

Trevelyan: Break down digital trade barriers to help British businesses thrive

Trade Secretary unveils five-point plan for digital trade in keynote speech at London Tech Week.

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- Trade Secretary unveils five-point plan for digital trade in speech to London Tech Week
- Plan will reduce costs for British businesses, cut red tape and shore up data protection
- Figures show digital trade is vital for business growth in the UK – worth £326 billion in 2019

The UK must break down unfair or discriminatory digital trade barriers to help British businesses export their world-leading services, the International Trade Secretary will say today.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan will set the challenge in a virtual keynote speech kicking off London Tech Week to an audience of industry leaders – her first speech since being appointed last week.

The Department for International Trade will today publish a five-point plan for establishing a free and fair digital trade landscape to help UK businesses and consumers thrive.

Many businesses currently face barriers that restrict their ability to benefit from digital technology, such as paperless trading, or force them to meet unjustified requirements to localise data or disclose their intellectual properties such as source code.

Making digital trade easier will allow businesses in every sector to reach more customers by making it simpler to sell online and helping them trade efficiently and cost-effectively.

Consumers will enjoy greater access to international marketplaces offering wider variety and more affordable products and services. They will also benefit from a secure digital economy which will remain underpinned by the UK's strong data protection safeguards.

Under the five-point plan, DIT will:

1. Facilitate more open digital markets to ensure British consumers and businesses benefit from greater access to digital markets in other countries.
2. Advocate free and trusted cross-border data flows that will make it simpler and cheaper for businesses who use data to trade internationally while maintaining the UK's high standards for personal data protection.
3. Champion consumer and business safeguards through enhanced consumer and intellectual property protections.
4. Promote the development and adoption of innovative digital trading systems such as digital customs processes, e-contracting and paperless trading, which can cut red tape and make trade easier, cheaper, faster, and more secure.
5. Establish global cooperation on digital trade via free trade agreements with international partners and using our G7 presidency and seat at the WTO to push for countries to become more open to digital trade.

International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

All of us depend on digital trade, yet British businesses face digital barriers in countries who take a protectionist approach. I want the UK to break down these barriers and open up new, exciting opportunities for businesses and consumers so we can see improved productivity, jobs and growth.

Our five-point plan is the first step in shaping international digital trade policy for decades to come. Through our network of international agreements, we are breaking new ground, pushing forward innovative ideas and setting a new gold standard for digital trade.

International digital trade is already a key driver of productivity and business growth in the UK. The digital sector contributed £150.6 billion to the UK economy in 2019, employing 4.6% of the national workforce.

Last year, the UK agreed a comprehensive digital chapter as part of the Free Trade Agreement with Japan and in June, negotiations were launched on a cutting-edge Digital Economy Agreement with Singapore, pushing the frontiers of digital trade further.

In the coming months, the UK will look to conclude negotiations with other key partners such as Australia and New Zealand, driving forward our accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and continuing to cement the UK as a key partner in the fast-growing Indo-Pacific region. We will also conclude the G7's first ever trade track, working with our partners to establish some shared principles on our approaches to digital trade.

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Press release

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- Liz Truss convenes Permanent Five members of the UN Security Council
- Visit comes after the UK, US and Australia announce AUKUS trilateral security and defence partnership

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss will arrive in the US later today (Sunday 19 September) ahead of a four-day visit to New York and Washington DC – the first official visit in her new role.

Along with the Prime Minister, Truss will meet President Biden and Vice President Harris, as well as attending High Level Week of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

At UNGA, the Foreign Secretary will convene the Permanent Five (P5) members

of the UN Security Council – the UK, US, France, China and Russia – to encourage international co-operation over vital issues such as Afghanistan, Myanmar and vaccine distribution.

Truss will also travel to Washington DC for meetings with State Representatives, including Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. Discussions will focus on G7 priorities and climate change in the run up to COP26.

Speaking ahead of the visit Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

I'm delighted my first international visit as Foreign Secretary is to the United States – the UK's closest and most important partner. At the UN General Assembly, I look forward to convening global leaders to tackle the major issues of the day and projecting a positive, outward-looking Global Britain that delivers for people across the United Kingdom.

The visit comes as the UK, US and Australia announce the AUKUS trilateral security and defence partnership, to protect and defend shared interests in the Indo-Pacific. The 'AUKUS' alliance will enhance the development of joint capabilities and technology sharing.

In Washington, Liz Truss will also meet Head of the US Agency for International Development, Samantha Power and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell.

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[Ambitious Plans to drive levelling up agenda](#)

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will become the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities as the Government delivers on its central mission to level up every part of the UK.

The change comes as former Bank of England Chief Economist Andy Haldane was today appointed as the new Head of the Levelling Up Taskforce.

The taskforce has been jointly established by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Michael Gove MP.

The Secretary of State will drive cross-Whitehall efforts to deliver a programme of tangible improvements in every part of the UK as we build back

better from the pandemic, and deliver on the people's priorities.

The Secretary of State will have responsibility for United Kingdom governance and elections. He will therefore also take on the additional title of Minister for Intergovernmental Relations, working closely with the Territorial Offices and leading coordination with the devolved administrations on the Prime Minister's behalf.

He will be supported in the department by new Minister of State Kemi Badenoch MP and Neil O'Brien MP, who has been appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State.

Reappointed to the department are Ministers of State the Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP and Lord Greenhalgh, and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Eddie Hughes MP.

Andy Haldane will join as a permanent secretary in the Cabinet Office on secondment from the Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) for six months. He will head up the Levelling Up Taskforce that will report jointly to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson MP, said:

This Government is committed to uniting and levelling up every part of the UK and I am determined that as we build back better from the pandemic we are geared up with the teams and expertise to deliver on that promise.

Andy is uniquely qualified to lead our efforts to raise living standards, spread opportunity, improve our public services and restore people's sense of pride in their communities. I look forward to working with him, and with my new ministerial team, to deliver the opportunities this country needs.

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Michael Gove MP, said:

I'm thrilled that the PM has asked me to lead the Levelling Up agenda, the defining mission of this Government.

With a superb team of ministers and officials in a new department, our relentless focus will be on delivering for those overlooked families and undervalued communities across the United Kingdom.

We have a unique opportunity to make a real difference to people's lives.

Commenting on Andy's appointment, the Cabinet Secretary, Simon Case, said:

I would like to congratulate Andy on his appointment. Andy brings with him a wealth of experience and insight from his distinguished career at the Bank of England and in academia. I am very grateful that he has agreed to join us to lead this ambitious programme of work and look forward to working with him over the next six months.

Andy Haldane said:

Levelling up the UK is one of the signature challenges of our time. It has also been a personal passion throughout my professional career. So, I am delighted and honoured to be making a contribution to this crucial objective by heading the new Levelling Up Taskforce. I look forward to working with colleagues across government, local and national, and with the private and voluntary sectors, to design and deliver an economy that works for every part of the UK.

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Permanent Secretary Jeremy Pocklington said:

This department is leading the way in championing levelling up, and our recently unveiled second headquarters in the city of Wolverhampton reflects our commitment to driving growth across the UK. I'm incredibly excited that we are at the forefront of such important work.

Tim Eyles, Chair of the RSA, said:

The RSA has a long history of working with government to help resolve the challenges of our time. Levelling up is crucial if we are to unlock untapped potential across the whole of the UK, and is at the heart of the RSA's programmes of work. We are therefore extremely pleased and honoured that Andy has been asked to lead this taskforce.