

UK and Vietnam commit to further strengthen trade ties

The UK and Vietnam have today (Friday 4 October) committed to further strengthening trade and investment ties.

The 11th meeting of the UK-Vietnam Joint Economic and Trade Commission (JETCO) was held in Ha Long Bay today. Discussions focused on a range of issues including bilateral trade and investment ties, cooperation in education, healthcare, energy, agriculture and financial services.

Trade Policy Minister Conor Burns and Vice Minister of Industry and Trade Hoang Quoc Vuong agreed to further collaboration on issues currently preventing UK businesses trading in Vietnam. This includes:

Current caps on foreign ownership of companies in Vietnam, which limits opportunities and means that in some sectors only 49% of a company can be owned by a foreign business.

- Lack of regulatory framework in the Vietnamese Fintech sector, which means licenses are granted at the discretion of the authorities and UK businesses find it difficult to enter the market.
- Sections of Vietnam's renewable energy sector not being aligned with internationally recognised standards, increasing costs for UK business who want to invest in the sector.

As the UK prepares to leave the EU on 31 October, markets like Vietnam will provide significant opportunities for both UK businesses and households.

Total trade between the UK and Vietnam was worth over £6 billion last year alone.

Vietnam is one of the world's fastest growing economies and is predicted to become one of the top 20 global economies by 2050, with GDP increasing by over 7% in 2018.

Trade Policy Minister, Conor Burns said:

Vietnam is one of the most dynamic markets and a key trading partner for the UK going forward, with UK exports to the nation worth over £800 million last year.

As we approach 31 October, our aim is simple – to promote British businesses overseas and strengthen our trading ties globally. Vietnam is one of the world's fastest growing markets and our trade talks are making big strides in making it easier for our two countries to do business.

The first official UK-Vietnam JETCO took place in 2007. To date, it has:

- Given UK pharmaceutical companies the ability to export vaccines to Vietnam that have been in the UK market for over 5 years without the need for local clinical trials, allowing life-saving drugs to enter the market.
- Committed to further collaboration on promoting English language skills and mutual recognition between UK and Vietnamese universities, helping to support an estimated 12,000 Vietnamese students studying in the UK.

During his visit, Minister Burns visited Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi where he met with leading British businesses operating in the country.

Mr Burns also attended the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the University of Bedfordshire and its local partner, Hong Bang International University providing 6 new joint degree programmes in Vietnam.

[UK and Tunisia sign continuity agreement](#)

The UK government has signed a trade and political continuity agreement with Tunisia in London today.

- Trade between the UK and Tunisia was worth £378 million in 2018.
- The UK has now secured trade with countries accounting for £100 billion.
- The agreement will ensure British businesses and consumers benefit from continued access to the market after we leave the EU.

The British Ambassador to Tunisia Louise De Sousa signed the agreement with the Tunisian Ambassador to the United Kingdom Nabil Ben Khedher.

Welcoming the agreement, UK Minister for the Middle East Dr Andrew Murrison said:

The signing of this agreement demonstrates the UK's commitment to Tunisia, working together to support our shared long-term ambitions for a deeper economic partnership.

Tunisia represents opportunities for UK companies and this agreement gives exporters and consumers the certainty they need to continue trading freely and in confidence as the UK prepares to leave the EU.

The Agreement will ensure British businesses and consumers benefit from continued trade with Tunisia after we leave the European Union. It provides,

among other trade benefits, tariff-free trade of industrial products together with liberalisation of trade in agricultural, agri-food and fisheries products.

This will further help to strengthen the trading relationship between the UK and Tunisia, which was worth £378 million last year, an increase of 3.0% on the previous year.

In addition to growing trade, today's agreement seeks to deepen UK-Tunisian cooperation across foreign policy, economic, social and cultural ties. The Agreement provides a framework for policy dialogue and to strengthen cooperation on important issues like education, trade, environmental and human rights matters; reaffirming Britain's commitment to a close relationship with Tunisia and North Africa.

Minister of State for Trade Conor Burns said:

The UK government is committed to ensuring that businesses are fully prepared for Brexit. Today's signing ensures that UK and Tunisian businesses, exporters and consumers can continue to trade freely after the UK leaves the EU on 31st October.

I am confident that this agreement will usher in a new phase of greater cooperation between our two countries and help pave the way for increased bilateral trade and investment in the future.

Notes to editors

- This agreement will be subject to the domestic parliamentary procedures in both the UK and Tunisia before it is brought into force.
 - This agreement is designed to take effect when the EU-Tunisia agreement ceases to apply to the UK.
 - The UK has now secured agreements with countries that accounted for £100 billion of trade in 2018.
 - Trade between the UK and Tunisia was worth £378 million in 2018.
 - Statistics sourced from ONS 'UK total trade: all countries, non-seasonally adjusted January to March 2019 release'. Figures relate to 2018.
 - Under the new agreement UK consumers will continue to benefit from lower prices on goods imported from Tunisia, such as textiles and clothing. Consumers in Tunisia will continue to benefit from lower tariffs on products such as machinery and mechanical appliances produced in the UK.
 - The UK-Tunisia Association Agreement replicates the effects of the existing trade and non-trade provisions as far as possible. It will come into effect as soon as the existing EU-Tunisia Association Agreement ceases to apply to the UK.
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Planning Inspectorate publish an updated Inquiries Review Action Plan following Bridget Rosewell's recent visit

Today, 4 October 2019, the Planning Inspectorate have published an update to the [Inquires Review Action Plan](#) (PDF, 813KB, 45 pages) first published in May. The Action Plan sets out how the recommendations from the Rosewell Review into Planning Inquiries are being implemented. This update follows on from the [visit paid to the Inspectorate by Bridget Rosewell on 19 September](#).

Since the publication of the Inquires Review findings in February 2019, significant progress has been made with over half of the 22 recommendations delivered and all others well under way. Most importantly, all planning appeal inquiries are now following the new inquiries process.

Progress against the 22 Recommendations

- 1 Improving the submission and validation of appeals
- 2 Reforming the statement of case ✓
- 3 Streamlining the process for deciding the appeal mode to be used ✓
- 4 Issuing a start letter more quickly ✓
- 5 Preparing for the inquiry (start letter to start of inquiry) ✓
- 6 Costs of the Inquiry
- 7 Statements of Common Ground ✓
- 8 Requiring early inspector engagement ✓
- 9 Preparation in approaching the examination of the evidence ✓
- 10 The timely submission of inquiry documents
- 11 Inspectorate to enforce timely submission of docs including with sanctions ✓
- 12 Encouraging early identification of Rule 6 parties ✓
- 13 The conduct of inquiries and the role played by inspectors ✓
- 14 Use of technology
- 15 The role of interested parties during the event ✓
- 16 Allocation of time post inquiry for the inspector to write up the case ✓
- 17 Decisions made directly by the Secretary of State
- 18 Inspector availability and the management of casework ✓
- 19 The number of withdrawn inquiry appeals ✓
- 20 The benefits of a policy feedback loop
- 21 Implementing the proposals and monitoring future performance ✓
- 22 Reforming data collection and performance measurement

Since the start of issuing Decisions in the new 'Rosewell style' in March

2019, decisions from 15 inquiries have been issued using the new process and [timeline](#) all within the expected timeframe of 24-26 weeks; over 90% have been within 24 or less; under 10% within 26 weeks.

The Action Plan is a live document and will be updated again in February 2020 and June 2020.

[Hong Kong protests, 4 October 2019: Foreign Secretary's statement](#)

Following Hong Kong's use of regulations under emergency legislation, which will come into effect on 5 October, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

Political dialogue is the only way to resolve the situation in Hong Kong. While governments need to ensure the security and safety of their people, they must avoid aggravating and instead reduce tensions.

Further information

[Deputyship fee refunds scheme launched](#)

Refunds are being offered to those who were charged more than was necessary for certain deputyship fees charged for any period between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2015.

Current deputies acting for existing clients do not need to apply. The Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) will be in touch with deputies in the coming weeks to arrange any refunds due.

Due to difficulty in predicting costs as the number of deputyships rose faster than expected, the fees charged did not match how much it cost OPG to supervise. Since 1 April 2015, clients have not been overcharged.

The Ministry of Justice, which sets OPG's fees, has now launched a refund scheme for those who paid higher fees for the qualifying period. The scheme will be run by OPG and does not apply to fees paid to either OPG Scotland, the Office of Care and Protection in Northern Ireland or the Court of Protection.

Former clients where the deputyship has ended

If you are a former client now able to make all your own decisions, the former client's attorney or acting on behalf of someone who has died, then you will need to apply for a refund.

Only one application form needs to be completed for each former client; OPG will then find all qualifying fees paid by them during the period.

Full guidance for those applying is available online and there is a dedicated refunds helpline for those who need it. If you, or someone you are acting for, thinks they may be eligible please visit www.gov.uk/deputyship-refund for more details and to apply.

For those who don't have internet access or need help with their refund please contact OPG on 0300 456 0300* and select option 6 to speak to a member of the refunds team. The scheme is open for 3 years so there's plenty of time to apply.

*Lines are open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9am to 5pm and Wednesday from 10am to 5pm. Please select option 6 if calling. Visit www.gov.uk/call-charges for call charges.