

# Paperless trade for UK businesses to boost growth

- The Bill will make digital documentation legally recognised, reduce admin costs and make it easier for British firms to buy and sell internationally
- Processing times for electronic documents cut to 20 seconds and carbon emissions reduced by at least ten per cent

British businesses will be able to trade easier, faster and cheaper around the world thanks to new plans to remove needless paperwork and bureaucracy.

The Electronic Trade Documents Bill, expected to be introduced in Parliament today, will boost the UK's international trade, already worth more than [£1.4 trillion](#), and will reduce the estimated 28.5 billion paper trade documents printed and flown around the world daily.

Business-to-business documents such as bills of lading – a contract between parties involved in shipping goods – and bills of exchange – used to help importers and exporters complete transactions – currently have to be paper-based due to longstanding laws.

Under the Electronic Trade Documents Bill, digital trade documents will be put on the same legal footing as their paper-based equivalents to give UK business more choice and flexibility in how they trade.

The Bill will modernise old legislation such as the Bills of Exchange Act 1882 and the Carriage of Goods by Sea Act 1924.

Removing the legal obstacle to electronic versions of trade documents will significantly lower administration costs and is expected to provide a £1.14 billion boost to UK business over a ten-year period. It will reduce trade contract processing times from between seven and ten days to as little as 20 seconds, according to [Trade Finance Global](#).

Digital Secretary Michelle Donelan said:

Our digital-first plans will make it easier for the country's firms to buy and sell around the world – driving growth, supercharging our economy, cutting carbon and boosting productivity.

We want to support businesses by cutting red tape and allowing them to sell their goods and products globally without burdensome bureaucracy.

The UK was central to establishing the international trade system

in the nineteenth century and we are once again leading the world to boost global trade in the twenty-first century.

The Digital Container Shipping Association [estimates](#) that if 50 per cent of the container shipping industry adopted electronic bills of lading, the collective global savings would be around £3.6 billion (\$4 billion) per year. The International Chamber of Commerce estimates that small and medium businesses could see a 13 per cent increase in international business if trade is digitised.

Elsewhere the World Economic Forum (WEF) has found that digitising trade documents could potentially reduce global carbon emissions from logistics by as much as 12 per cent. Electronic trade documents also increase security and compliance by making it easier to trace records – for instance, through the use of blockchain and distributed ledger technology.

International trade still relies to a large extent on a special category of trade document which is dependent on being physically possessed by a person, and transferred over to another person.

The UK is a world leader in digital trade but currently the law does not recognise the possibility of possessing electronic documents, which prevents industries going fully paperless. This is costly and inefficient.

This Bill will allow businesses to choose to use electronic trade documents but does not force them to do so – allowing them to use practices and processes which work for them. It will set a vital precedent for all sectors and industries using English law as a basis for international contracts, including across the Commonwealth.

Commonly used documents in the UK for the trade in or transport of goods which the Bill will enable to become electronic include:

- a bill of exchange
- a promissory note
- a bill of lading
- a ship's delivery order
- a warehouse receipt
- a mate's receipt
- a marine insurance policy
- a cargo insurance certificate

The new rules will require trade documents in electronic form to meet certain criteria designed to replicate the key features of paper trade documents. This includes ensuring only one person, or parties acting jointly, can exercise exclusive control over it at any time, and removing the previous holder's ability to exercise control over it once it has been transferred on.

The Bill will have its second reading when parliamentary time allows.

Chris Southworth, Secretary General, ICC United Kingdom said:

The publication of the Bill is a game changer with huge economic gains to be made for trade if companies digitalise systems and remove paper. Trade plays a huge role in the global economy so digitalisation is vital to establishing a more sustainable system.

Real time transactional data will enable us to gather far richer, more insightful information to help us track and monitor the flow of sustainable goods and finance across the system. This is simply not possible if information is held on paper documents

\*\*\*ENDS

\*\*\*Notes to Editors:

The Bill was developed by the Law Commission for England & Wales and the government has consulted with the Territorial Offices and Devolved Administrations to ensure that it works for the whole of the UK. Reform in this area is a G7 commitment made under DCMS Secretary of State's Digital Track of the UK G7 Presidency.

DCMS is backing the country's powerhouse sectors to grow the economy and make a difference where people live.

The digital sector contributes approximately £138 billion to the economy. There are 1,822,000 jobs in the sector – 250,000 more than in 2019 before the pandemic.

Exports of services by the digital sector were worth £56 billion in 2020, which is around a fifth of the UK's total service exports.

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## [Gulf Cooperation Council trade negotiations update](#)



The first round of negotiations for a [Free Trade Agreement](#) (FTA) between the United Kingdom (UK) and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) took place between 22

August and 29 September 2022. The negotiations were conducted virtually.

In this round of negotiations, the UK and GCC discussed their objectives for the FTA and exchanged technical information. Technical discussions were held across 29 policy areas over 33 sessions. In total, more than 100 UK negotiators from across government took part in this round of negotiations.

An FTA will be a substantial economic opportunity, and a significant moment in the UK – GCC relationship. Government analysis shows that, in the long-run, a deal with the GCC is expected to increase trade by at least 16 percent, add at least £1.6 billion a year to the UK economy and contribute an additional £600 million or more to UK workers' annual wages.

Both sides have committed to secure an ambitious, comprehensive and modern agreement fit for the 21st century.

The government remains clear that any deal will be in the best interests of the British people and the UK economy. We will not compromise on our high environmental and labour protections, public health, animal welfare and food standards, and we will maintain our right to regulate in the public interest. We are also clear that during these negotiations, the NHS and the services it provides is not on the table.

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1. 12 October 2022

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## [TRA announces interim conclusions on welded tubes reconsideration](#)

News story

The TRA announces its interim conclusions in a reconsideration of a trade remedy measure on welded tubes and pipes from China, Belarus and Russia.



The Trade Remedies Authority (TRA) proposes to change its original decision to re-include galvanised tubes in goods covered by the measure, as it has since been established that this product is produced within the UK. The [rationale for this](#) is explained in a report on the TRA's [public file](#).

Galvanised tubes (non-threaded WTP plated or coated with zinc) are used for a range of purposes including construction uses such as scaffolding poles. If implemented, the change would mean that imports of this product would be subject to a tariff imposed at the border, along with other types of welded tubes and pipes covered by this measure.

The TRA's intended recommendation is being published on the public file on 12 October and will be available for 14 days to allow interested parties to consider the findings. The TRA will then make its final recommendation to the Secretary of State for International Trade.

### **Original investigation of the measure**

In August 2021, the TRA recommended to the Secretary of State for International Trade that the UK continue to apply the anti-dumping duties to imports from China and Belarus but not to imports from Russia. This was because the TRA's analysis found that if the measures were removed, producers in Belarus and China would be likely to dump these products in the future and cause harm to UK industry, but that Russian producers would not. The TRA also recommended that the description of goods to which the anti-dumping should be applied be changed to exclude one of the four types of product covered by the measure, as it was not manufactured within the UK. This recommendation was accepted by the Secretary of State for International Trade.

A domestic steel producer subsequently requested that the TRA reconsider its recommendation and provided new data for TRA to consider as part of its investigation. Reconsiderations are an established part of the UK's tax regime, with many different arms of the Government incorporating them as part of their standard operating procedures. They are one of the main ways businesses can continue to make their case once a decision that affects them has been made.

The TRA's reconsideration covered the same remit as the original transition review. It considered, within the rules set in the UK's regulatory framework and the underlying World Trade Organization obligations, whether its original recommendation was correct. As part of this process, the TRA reviewed all

relevant material, including additional information provided by interested parties.

### **Background information**

- The Trade Remedies Authority is the UK body that investigates whether new trade remedy measures are needed to counter unfair import practices and unforeseen surges of imports. Read more about the TRA's mission in its [Business Plan](#).
- The TRA is an arm's length body of the Department of International Trade (DIT) launched on 1 June 2021. Before its launch, it operated as the Trade Remedies Investigations Directorate (TRID) of DIT.
- Trade remedy investigations were carried out by the EU Commission on the UK's behalf until the UK left the EU. Forty-four EU trade remedy measures of interest to UK producers were carried across into UK law when the UK left the EU and the TRA is currently reviewing each one to assess whether it is suitable for UK needs.
- The Welded Tubes and Pipes measure was the first of these measures to be reviewed and the TRA's review completed in August 2021.
- UK industries concerned about imports have also been able to submit applications for a new trade remedy measure since January 2021. These applications are considered by the TRA to see if there are grounds for an investigation.

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## **Man receives increased sentence after referral to the Court of Appeal**



A man who raped and abused a woman has received an increased prison sentence after his case was referred to the Court of Appeal.

The offender, who cannot be named for legal reasons, raped the victim twice and subjected her to controlling and coercive behaviour. He also subjected the victim's daughter to physical and verbal abuse.

On 15 July 2022, the offender was sentenced to 8 years' and 3 months imprisonment for two counts of rape, controlling and coercive behaviour, child cruelty and common assault. The offender also received a restraining order.

Following the sentencing, the case was referred to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme.

On 12 October 2022, the Court found the original sentence to be unduly lenient and increased it to 11 years 9 months' imprisonment.

Speaking after the hearing, HM Attorney General Rt Hon Michael Ellis KC MP said:

The offender subjected the victim to despicable assaults and controlling, coercive behaviour, which will have a lasting impact on the victim and her daughter.

Increasing the sentence sends a clear message that any type of abuse is not acceptable and will be met with tough punishment.

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1. 12 October 2022

Since publishing this, it has come to our attention that the offender cannot be named for legal reasons.

2. 12 October 2022

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## **CMA to take action to give private patients access to information**

- Private hospitals and consultants could face enforcement action for failing to provide key information for prospective patients
- David Stewart: "Prospective patients need this information to make important and, at times, difficult choices about their private healthcare."

Some private healthcare providers have not been providing prospective

patients with clear and consistent information that would allow them to compare providers, in breach of the Private Healthcare Order, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has warned. As a result, the CMA is set to launch enforcement action.

To ensure people have access to clear and consistent information, the CMA issued the Private Healthcare Order in 2014 – a legally binding order that requires, amongst other things, providers to submit key data to the Private Healthcare Information Network (PHIN). PHIN collates and publishes this data online, allowing prospective patients to compare healthcare providers by important markers such as pricing, customer satisfaction and infection and success rates.

The order has been in place for several years and some providers have not supplied the information required, meaning patients are still unable to make meaningful comparisons when choosing their provider. As a result, the CMA is set to launch targeted enforcement action against a number of private consultants and hospitals.

The first step would be to name those in breach of the Order and then seek the swiftest possible way of addressing their non-compliance – this could be through voluntary commitments from the providers, or if necessary, the CMA could issue legally binding directions or begin court action.

David Stewart, Executive Director of Markets and Mergers, said:

Prospective patients need this information to make important and, at times, difficult choices about their private healthcare – and currently, they don't have the full picture.

We know this isn't an easy task for hospitals and consultants. However, hundreds of hospitals and thousands of consultants have already supplied the right information to PHIN. We thank them for working hard to meet this requirement.

There are still some providers that have failed to make any progress, or even attempt it. If they now show a commitment to making the changes needed, we will support them to achieve this, alongside PHIN. However, those that continue to fail to can expect to face enforcement action.

All updates on this work can be found on the [Private healthcare market investigation](#) page.

## Notes to editors

1. [PHIN](#) is the independent, government-mandated organisation publishing performance and fees information about private consultants and hospitals.
2. The CMA recently approved a new Strategic Plan proposed by PHIN to ensure the industry delivers full compliance with the Order.



3. The CMA has issued a letter to the private healthcare sector announcing it is set to launch enforcement action under the Private Healthcare Market Investigation Order 2014.
4. The CMA's Private Healthcare Market Investigation Order 2014 can be found [here](#).