

Prime Minister pledges to build on Brexit achievements in 2022

- 1 January 2022 marks one-year anniversary of UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.
- Government has used Brexit freedoms to establish a point-based immigration system, secure the vaccine rollout and strike new trade deals around the world.
- PM pledges to move “further and faster” to build on these achievements in 2022.

The Government will go “further and faster” to maximise the opportunities of Brexit, the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson has said in comments marking the one-year anniversary of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA).

The landmark agreement, which came into effect a year ago today, is the world’s biggest zero-tariff, zero-quota free trade deal. It allows businesses in Britain to trade freely with Europe while also being able to seize new trading opportunities with countries around the world.

Since the agreement was signed, the Government has sought to capitalise on new freedoms by cutting red tape for businesses, reforming EU rules and regulations and boosting trade abroad to create new jobs here in the UK. Key successes include:

- Taking back control of our borders – replacing freedom of movement with a points-based immigration system that attracts the brightest and best talent from around the world.
- Securing the vaccine rollout – streamlining procurement processes and avoiding cumbersome EU bureaucracy to deliver the fastest vaccine rollout anywhere in Europe last year.
- Striking new free trade deals – with over 70 countries, worth over £760 billion, including landmark deals with Australia and New Zealand that pave the way for our entry to the £9 trillion Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.
- Axing red tape and bureaucracy – ending the Tampon Tax, simplifying complex EU alcohol duty rates, and forging ahead to remove the ban on selling in pounds and ounces and to restore the crown stamp onto the side of pint glasses.
- Strengthening our standards – allowing the UK to go further than the EU and set improved environmental standards, animal welfare and product safety.

Having left the EU, the UK is now able to establish a regulatory regime which is free of prescriptive EU rules and best suits our own interests.

As part of this effort, officials are currently reviewing thousands of individual EU regulations automatically kept on the statute book after Brexit – known as Retained EU Law – to ensure they benefit people and businesses in

the UK. Laws which do not meet this test will be reformed or repealed.

Alongside the Review into Retained EU Law, work is already taking place across Whitehall to create a better regulatory framework and ensure that the UK is at the leading edge of science and technology. This involves:

- Driving forward work on Artificial Intelligence, where the UK is already at the forefront of global progress, to grow investment and support research and development.
- Enhancing Britain's potential as a world leader in the Future of Transport, including autonomous maritime vessels, self-driving cars and drones and modernising outdated vehicle standards.
- Creating a pro-growth, trusted data rights regime, more proportionate and less burdensome than the EU's GDPR.
- Rolling out a new agricultural system and changing the rules on gene-edited organisms, to enable more sustainable and efficient farming and help produce healthier and more nutritious food.
- Reforming medical devices regulations to foster the development of new and emerging devices, harnessing cutting edge technology and software. This will ensure access to the world's most innovative technologies for NHS patients while maintaining quality and safety.

These plans build on recommendations from the Taskforce for Regulatory Reform, Innovation and Growth (TIGRR) led by Sir Iain Duncan Smith, which reported to government earlier this year.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, said:

A year ago today we entered our new relationship with the EU through the world's biggest ever zero-tariff, zero-quota free trade deal – the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

That was just the start – our mission since has been to maximise the benefits of Brexit so that we can thrive as a modern, dynamic and independent country.

We've replaced free movement with a points-based immigration system. We've secured the fastest vaccine rollout anywhere in Europe last year by avoiding sluggish EU processes. And from Singapore to Switzerland, we've negotiated ambitious free trade deals to boost jobs and investment here at home.

But that's not all. From simplifying the EU's mind-bogglingly complex beer and wine duties to proudly restoring the crown stamp onto the side of pint glasses, we're cutting back on EU red tape and bureaucracy and restoring common sense to our rulebook.

The job isn't finished and we must keep up the momentum. In the year ahead my government will go further and faster to deliver on the promise of Brexit and take advantage of the enormous potential that our new freedoms bring.

Memorial human rights group: statement from UK and partners

Government response

The UK, US, Australia, Canada and EU have today issued the following statement on the court decision to liquidate Russian human rights group Memorial



The following joint statement was today (December 31, 2021) issued by the United States of America, Australia, Canada, the European Union, and the United Kingdom.

“We deplore the decisions by two Russian courts to forcibly close International Memorial and the Memorial Human Rights Center. For more than three decades, Memorial has fulfilled a unique role in documenting historical crimes and recovering for posterity the memory of the tens of millions of victims of political repression in the country.

“Memorial has also advocated tirelessly for the protection of human rights in Russia, exposing appalling abuses, including in the North Caucasus, and maintaining a growing list of individuals it considers to be political prisoners. The claim by Russian authorities that Memorial Human Rights Center’s principled and peaceful work ‘justifies extremism and terrorism’ cannot be accepted. Memorial’s work has never been more needed.

“The unconscionable decision to silence Memorial follows many months of deepening and systematic repression in Russia against human rights defenders, independent media and journalists, political opposition members and critical voices, as well as religious minority groups and other marginalised groups. This further harms Russia’s international reputation, as respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law constitutes one of the foundations of the rules-based international order.

“We call on Russia to uphold its international human rights obligations and

commitments and we continue to condemn the Russian legislation on ‘foreign agents’, which further silences independent voices and shrinks the space for civil society. The people of Russia, like people everywhere, have the right to freedom of expression and association, including in defence of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

Published 31 December 2021

[New Year message from Scottish Secretary Alister Jack](#)

It has been another challenging year and while Covid continues to demand much of us all, I am optimistic for 2022.

We are working flat out to ensure that we have the best protection possible against the Omicron variant – but we shouldn’t forget that we are in a much better place than we were 12 months ago.

This time last year, the vaccination programme was in its infancy and results uncertain.

Now the UK is to the fore in the global struggle against the virus, with the vast majority of us safer thanks to vaccines and – after the Herculean efforts of the NHS over the past couple of weeks – booster jabs too.

I want to pay tribute to the scientists who made this possible by developing, innovating and testing; to the magnificent staff of the NHS and the volunteers who worked alongside them; and to the British military personnel who toiled tirelessly amid the greatest national effort of peacetime.

And thanks are due not least to you, for the sacrifices you’ve made, for looking out for your neighbours, and putting up with huge restrictions on your lives. Thank you, most importantly, for rolling up your sleeves for injections that might well have saved your life and those of others around you.

We still have a way to go, and I encourage anyone not yet vaccinated or boosted to get their jabs now. It’s never too late to play your part in the fight against Covid.

Though it is natural to look back at this time of year, we must also look forward.

Recovering from the pandemic is our priority. The UK Government’s unprecedented package of support – including 18 months of furlough – did a huge amount to protect businesses and livelihoods.

A third of Scottish jobs were supported by our furlough and self-employed schemes, helping insulate families as the economy rode out the storm.

Now we are Building Back Better. The UK Government's £1.5 billion City Deals programme continues at pace. And we have announced more than £191 million in grants for communities in every corner of Scotland, as we drive to level up across the UK. On top of that our Plan for Jobs is getting people into work and helping them progress.

Much is done, yes, but much more remains to be done.

We will bring Freeports – which offer the conditions in which high-tech, high-end jobs can flourish – to Scotland.

The Union Connectivity Review is a visionary blueprint designed to transform the lives of Scots by bringing our transport network up to a standard that is both fit for today and ready for tomorrow. By smoothing the flow of people and goods by road, rail, sea and air, we can deliver a better connected and therefore more prosperous UK.

One beacon of light this year was COP 26, the United Nations' conference hosted in Glasgow, which was huge in scale and vision. It brought together the world in a spirit of joint endeavour to tackle the other great crisis of our times – the climate emergency. The UK will continue to lead the world on tackling climate change during our year-long presidency of COP.

Scotland can lead the world in this green revolution. We're investing massively in renewables such as wind and tidal, while at the same time helping the North Sea industries, on which so many rely on for their livelihoods, transition to new technologies and opportunities.

Though no one can be precise about when the misery of Covid will pass, I am sure that – together as one United Kingdom – better times are ahead for all.

I wish everyone a happy, healthy and prosperous 2022.

[Attorney General refers the sentences of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes' killers to the Court of Appeal](#)

The Attorney General, Rt Hon Suella Braverman QC MP, has referred the sentences of Emma Tustin and Thomas Hughes to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme.

Emma Tustin, 32, was convicted of the murder of her 6-year-old stepson,

Arthur Labinjo-Hughes. The victim's father, Thomas Hughes, 29, was convicted of his manslaughter. Both offenders were also convicted of child cruelty.

Arthur Labinjo-Hughes' death was caused by a severe head injury. In the weeks leading up to his death, the Court found that the offenders collaborated in a campaign of cruelty intended to cause the victim significant harm and suffering. Arthur Labinjo-Hughes was routinely subjected to physical violence and ill-treatment and he was deliberately deprived of water and poisoned with salt.

The offenders were sentenced at Birmingham Crown Court on 3 December 2021. Emma Tustin was sentenced to life imprisonment with a minimum term of 29 years, and Thomas Hughes was sentenced to 21 years' imprisonment.

Speaking about the case, the Attorney General said:

My thoughts are with all those who loved Arthur Labinjo-Hughes. This is an extremely upsetting and disturbing case, involving a clearly vulnerable young child. Emma Tustin and Thomas Hughes grossly abused their position of trust and subjected an innocent child, who they should have been protecting to continued emotional and physical abuse.

I understand how distressing the public have found this case, but it is my job to decide if a sentence appears to be unduly lenient based on the facts of the case. I have carefully considered the details of this case, and I have decided to refer the sentences to the Court of Appeal as I believe them to be too low.

A date for the hearing at the Court of Appeal is yet to be set.

The ULS scheme allows victims of crime, their families, prosecutors and the public to ask the Law Officers to review sentences for certain crimes that fall within the scheme that they believe are too low.

The ULS scheme only applies to certain sentences given in the Crown Court in England and Wales.

The Attorney General can only ask the Court of Appeal to review a sentence under the ULS scheme if she considers that sentence to be unduly lenient. That means, for example, that the sentencing judge made a gross error or imposed a sentence outside the range of reasonable sentences available.

The Attorney General acts independently of government when deciding on Unduly Lenient Sentences, also known as acting as 'guardian of the public interest'.

New VAPC Terms of Reference will assist all veterans and their families

News story

The Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Leo Docherty, endorsed the VAPCs' new supplementary Terms of Reference, enabling VAPC members to represent all veterans and their families in their region.



Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Leo Docherty with serving personnel. UK MOD © Crown copyright 2021

The Minister's letter of 15 November 2021 to Johnny Lighten MBE, the Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committees' (VAPC) "Chair of Chairs", stated:

Thank you for inviting me to your conference [of VAPC Chairs] on 26 October [2021]. I found it most interesting and I left feeling really enthused and with a greater awareness of the role that the VAPCs play in supporting veterans.

I know that there has been much activity over the last 12 months surrounding the introduction of the new TORs and am pleased that I have been able to play my part in agreeing these. I look forward to working closer with you as the National Chair over the next 12 months and I see your role as key in enabling the VAPCs to move forward together in supporting our Veterans.

I believe that these TORs will enable the VAPCs to deliver a structured contribution to better understanding the support the whole of the veteran's 'family' are receiving in your regions. I hope you now feel that you now have a real opportunity to assist in shaping and informing the strategy for our veterans and to provide

a regional picture of successful delivery of the soon to be announced Veteran Strategy Action Plan.

I look forward to reading your first report in May 2022 and again in November 2022 after which, further discussion can take place regarding potentially formalising your broader role in Statute. I am pleased to say that I have now signed your new TORs and a copy of these are enclosed.

These Terms of Reference (TORs) reflect the fact that the VAPCs, given their independent and regional set-up, aim to make a useful contribution to the Government's drive to make the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran.

The TORs have 2 principal purposes:

1. To set out the activities that members of VAPCs, as individuals and as members of informal regional groups, are asked to carry out relating to all veterans and their families.
2. To provide direction relating to their performance for an initial period of 12 months beginning from the date these TORs are agreed.

Further information

Published 31 December 2021