

UK and Australia sign historic trade deal

- The UK-Australia trade deal is the first 'from scratch' UK trade agreement to be finalised since the UK left the EU.
- It was agreed in principle by the UK Prime Minister in June and the UK International Trade Secretary has today signed the final deal during a virtual ceremony.
- The deal will benefit the UK by eliminating most tariffs on UK exports and unlock £10.4 billion of additional trade.

The UK has signed an historic trade agreement with Australia, our first 'from scratch' since leaving the EU, setting new global standards in digital and services and creating new work and travel opportunities for Brits and Australians.

The deal was 'agreed in principle' by the UK Prime Minister and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison in London in June, and negotiators have now finalised all chapters of the agreement. The final deal was signed in a virtual ceremony by International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan on Friday morning and will now be laid in the UK Parliament for a period of scrutiny.

The deal is expected to unlock £10.4 billion of additional trade, boosting our economy and increasing wages across the UK, while eliminating tariffs on most UK exports. It includes cutting-edge agreements in areas where Britain is a world leader, including in digital and technology, along with increased access to Australia for the UK's powerhouse service sectors.

This agreement will help create new opportunities for businesses in both the UK and Australia:

- Establishes clear and transparent rules that ensure fair treatment for UK investors, greater legal certainty to prohibit discriminatory treatment and reduces the risks associated with investment decisions.
- Provides UK investors with broader and deeper market access than Australia has ever guaranteed before, making it easier to invest across the economy while restricting limitations on business activity and reducing "investor-unfriendly" performance requirements.
- It gives UK and Australian firms guaranteed access to each other's government procurement markets
- It will allow young people to work and travel in Australia for up to three years at a time, removing previous visa conditions.
- UK service suppliers including architects, scientists, researchers, lawyers and accountants will have access to visas to work in Australia without being subject to Australia's skilled occupation list. This is more than Australia has ever offered any other country in a free trade agreement.
- UK businesses and professionals will have guaranteed certainty of

access, helping to make long-term business decisions around the movement of personnel, bidding for and accepting new contracts, and advertising their services in Australia.

- The deal removes tariffs on UK exports, making it cheaper for Australian importers to sell iconic British products like cars, Scotch whisky and UK fashion. Australian favourites like Jacob's Creek and Hardys wines, Tim Tams and surfboards will be more accessible for British consumers.

The deal is also a gateway into the fast-growing Indo-Pacific region and will boost the UK's bid to join CPTPP, one of the largest free trade areas in the world, covering £8.4 trillion of GDP and 11 Pacific nations from Australia to Mexico.

International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

Our UK-Australia trade deal is a landmark moment in the historic and vital relationship between our two commonwealth nations. This agreement is tailored to the UK's strengths, and delivers for businesses, families, and consumers in every part of the UK – helping us to level up. We will continue to work together in addressing shared challenges in global trade, climate change and technological changes in the years ahead.

Today we demonstrate what the UK can achieve as an agile, independent sovereign trading nation. This is just the start as we get on the front foot and seize the seismic opportunities that await us on the world stage.

British High Commissioner to Australia HE Vicki Treadell said:

Today we make history. A day that heralds our exciting future. This Free Trade Agreement is a world-class partnership that helps Australians access the best of British high-quality goods and services, British companies to realise even greater opportunity in Australia and shows that Britain is open for business. The mobility elements further strengthen our existing connections and ensures that talent exchange will be even easier to achieve.

I look forward to working with our Australian friends to take this ambitious agreement forward as we realise the incredible opportunities now available to both our nations.

RenewableUK's CEO Dan McGrail said:

Australia has the potential to be a clean energy powerhouse, able

to provide all its electricity needs using just 1% of its offshore wind potential.

This free trade agreement will make it easier for UK and Australian companies to export green technologies and expertise, speeding up the transition of both countries to our net zero goals. We look forward to seeing even more UK companies out in Australia, ensuring they maximise all the economic benefits we've seen flow from our low-cost wind energy and green hydrogen developments.

TheCityUK Managing Director, International Trade and Investment, Nicola Watkinson, said:

This agreement with Australia is further evidence of the UK breaking ground with new trade deals with key trade partners. It is the first wholly new agreement negotiated with an advanced economy, and it furthers the UK objective to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

The agreement rightly focuses on issues important to the services sectors representing 80% of the UK economy, such as recognition of professional qualifications, data and digital provisions, which all create new opportunities for UK exporters. As the UK's largest exporter of services, the financial and related professional services industry welcomes this agreement.

CEO of Make UK, the manufacturers organisation Stephen Phipson said:

Achieving a new preferential trade arrangement with Australia is welcome for Britain's manufacturers who will benefit from day one with tariff free access on goods sold and witness improvements in business mobility between the two countries.

With enhanced export opportunities for the UK's medical device manufacturing sector and strengthened frameworks for bi-lateral co-operation on technical standards and regulations, there is much that the UK and Australia can work on in the future to boost exports from the UK. In the coming months, we look forward to working with Government to look at how the wider benefits of this new and closer relationship can be positioned and communicated with the manufacturing sector to maximise understanding of the opportunities available ahead of the deal coming into force in the future.

Skills boost to support more people into jobs

Adults and young people across the country will benefit from more high-quality and flexible education and training – levelling up opportunities and supporting more people into higher skilled, higher wage jobs.

People looking to upskill or retrain will have access to more than 100 short courses starting from September next year, lasting between six weeks to a year, supporting them to space out their studies and learn at a pace that works for them. More than 20 universities and colleges will offer the courses in subjects where there are skills shortages, such as Digital, Net Zero, Education, STEM and Healthcare – offering an alternative to studying a traditional three-year degree.

A further nine [Institutes of Technology](#) have been announced today (Friday, 17 December) in locations including Blackpool, Derby, Salford and Essex, bringing the total to 21 across the country and delivering on the government's manifesto commitment. Institutes of Technology are unique collaborations between employers, colleges and universities that specialise in offering high-quality Higher Technical Education and training in subjects such as advanced manufacturing, digital and cyber security, aerospace and healthcare, which will deliver the skilled workforce businesses need and get more people into jobs closer to home.

£150 million has also been awarded to 100 colleges and universities to upgrade their facilities and equipment to boost access to higher technical training and flexible courses in key subjects, such as engineering, healthcare and science, that will help tackle regional skills gaps and level up local economies.

Additionally, young people starting new T Level qualifications in 2023 in subjects such as Media, Broadcast and Production, Animal Care and Management and Catering are also set to benefit from over £150 million investment to upgrade teaching facilities and equipment.

The Department for Education has also confirmed that students studying courses including T Levels will benefit from [an extra £615 million cash boost in the 2022-23 financial year](#) so every young person can continue to access the training they need to succeed. The cash injection will see per student funding boosted by over 8%. This includes funding for an extra 40 hours of education per student to help them catch up on lost learning due to the pandemic. On top of this, funding for high value courses – those that deliver the skills that the country needs and which can lead to higher wages for students – and high cost courses including building and construction will also be increased.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said:

Ensuring everyone is given the opportunity to reach their full potential, no matter their age or life stage, is a vital part of our mission to level up this country.

These measures, including our new short courses and nine new Institutes of Technology, will boost access to more high-quality and flexible education and training – giving people the chance to learn at a pace that is right for them, while ensuring we have the skilled workforce needed to boost our economy.

Colleges including Weston College, Somerset, and universities including University of Wolverhampton and Keele will offer the short courses, which will help people to fit training around their lives while helping to plug local skills gaps. Student finance will also be available to students taking the courses, marking the next step in the development of the government's Lifelong Loan Entitlement, which, from 2025, will provide individuals with a loan entitlement to the equivalent of four years of post-18 education they can use flexibly over their lifetime.

Funding has been awarded to Nottingham College to create a new Laboratory Science and Innovation Centre to expand their training offer, along with Roehampton University that will deliver a new Healthcare hub to support more higher technical, apprenticeships and flexible modular training. These are just two of the 100 successful further and higher education providers that will lead projects to modernise facilities as part of the Office for Students' Strategic Priorities Grant.

From today, colleges, schools and sixth forms delivering T Levels can bid for a share of over £150 million – [from the fourth wave of the T Level Capital Fund](#). The funding will be used to refurbish buildings and facilities, including creating training kitchens for catering students, studios for media students, and facilities for agricultural courses such as trainee milking parlours or labs to learn about land science in readiness for students starting courses in September 2023.

A further 12 projects totalling £16 million supported by [wave 3 of the T Level Capital Fund](#) have also been announced today, bringing the total to 77 projects that will provide new buildings and facilities for students studying T Levels from September 2022. Successful projects include Gateway Sixth Form College in Leicester, awarded funding to create a dedicated health suite and a central learning resource space for students, and UTC South Durham, awarded funding to extend their engineering hall, to include two engineering workshops and an IT suite.

The Chancellor announced in the [Budget](#) that an extra £1.6 billion would be invested in 16-19 education and training by 2024-25 compared with 2021-22 financial year. Today the Department for Education has published details of how £615 million of that funding will be invested next year.

New research reveals the most pressing opportunities and barriers to trustworthy innovation in data and AI

- A CDEI survey of almost 1,000 businesses reveals how AI and data is being used across the UK – and highlights the sectors where there is greatest innovation.
- The CDEI's AI Barometer, informed by the insight of over 80 sector experts, highlights the most pressing opportunities and challenges for trustworthy innovation.
- New research follows the publication of the CDEI's AI assurance ecosystem roadmap, which sets out the steps required to build a world-leading ecosystem of products and services that can give organisations greater confidence to invest in AI.

A major new survey of British businesses, commissioned by the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation (CDEI), the government's expert body on trustworthy innovation in data and AI, has revealed the importance of supporting companies to adapt to an increasingly data-driven world.

The survey highlights significant variation in the penetration of data-driven technologies across sectors of the economy. For instance, while there is comparatively lower adoption of data-driven technologies in healthcare businesses (12%), the industry has the highest proportion of extensive AI use (10%). This contrasts with digital and communications businesses, where one-in-five (21%) businesses use data-driven technologies, but only one-in-20 (5%) extensively use these technologies.

This research reveals a range of barriers that, once overcome, will enable the UK to build on its strong foundations and grasp the opportunities presented by greater adoption of data driven-technologies.

Key barriers highlighted in the research relate to the access and sharing of data. Over two thirds (70%) of businesses said they desired more information to help them navigate the often complex legal requirements around data collection, use and sharing. Nearly a quarter (23%) of businesses cited difficulty accessing quality data as a barrier to innovation, while almost half of businesses (43%) highlighted limited technological capabilities. These findings align with [recent research published by DCMS](#) on barriers to data access across the economy.

The CDEI has also published the second edition of its AI Barometer, an analysis of the most pressing opportunities and risks associated with AI and data use. Drawing on the insight of over 80 expert panellists, the report identifies areas where there are untapped opportunities for innovation in three key sectors which have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic:

- In **transport and logistics**, these include opportunities to improve energy efficiency, drive down emissions, and yield better environmental outcomes, as well as smooth trade flows at borders.
- In **recruitment and employment contexts**, data-driven innovation has the potential to improve talent pipelines, enable greater access to job opportunities and reduce bias and discrimination.
- In **education**, data-driven innovation was seen to have the potential to reduce the administrative burden on teachers and increase social mobility.

The CDEI is already taking steps to help the UK seize these opportunities. Last week, it [set out the steps](#) required to build a world-leading ecosystem of products and services that can verify that AI systems are effective, trustworthy and compliant with regulation. These tools will help to give organisations the confidence they need to invest and realise the benefits of AI. The CDEI is also working closely with the Office for Artificial Intelligence on the upcoming AI White Paper, which will highlight the role of assurance both as a market-based means of managing AI risks, and as a complement to regulation, that will empower industry to ensure that AI systems meet their regulatory obligations.

Building on insights from the AI Barometer, last week new [industry-led guidance](#) into the responsible use of AI in recruitment was published by the Recruitment and Employment Confederation, developed in partnership with CDEI.

The CDEI also works alongside teams in DCMS to deliver the [National Data Strategy](#) and enable trustworthy access to quality data, by exploring new approaches to data governance (such as [data intermediaries](#)) and emerging technical solutions (including through a new UK-US R&D effort to [mature privacy-enhancing technologies](#), announced last week). The government recently published a policy framework setting out its approach to [unlocking the value of data across the economy](#), to deliver on Mission 1 of the National Data Strategy.

Edwina Dunn, Interim Chair of the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation, said:

Data and AI can help tackle some of the greatest challenges of our time. In order to achieve this, we need to overcome barriers to

innovation, such as poor quality data, and address risks such as algorithmic bias. The CDEI is working in partnership with a range of organisations to help them overcome these barriers, mitigate risk and put high-level ethical principles – such as accountability and transparency – into practice. It's practical work like this that will enable us to build greater public trust in how data and AI are used.

Chris Philp MP, Minister for Technology and the Digital Economy at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said:

Data and AI can be harnessed to support both our economic and social recovery as we look to build back better. Understanding how we can best use technologies to address major shifts in labour markets and the ways that we work, deliver education or decarbonise our transport infrastructure, will be crucial to this mission. I look forward to working with organisations across the UK to address the barriers to innovation highlighted in the CDEI's analysis, so that the UK can unlock the full potential of data and AI.

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Notes to editors:

- The CDEI is a government expert body enabling the trustworthy use of data and AI. Its multidisciplinary team of specialists, supported by an [advisory board](#) of world-leading experts, work in partnership with organisations to deliver, test and refine trustworthy approaches to data and AI governance.
- To produce the report, the CDEI conducted an extensive review of policy and academic literature, and convened over 80 expert panellists. The CDEI used a novel comparative survey to enable panellists to meaningfully assess a large number of technological impacts; the results of which informed a series of workshops. It also commissioned Ipsos MORI to survey 965 businesses across eight sectors between March and May 2021, including vendors, users and non-users of data-driven technology.
- In June 2020, the CDEI published the first iteration of its [AI Barometer](#), which assessed the opportunities, risks, and governance challenges associated with AI and data use across five key sectors

(including criminal justice, financial services, health and social care, digital and social media, and energy and utilities).

- The CDEI's 2021/22 work programme is focused on three areas, aligned with the priorities set out in the [National Data Strategy](#): enabling trustworthy access to and sharing of data; building a strong AI assurance ecosystem in the UK; and supporting the delivery of transformative data and AI projects in the public sector.

[UK and Australia sign world-class trade deal](#)

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The deal was agreed in principle by the Prime Minister and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison in London in June, and negotiators have now finalised all chapters of the agreement.

The final deal was signed in a virtual ceremony by International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan on Thursday night, and will now be laid in Parliament for a period of scrutiny.

The deal is expected to unlock £10.4 billion of additional trade, boosting our economy and increasing wages across the UK, while eliminating tariffs on 100% of UK exports.

It is a deal tailored to the UK economy, with cutting-edge agreements in areas where Britain is a world leader, including in digital and tech, along with increased access to Australia for the UK's powerhouse service sectors.

This agreement will help create new opportunities for businesses in both the UK and Australia:

- It gives UK firms guaranteed access to bid for an additional £10 billion worth of Australian public sector contracts per year.
- It will allow young people to work and travel in Australia for up to three years at a time, removing previous visa conditions.
- For the first time UK service suppliers including architects, scientists, researchers, lawyers and accountants will have access to visas to work in Australia without being subject to Australia's changing skilled occupation list. This is more than Australia has ever offered any other country in a free trade agreement.

- The deal removes tariffs on all UK exports, making it cheaper to sell iconic products like cars, Scotch whisky and UK fashion to Australia, while making Australian favourites like Jacob's Creek and Hardys wines, Tim Tams and surfboards more accessible for British consumers.

The deal is also a gateway into the fast-growing Indo-Pacific region and will boost our bid to join CPTPP, one of the largest free trade areas in the world, covering £8.4 trillion of GDP and 11 Pacific nations from Australia to Mexico.

International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

Our UK-Australia trade deal is a landmark moment in the historic and vital relationship between our two Commonwealth nations. This agreement is tailored to the UK's strengths, and delivers for businesses, families, and consumers in every part of the UK – helping us to level up. We will continue to work together in addressing shared challenges in global trade, climate change and technological changes in the years ahead.

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[G7 statement on the Omicron variant](#)

News story

The statement issued by the G7 health ministers on the global threat of the new variant of COVID-19 following their meeting.



G7 health ministers today held their final meeting of the UK's G7 Presidency, focusing particularly on the very worrying developments on Omicron.

Deeply concerned by the rise in cases, ministers agreed that these developments should be seen as the biggest current threat to global public health. It is more important than ever to closely cooperate, and monitor as well as share data. This will be key to addressing the fast developing situation.

In light of these extensive challenges, G7 ministers reiterated the commitment to taking forward the pledges in recent G7 and G20 declarations to tackle the ongoing pandemic and build defences for the future. Following information exchange between ministers they agreed that working together was crucial in responding to the rapidly growing Omicron wave. Ministers highlighted the importance of equitable access to diagnostics, genome sequencing, vaccines and therapeutics. They also agreed on the increasing importance of booster campaigns and regular testing alongside continued non-pharmaceutical measures. Ministers reiterated their continuous support for COVAX, their commitment to the global effort on vaccine rollout and their support for accelerated development of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics in pandemics.

G7 health ministers also welcomed the close cooperation throughout the UK's G7 Presidency on clinical trials, global health security, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and digital health. Ministers welcomed the new German health minister and committed to working closely with Germany as they take on the G7 Presidency.

A Department of Health and social care spokesman said:

The Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid today hosted G7 Health Ministers in the final meeting of the UK's G7 Presidency in which all countries agreed the Omicron variant is the biggest threat to global public health.

Ministers shared their concerns over the rise in Omicron cases around the world and discussed how to combat the new variant, stressing the importance of co-operating closely to monitor the situation, share data and increase vaccinations to provide as much protection as possible.

The UK had another record day of booster jabs yesterday and over 25 million people across all four nations have bolstered their immunity with a top-up jab as part of the UK's mission to get boosted now.

Ministers also joined the Health and Social Care Secretary in congratulating Minister Lauterbach on taking over the G7 Presidency