



# International Trade Committee

14 Tothill Street, London SW1H 9NB  
Tel.: 020 7219 1318 E-mail: [tradecom@parliament.uk](mailto:tradecom@parliament.uk)

Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP  
Secretary of State for International Trade  
Department for International Trade  
Old Admiralty Building  
Admiralty Place  
London  
SW1A 2BL

17 September 2021

Dear Anne-Marie,

Congratulations on your appointment to the role of Trade Secretary and, on behalf of my Committee, we look forward to engaging with you across your portfolio.

I wanted to write to you promptly as we are obviously keen to see you soon to discuss how you plan to take forward your new role, and your view on the wider work of the Department for International Trade (DIT). My Committee had been seeking to arrange an evidence session with your predecessor for a while without success, but I am hopeful that you will acknowledge the importance of good relationships between Government departments and their Select Committees by prioritising this appointment for the first or second week after conference recess.

In relation to free trade agreements (FTAs), the Government has acknowledged freely the importance of parliamentary scrutiny, and particularly that of my Committee. It has, for example, pointed to ongoing engagement with the Committee, and given assurances around making ministers and officials available promptly and providing at least three months' public access to all new FTAs for scrutiny before they are formally laid before Parliament.

We have welcomed these and other commitments but have not always felt that the practice has followed the promises closely. In particular, timeliness has been a concern to the Committee – both in terms of responding to correspondence or reports and accommodating requests for ministerial attendance or information in confidence.

My Committee plays a key role in scrutinising the Government's work on international trade on behalf of Parliament, so appearances before the Committee should be given precedence over other commitments. Your predecessor told us that she would make herself and officials available soon after the UK-New Zealand FTA negotiations had reached agreement in principle, but recently we were told this would be within three weeks. I'm sure you will agree that this does not suggest an impetus or openness towards scrutiny and does not help draw out details of complex topics in a timely way.

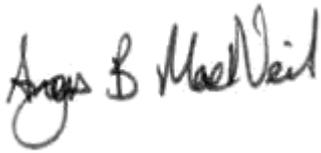
I am keen that we build positively on the relationship my Committee has had with your department and predecessor, to develop a new and improved one that supports transparency and high-quality scrutiny. I would be particularly grateful if you could confirm that you will more highly prioritise such appearances and consider additional

avenues to share more information about DIT's work and progress in negotiations with my Committee in confidence.

As the Government moves toward securing its first completely new FTAs in the next few months it will be vital to have strong engagement, to ensure our important scrutiny can proceed effectively and inform the House's deliberations. I look forward to working with you and your ministers on this and hope to see you before the Committee soon.

In accordance with our usual practice, this letter, along with any replies, will be published on the Committee's webpage.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angus B MacNeil". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and 'M'.

Angus Brendan MacNeil  
Chair of the International Trade Committee