My Lord Faulkner, Madam President, ladies and gentlemen

It was great to see John Adam joining me with his award. John is a great friend.

I was very moved and of course thrilled, to hear from your President, Susie, that the British Metals Recycling Association was planning to honour me tonight with your Lifetime Achievement Award and I thank the Association very much for this very flattering recognition. Also, a very special “thank you” to my very long-standing and great friend, Michael Lion, for his most kind and over generous words. Many of you will not know that Michael is a man of many talents and in his early years, was a drummer and singer in Eric Clapton’s famous band.

On the business front, I have always admired his knowledge of the non-ferrous industry and also his razor sharp intellect. For Michael to travel from his offices in Hong Kong to be here tonight is an added honour which I appreciate very much. Michael is one of possibly the most influential and well known authorities in the world on non-ferrous metals, particularly on copper, with lifetime of global connections, especially in China. Thank you once again, Michael, for giving up your valuable time to make a 12,000 mile round trip to present me with this precious award tonight.

I was brought up from an early age in the recycling or “scrap” business as it was known then. I am more than proud to be a member of the UK recycling fraternity. It is a great industry and have made some wonderful lifetime friends and I have derived an enormous amount of pleasure from having the opportunity to become very much involved with the initial transition and development of the industry from the manual processing of scrap metals into the high tech age of mechanisation and with the UK gearing up, with cutting edge technology, to become one of the most well-equipped and efficient recycling nations in the world as we are today.

Besides our industry’s positive contribution of about £8 billion pounds per annum to the National economy, we recover the Nation’s metallic waste and convert it into over 10 million tonnes every year of furnace feed. We are, as an industry, an enormous asset to the environment which is widely underrated. Most of us know that one tonne of steel made from iron ore causes over 80% more pollution to air and water than one tonne of new steel produced from our recycled ferrous scrap and with very similar figures in non ferrous metals.

To read the Secretary of State’s response when asked what effect the Chinese ban on imports of waste into China meant to the recycling industry when he responded, “I have no idea what effect it would have on the UK recycling sector” was a very worrying statement, from someone, with ultimate power over our recycling activities We must make sure that he is now fully briefed on this important British industry.

The most pressing task we have, as an industry, is to get rid of the word “waste” for all of our processed products. A certain amount of the materials which we process in our yards are waste when they arrive but when they leave, after costly processing, they are ready for use as furnace feed and should certainly not be classified as waste but as a raw material.

The word “waste” is pernicious and brings down on us additional costs and unjustified environmental regulations and also creates problems at frontiers when exporting.

I realise that our BMRA Secretariat has a close relationship with the Government Departments controlling environmental and industrial matters. We now need even closer relations with these relevant Government departments as Brexit is growing closer. We need to put our Brexit requirements firmly on the table and the first of those must be to remove our finished grades from the waste category.

We need not worry about our industry’s trading position whatever the Brexit result is. We are natural free traders and entrepreneurs and no strangers to international trading (and not just in Europe).

We should all remember that this great British Association (the BMRA) and all of the other the Federations overseas were all formed due to the threat of export controls. They had one basic objective – to ensure that as recyclers and traders, we are allowed to trade our products anywhere in the world, freely across frontiers, without hindrance. We must do our utmost to maintain our freedom to export which is so important to all of you here tonight as 90% of the £8 billion pounds worth of metals we recover and recycle every year are exported.

Incidentally, we export and contribute to the economy twice as much as the well publicised Scotch whiskey industry.

May I thank all you members of the British Metal Recycling Association for this very special award. It has been great to be here tonight amidst the cream of the UK Recycling Industry and thank you all for listening.