- Sector focus, modern Nigerian art and creative industries
- Key stakeholders, Nigerian government, United Kingdom government, diaspora representatives

## WHO WINS / WHO LOSES

### Winners

Nigerian artists gaining global visibility and cultural influence

United Kingdom cultural institutions benefiting from Nigerian creative capital

Diaspora communities reinforcing their role as cultural intermediaries

### Conditional winners

Nigeria's economy, dependent on converting cultural visibility into structured industry growth

### Losers

Domestic creative infrastructure lacking institutional support

Artists without access to global platforms or diaspora networks

## POLICY SIGNALS

The engagement signals increased use of cultural diplomacy as part of foreign policy. However, it also reflects a gap between international cultural positioning and domestic creative industry development.

## INVESTOR SIGNAL

Nigeria's creative economy remains globally relevant and commercially viable, particularly in art, music, and film. However, investment opportunities are constrained by weak intellectual property systems, limited financing structures, and fragmented distribution channels.

## RISK RADAR

Disconnect between global recognition and domestic monetisation

Weak intellectual property enforcement reducing revenue capture

Overreliance on diaspora and foreign platforms for distribution

Limited institutional funding for creative industries

Policy inconsistency affecting long-term sector development

The exhibition underscores Nigeria's cultural influence, but also highlights a persistent imbalance. Visibility is global, value capture remains uneven.

# NSIA Dairy Deal Targets Import Substitution, Assesses Execution in Fragile Agriculture System



Mr. Aminu Umar-Sadiq, Managing Director of NSIA

By Ayo Susan

The Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Asset Green Limited to develop a \$500 million integrated dairy project in Nigeria.

Aminu Umar-Sadiq, Managing Director of NSIA, described the initiative as “one of the most ambitious... aimed at strengthening Nigeria’s food and nutrition security in a generation.” Rod Bassett, Director at Asset Green Limited, stated that the partnership reflects efforts to reduce Nigeria’s dependence on dairy imports.

The project structure combines large-scale farming, processing, and distribution within a single platform.

### DECISION HIGHLIGHT

The NSIA is deploying sovereign-backed capital into a vertically integrated dairy model aimed at import substitution, local production scaling, and foreign exchange conservation.

### DECISION MEMO

This transaction reflects a recurring Nigerian policy instinct, substitute imports through large-scale domestic production. The difference here is structure. Unlike fragmented agricultural interventions, the dairy project is designed as a fully integrated value chain, from forage cultivation to processing and distribution.

However, integration does not eliminate structural constraints. Nigeria’s agricultural sector remains defined by weak land tenure systems, low irrigation penetration, climate exposure, and limited input efficiency. Embedding a \$500 million project within this environment introduces execution risk that capital alone cannot resolve.

Umar-Sadiq’s framing of the project as “transformative” underscores its scale, but scale in Nigerian agriculture has historically struggled with continuity. Large projects often face bottlenecks in land aggregation, community alignment, and logistics infrastructure. The commitment to integrate up to 10,000 rural households through out-grower schemes is notable, yet such models depend heavily on coordination, extension services, and consistent input supply, areas where past programmes have underperformed.

Bassett’s emphasis on reducing import dependence highlights the macroeconomic logic. Nigeria’s dairy import bill places sustained pressure on foreign exchange. The proposed annual revenue projection of \$620 million suggests commercial viability, but this assumes stable production cycles, efficient processing, and competitive pricing against imported alternatives.

The involvement of Jonny Baxter, British Deputy High Commissioner, signals that this is not purely a domestic agricultural intervention but part of a broader United Kingdom–Nigeria investment corridor. That introduces an additional layer, external partnership credibility, but also exposure to foreign investor expectations on governance and returns.

The model aligns with parallel interventions such as the African Development Bank Group’s National Agricultural Growth Scheme – Agro-Pocket programme, which has demonstrated that input access and technology can improve yields. Yet, the dairy project operates at a different scale and complexity, requiring not just productivity gains but system-wide coordination.

The central issue is not intent but execution. Nigeria has repeatedly demonstrated policy ambition in agriculture. Delivery remains inconsistent.

### WHO WINS / WHO LOSES

#### Winners

Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority, expanding its role as a strategic investor in real sector assets

Asset Green Limited, gaining entry into a large-scale agricultural platform

Rural participants integrated into structured value chains

#### Conditional winners

Consumers, dependent on whether local production translates to lower prices and improved supply

#### Losers

Import-dependent dairy traders if substitution is effective

Unstructured smallholder systems excluded from integrated supply chains

### POLICY SIGNALS

The deal signals a shift toward large-scale, state-backed agro-industrialisation rather than dispersed smallholder interventions. It also reinforces import substitution as a central economic strategy, particularly in food systems tied to foreign exchange pressures.

### INVESTOR SIGNAL

There is growing institutional appetite to deploy capital into agriculture, particularly through integrated platforms that promise scale and efficiency. However, returns remain contingent on resolving structural bottlenecks rather than purely financial inputs.

### RISK RADAR

Land acquisition and community alignment risks across large-scale acreage

Climate variability affecting forage and livestock productivity

Infrastructure gaps in transport, storage, and cold chain systems

Execution risk in coordinating out-grower networks at scale

Foreign exchange volatility impacting input costs and pricing competitiveness

The project introduces scale and structure into Nigeria’s dairy ambition. Whether it delivers depends less on capital and more on the system it is inserted into.

### DATA BOX

- Investment size, \$500 million
- Land footprint, 20,000 hectares
- Dairy herd capacity, 10,000 milking cows
- Processing output, up to 15,000 metric tonnes of infant formula annually
- Projected annual revenue, \$620 million
- Jobs, 2,500 direct, 5,000 indirect
- Out-grower integration, up to 10,000 rural households
- Agriculture sector share, ~25 percent of GDP, 38 percent employment

# Nigeria's Quiet Broadband Shift Is Exposing Policy Failure, Market Truths



I do not see the recent surge in MTN's FibreX subscribers as just another telecom success story. I see it as something more uncomfortable, more revealing, and frankly, more consequential. It is a silent referendum on how Nigerians actually want to connect, and a quiet indictment of how the system has failed to anticipate that demand.

When a product grows from 11,794 users to 89,441 in one year, a 658 percent increase, the instinct is to celebrate. I do not celebrate too quickly. Numbers of that magnitude are rarely just about product-market fit. They are signals. They tell you where the market is moving, and more importantly, where policy, infrastructure, and strategy have lagged behind reality. What I see is not just adoption. I see correction.

For years, Nigeria's digital expansion has leaned heavily on mobile broadband. It was convenient, scalable, and politically attractive. Roll out towers, expand 4G, talk about 5G, and the narrative writes itself. Coverage becomes the metric. Penetration becomes the headline. Progress becomes something that can be easily quantified and reported. But coverage is not capacity.

The uncomfortable truth is that mobile networks, for all their reach, were never designed to carry the weight of a digital economy. They were designed for access, not intensity. And now, as Nigeria's digital behaviour evolves, streaming, remote work, gaming, cloud computing, content creation, the cracks are no longer subtle. They are structural. This is where FibreX becomes instructive.

Egerton Idehen, Chief Broadband Officer of MTN Nigeria, put it plainly: "Wireless will take Nigeria into the future, but fibre ensures that future is fast, stable, and limitless." I agree with the first half. I interrogate the second.

Wireless will take Nigeria into the future, yes, but it will not sustain that future. Fibre is not a complement. It is the backbone. And what we are witnessing is not the rise of fibre as an alternative, but its emergence as a necessity that has been delayed for too long. The growth of FibreX is not accidental. It is demand catching up with suppressed need.

Look at the user profile. These are not casual internet users. These are high-intensity consumers, remote workers, developers, creators, streamers, people whose economic productivity is tied directly to bandwidth reliability. For them, mobile data is no longer sufficient. It is unpredictable, often throttled, and increasingly expensive relative to value delivered.

FibreX's proposition is simple but disruptive in the Nigerian context: unlimited data, no fair usage policy, and speeds that can reach up to 1Gbps. In a market conditioned to ration data and manage consumption, that is not just a product feature. It is a behavioural shift.

At N25,000 monthly for 50Mbps, it also sits in a strategic price band. It is expensive enough to target the emerging middle class, yet significantly cheaper than alternatives like Starlink, which demands up to N150,000 monthly and hardware costs running into millions. FibreX is not competing at the bottom of the market. It is redefining the middle. And that middle is expanding.

The addition of nearly 78,000 subscribers in one

year is not just a growth metric. It is evidence of willingness to pay for quality. Nigerians are often described as price-sensitive, but that framing is incomplete. Nigerians are value-sensitive. When the service works, when it is reliable, when it supports productivity, people will pay. This is where the market is ahead of policy.

The Nigerian Communications Commission projects that 5G coverage will reach 50 percent by 2030 and that internet users will approach 200 million. These are ambitious targets. But they are incomplete if they continue to prioritise coverage over capacity.

You cannot build a digital economy on mobile bandwidth alone. You cannot power a generation of creators, developers, and remote professionals on networks designed for intermittent use. And you certainly cannot compete globally if your infrastructure is fundamentally unstable. FibreX's growth is exposing this gap.

But it is also exposing something else, the inefficiencies and contradictions within Nigeria's infrastructure environment.

Despite the momentum, the constraints are almost predictable. Fibre cuts. Vandalism. Right-of-way bottlenecks. Community resistance. Regulatory fragmentation. These are not new problems. They are recurring failures of coordination and enforcement.

In 2025 alone, MTN recorded over 9,200 fibre cuts and more than 200 vandalised sites. That is not an operational issue. That is systemic fragility.

When critical infrastructure can be disrupted at that scale, the conversation should move beyond telecom operators and into governance. Telecommunications infrastructure has already been classified as Critical National Information Infrastructure. Yet, enforcement remains weak, inconsistent, and largely reactive.

Idehen's call for stronger infrastructure protection laws is not new. It is overdue. But laws alone will not solve the problem. What is required is alignment across federal, state, and local levels. Right-of-way charges must be standardised. Access processes must be simplified. Community engagement must be structured, not negotiated ad hoc at every deployment point.

The current system is inefficient by design. Every new fibre rollout becomes a negotiation, a risk, and in many cases, a delay. And yet, despite these constraints, the market is moving.

That is what makes this moment significant. Growth is happening in spite of the system, not because of it.

MTN's ambition to connect 8 million homes by 2028 is aggressive. It is also revealing. It signals that operators are willing to invest ahead of policy certainty. But ambition without enabling conditions will eventually hit limits. Expansion requires not just capital, but coordination.

The Federal Government's Project Bridge, which aims to expand fibre infrastructure from 35,000 kilometres to 125,000 kilometres, is a step in the right direction. But execution will determine relevance. Nigeria does not lack plans. It struggles with delivery. The deeper issue, however, is strategic clarity.

Is Nigeria building a broadband economy or a connectivity economy? The two are not the same.

A connectivity economy focuses on access, number of users, coverage percentages, and headline statistics. A broadband economy focuses on speed, reliability, latency, and capacity to support economic activity. One is about inclusion. The other is about productivity. For too long, Nigeria has optimised for the former.

FibreX's growth is forcing a shift toward the latter. It is also forcing competition.

As fibre adoption increases, other operators will respond. Fixed broadband will no longer be a niche product. It will become a competitive battleground. Pricing models will evolve. Service quality will be scrutinised. Customer expectations will rise. That is how markets mature.

But maturity will also expose weaknesses. Service complaints are already visible across social platforms. Installation delays, downtime, inconsistent speeds. These are early indicators of scaling pressure. Growth is one challenge. Sustaining quality at scale is another.

If FibreX fails to maintain reliability, the narrative will shift quickly. Trust, once lost, is difficult to rebuild in a market where alternatives are emerging. So, I do not see FibreX's growth as a victory lap. I see it as a stress test.

A test of whether Nigerian telecom operators can transition from access providers to infrastructure providers. A test of whether government can move from policy announcements to enforcement. A test of whether the market can sustain quality as demand intensifies.

Most importantly, it is a test of whether Nigeria is ready to take its digital economy seriously. Because this is what is really at stake.

Broadband is not just about faster internet. It is about enabling economic activity. It is about productivity, innovation, and competitiveness. It is about whether a Nigerian developer can work seamlessly with a global team, whether a content creator can upload without interruption, whether a business can operate without network uncertainty.

These are not luxuries. They are prerequisites for participation in the modern economy. The silent revolution is not the 658 percent growth. That is just the data point.

The real revolution is behavioural. Nigerians are moving from consumption to production, from casual usage to dependency, from managing data to demanding performance. And the system is scrambling to catch up. I am not surprised by FibreX's growth. I am surprised it did not happen earlier.

What happens next will determine whether this moment becomes a turning point or just another spike in a market that struggles to sustain momentum.

If the infrastructure holds, if policy aligns, if operators deliver, Nigeria could finally transition from a connectivity narrative to a broadband reality.

If not, this surge will remain what it currently is, a glimpse of what is possible, constrained by what is still broken.