



## Department for Business & Trade

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The Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP  
Chair, Business and Trade Committee  
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Dear Liam,

I would like to thank you for your letter dated 16 April 2025 on the Department for Business and Trade's (DBT) approach to the [request for input](#), which was launched on 3 April to seek input from UK businesses on potential UK measures responding to US tariffs. I set out below for the Business and Trade Committee the Government's answers to the questions that you raised.

**Does the Department believe that a product-level consultation is a realistic way to gather the information needed to inform tariff decisions? Given the complexity of global supply chains, what assessment was made of the suitability of this approach compared to alternatives?**

You will be aware that global tariffs are applied at the level of individual product codes, and product codes often sit across multiple sectors and have dual purposes and uses. More aggregate, sectoral feedback would therefore not provide useful analysis for understanding the impact of potential UK tariffs on individual products that cross-cut multiple sectors. Similarly, product-level feedback provides greater granularity on the level and detail of any potential impact of UK tariffs on that product, providing the government with more actionable information. For these reasons, the Department determined that product-level feedback was the most appropriate approach to take. If respondents wish, or if they only feel able, to respond at a more aggregated sectoral level, then this remains an option in section 5 of the questionnaire, or by sending these views to the Department via our designated email inbox, which will be taken on board.

The approach taken for this request for input is also well preceded both domestically and internationally. In 2021, the UK undertook a similar exercise to seek business input on a UK-specific tariff response to the first US steel and aluminium tariffs that were imposed in 2018. Additionally, key international partners like the EU and Canada have taken similar approaches to engaging businesses in relation to their response to US tariffs. On this basis, the Department's approach to the request for input has been targeted, realistic, and well preceded.

**To what extent did the Department consider the capacity of UK businesses to respond to the consultation at the requested level of granularity? Specifically, was any assessment made of the resource burden this would place on small and medium-sized enterprises, and how that might affect the diversity and representativeness of responses?**

I am of course aware that this request for input is seeking views from UK businesses of all sizes, and with different levels of capacity to feed in. In designing the questionnaire, effort was made to make the questions as accessible and user-friendly as possible for the full range of UK

businesses, such as using multiple choice options, and minimising the number of questions for businesses. Seeking product-level feedback means that businesses can focus more readily on the key product codes relevant to them, which makes it more accessible to smaller businesses that trade in fewer codes than larger companies.

We are, however, mindful that for larger organisations, including trade associations, this can present a challenge, especially when corraling views across sectors. While we do have a stated preference for businesses to feed in via the questionnaire for ease of analysis and data collection, we have also set up an email address ([tariff.response@businessandtrade.gov.uk](mailto:tariff.response@businessandtrade.gov.uk)) for respondents who prefer to feed in their views via email. Respondents are free to use this should their circumstances make filling out the questionnaire too difficult, or where they prefer to do so. We have also shared PDF copies of the request for input questionnaire to businesses so that they can plan their responses beforehand.

**Will the Department consider allowing respondents to provide feedback at a broader product category or sectoral level, where appropriate, rather than requiring detailed responses at the level of individual tariff lines?**

In section 5 of the request for input questionnaire, respondents are invited to add any further feedback in response to potential UK responses to US tariffs. Businesses have full discretion to use this space to feed in less granular feedback on the level of broader product categories, and sectoral level. Question 8 of section 3 also provides businesses with the opportunity and space to make any wider comments on the products they are commenting on.

Respondents are also provided with the Department's designated email address ([tariff.response@businessandtrade.gov.uk](mailto:tariff.response@businessandtrade.gov.uk)) for the request for input, to send longer responses which will be considered alongside responses submitted to the request for input form. We have already received high level views from businesses through this inbox.

**How does the Department intend to analyse and weigh the information gathered through this consultation alongside other stated considerations, such as wider economic impacts, international obligations, and strategic trade objectives? Given the scale and complexity of the data collection exercise, how will the Department ensure that this process delivers meaningful and actionable insight, rather than placing a disproportionate burden on businesses?**

The Department has endeavoured to ensure that best practice has been followed for every step of the request for input. The analysis of the responses will meet the high standards expected of a government engagement exercise of this kind, and each individual response we have received will be given due consideration.

I have mentioned earlier in this letter that due regard has been taken to ensure that the questionnaire places as little burden on businesses of any size as possible, while still obtaining useful and actionable feedback on the impact of UK tariffs on specific products. I have also outlined the process and considerations behind how the Indicative List was developed below. The request for input is intended to augment this with more detailed business and stakeholder insight. This will be considered alongside the type of factors you describe after the request for input closes on 1 May.

**What analysis was undertaken to develop the Indicative Long List of 8,374 products? In particular, what criteria were applied to identify these products from the broader pool of US-origin imports?**

This Indicative Long List was designed by DBT using economic analysis of UK-US trade data, supplemented with sector insights from departments across the UK government, as well as from the Devolved Governments. While the list is broad, DBT carefully considered several different factors when designing it. These factors included, but were not limited to:

*Supply chain risks:* seeking to exclude products where the Department's analysis indicated there was a high reliance by UK businesses and/or consumers on imports of US-origin goods to avoid any unnecessary harm to UK industries and/or consumers.

*Initial sector insights:* input and refinement from departments across Whitehall, and the Devolved Governments on the potential domestic impacts on UK industries and consumers of higher UK tariffs on particular US-origin goods.

*Wider public interest considerations:* a critical approach to excluding products from the list for reasons of national security and safety, including defence equipment, nuclear related products, and certain medical goods.

*Northern Ireland:* giving due regard to reducing the potential for disruption caused to Northern Ireland, with reference to how any future UK tariff response may interact with an EU tariff response at the border.

**Will you undertake to publish a summary of the consultation responses, including the impact of those responses on any potential Government action, in a format that is comprehensible to Parliament and the wider public?**

While the Prime Minister has been clear that all options remain on the table, the government's focus remains on a resolution through a mutually beneficial deal. The request for input is only one tool to solicit input from stakeholders, and is being undertaken alongside the Department's regular and ongoing engagement with businesses and industry associations on the topic of US trade and tariffs.

In a scenario where future tariff measures become necessary, the Department will publish an updated final list of products that are subject to a UK tariff response. In so doing, we would reflect where we have actioned the feedback that we received from businesses during the request for input and elsewhere.

I hope these answers bring clarity to the points that you have raised. I would like to thank you for your interest in DBT's work on the request for input.

Yours sincerely,



**The Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP**  
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