

The EU Viet Nam free trade agreement

All those who write to me to complain that the UK might sign a Free Trade Agreement with the USA not to their liking might like to concentrate on the Free Trade Agreements we have to accept, entered into by the EU for us. This week the EU has signed a new agreement with Viet Nam. There has been no debate in Parliament about it, and the UK has no right to reject it or to require improvements and amendments.

It is a long and complex document. The tariff reductions are asymmetric, with 7 years to get EU tariffs to zero, and more than 10 years to get all Viet Nam tariffs to zero. Both sides pledge themselves to the doctrine of equivalence over sanitary and phytosanitary matters. The provisions on animal welfare are unclear.

EU trade with Viet Nam is not large. The EU imports some clothing, telecoms products, computers and shoes. I think these agreements ought to be subject to proper Parliamentary control, with UK negotiators taking the views of public and Parliament into the negotiations.