



Department for International Trade

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6 December 2021

Dear Angus,

Thank you for your letter of 8th November regarding the scrutiny of negotiation objectives and the Government's trade strategy.

I remain committed to providing your Committee with as much information as is reasonably possible and would like to reiterate my commitment to making relevant Senior Civil Service Officials and Chief Negotiators available to brief your committee in private after negotiation rounds have concluded.

However, the Government has a responsibility to protect UK interests in our international negotiations and ensure neither our negotiating positions or our partners' legitimate expectations of confidentiality are undermined. The Lords Constitution Committee recognised this important balance in its 2019 report on treaty scrutiny. The information that you have requested access to is extremely sensitive and I do not believe that it is suitable to be shared even on an embargoed basis. I would highlight that it is not the norm internationally for governments to publish or state negotiation trade-offs and dependencies publicly.

The Government has a clear vision that guides our trade strategy. As an independent trading nation, Global Britain will stand with like-minded partners to champion free and fair trade under rules fit for the 21st century. The Government has consistently communicated how our trade policy delivers on the Government's wider economic aims (such as levelling-up, jobs, and economic growth) and foreign policy objectives (such as the Indo-Pacific tilt, international development, national resilience, and environmental sustainability). These points are clearly made in "Build Back Better: our plan for growth" and "Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy", both published in March this year.

In July, the priority outcomes for the Department were also set out in its Outcome Delivery Plan, including to, 'Secure world-class free trade agreements and reduce market access barriers, ensuring that consumers and businesses can benefit from both.' The plan clearly

explains how DIT will deliver and measure these outcomes. We account for our progress in the Department's Annual Report.

The Government has been very clear that any future trade deal must work for UK consumers and businesses, upholding our high regulatory standards. We are committed to world-class environmental, product and labour standards and will use the full range of measures available to us to uphold the UK's high regulatory standards. We will not weaken these levels of protection. We will maintain our current domestic levels of protection for consumers and the environment. The UK's reputation for quality, safety and performance is what drives demand for UK goods and is key to our long-term prosperity. The government has no intention of harming this reputation in pursuit of trade deals.

The Government's FTA work programme is agreed through the appropriate Cabinet Committees. Individual FTA negotiating mandates are also subject to collective agreement, following a rigorous cross-Whitehall process. A mandate must capture cross-Government priorities and set out an overall outcome for the UK. This process provides detailed strategic direction and clarifies potential trade-offs. The launch of each new negotiation is accompanied by the publication of a public bundle which includes the strategic case for the negotiation, negotiating objectives, an economic scoping assessment and Government response to any public consultation. Should your Committee or the International Agreements Committee in the House of Lords produce a report on these objectives, and as part of this recommend a debate, the Government remains committed to seeking to accommodate this request, subject to available Parliamentary time.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Anne Marie Trevelyan". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

The Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP
Secretary of State for International Trade
& President of the Board of Trade