

News story: Liam Fox delivers Parliament and the public a central role in post-Brexit UK trade agreements

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox, today set out major new proposals ensuring that MPs, the Devolved Administrations, businesses and the public can influence Britain's post-Brexit trade, designed to ensure future agreements create prosperity across the whole of the UK.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:

For the first time in over 40 years the UK will have the chance to decide who we trade with and on what terms. Those decisions must work of the whole of the UK, and that is why we are making this unprecedented commitment to transparency and inclusiveness for our MPs, the Devolved Administrations, businesses, civil society groups, trade unions and the public.

As an international economic department, we have the chance to deliver trade agreements that work for consumers and businesses across the UK. The more input we get on these, the better they will be.

Public consultations:

Dr Fox announced the government's intention that a 14-week consultation will run ahead of any new negotiation, allowing any individual or organisation across the UK to give their view. These will be easily accessible on online to ensure as many people get to feed into the government's work as possible.

This is longer than other government consultation periods and longer than the EU runs its own trade consultations for, giving the British public more say over Britain's trading future.

As part of the consultations, the Department for International Trade (DIT) will run events in all regions and nations of the UK to seek their views on how prospective trade agreements could support prosperity and growth.

Expert advice:

A new Strategic Trade Advisory Group will also be created, advising DIT ministers and trade negotiators on trade policy and negotiations.

The Group will be made up of 14 experts drawn from different groups such as business, civil society and unions, with an interest in our future trading relationships and their impact on the UK – from the workplace to consumer choice and the environment.

Individuals will be invited to apply by 17th August 2018 to join the group which will meet quarterly, providing direct advice to ministers and UK negotiators.

Providing evidence:

MPs will be given the opportunity to consider the Government's approach to negotiations and the potential implications of any agreements.

As negotiations progress, the Government will keep Parliament closely involved with regular Ministerial statements and updates to the International Trade Committee. The Government will – before entering formal negotiations – publish an 'Outline Approach' to each negotiation, setting out the high-level objectives and scope of that negotiation. This document will be accompanied by a scoping assessment.

Devolved Administrations:

We will work closely with the Devolved Administrations on an ongoing basis to deliver an approach that works for the whole of the UK. As part of this, we are conducting a series of collaborative policy roundtables with Devolved Administrations recognising the close interaction between trade policy and devolved policy areas. Parliamentary approval: Once a free trade agreement is finalised, if it changes existing UK laws, and where necessary legislation doesn't already exist, then new primary legislation will be introduced. Parliament will also be provided with comprehensive analysis of its effects. Importantly, Parliament will be able to scrutinise any new legislation in the usual way, as well as the ratification of all agreements through the usual procedures.