



Department for International Trade

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Angus Brendan MacNeil MP
International Trade Committee
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5 May 2020

Dear Angus,

Free Trade Agreement between the United Kingdom and the United States of America – Launch and First Round of Negotiations

Further to the statement I made to the House of Commons on 2 March, I am pleased to inform you that we will be publicly launching free trade agreement negotiations with the US today.

Negotiations will be carried out by video conference, ensuring that talks can progress during the Covid-19 pandemic. We will be negotiating on multiple topics simultaneously. This will include all Chapters typically found in a comprehensive free trade agreement, including SMEs, digital, services, investment and goods.

This negotiation round will continue for the next 2 weeks. Once the round has concluded we will make a statement to Parliament reporting on the outcome of the round to ensure the public are informed of progress and that negotiations are undertaken transparently.

In this first round of talks both teams of negotiators will explore respective negotiating objectives and agree a structure and work plan for the coming negotiating rounds. Approximately 100 negotiators on each side will be involved in this round of talks. The next negotiating round is expected to take place in June. We will continue to conduct talks remotely until it is safe to conduct talks in person.

More trade is essential if the UK is to overcome the unprecedented economic challenge posed by Covid-19, and new trade agreements are an important part of the long-term economic recovery. New free trade agreements provide new opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs who have suffered most in this difficult period and for every industry in both the UK and the US.

Our team will drive a hard bargain for the benefit of the UK as a whole, British industry and our people. We will absolutely respect the red lines we have agreed: the NHS, the price it pays for drugs and its services are not for sale. There will be no compromise on high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards. It is in the interests of both the UK and US to reach an agreement, but we will walk away from the negotiating table if the right deal is not on offer.

The Government is committed to transparency and will ensure that parliamentarians, UK citizens and businesses have access to the information they need on our trade negotiations. I am committed to engaging collaboratively with Parliament, as well as the devolved administrations and the public as we negotiate future trading relationships. While it is for Parliament to determine its own affairs, as I said in the House of Commons on 2 March, I expect your Committee to play a significant role in the scrutiny of our new free trade agreements, as part of the UK's independent trade policy, and alongside the newly established International Agreements Committee in the House of Lords.

I am also holding a briefing meeting for all MPs today from 1700 – 1800. Invites have issued separately, and I hope to see you there.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Truss', is centered below the text 'Best wishes,'.

THE RT HON ELIZABETH TRUSS MP
Secretary of State for International Trade
& President of the Board of Trade