

Liz Truss appoints New Trade Commissioners to boost UK trade

Press release

International Trade Secretary, Liz Truss, has named two new HM Trade Commissioners (HMTCs).



Two new Her Majesty's Trade Commissioners (HMTCs) have today been appointed by International Trade Secretary Liz Truss, to play a crucial role in attracting inward investment and helping British businesses seize export opportunities throughout Europe and Central Asia.

Working closely with the wider diplomatic network and other UK Government colleagues in their region, the new HMTCs will lead on a coordinated government effort overseas to promote UK trade, delivering jobs and prosperity for the UK economy.

Chris Barton, previously Acting Director General of Trade Negotiations at DIT, has been appointed as HMTC for Europe. Deputy HMTC for Europe, Kenan Poleo, becomes HMTC for Eastern Europe and Central Asia Network (EECAN).

International Trade Secretary, Liz Truss said:

As an independent trading nation, our relationships with our closest trading partner Europe and with Central Asia remain extremely important. We are working hard to promote Britain as a top investment destination – particularly in future-facing industries like science, tech and the green economy – and help British exporters access new markets.

I'm delighted to welcome Chris and Kenan as Her Majesty's Trade Commissioners. They bring proven expertise and a wealth of knowledge to help British businesses succeed in this new trading landscape and take advantage of new opportunities as we strike trade agreements.

Kenan Poleo, HM Trade Commissioner for EECAN, said:

I am honoured to be appointed Her Majesty's Trade Commissioner for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Countries across this dynamic region continue to diversify their economies into areas where the UK excels, such as technology and clean growth.

My key priority will be to support British businesses in realising the opportunities this diversification provides through dialogue and collaboration around market access, innovation and the key global challenges we share.

With GDP per capita across the region set to maintain its upward trajectory for the foreseeable future, my teams are primed to guide businesses on how to strengthen their investment and export horizons into these exciting, growing markets.

Chris Barton, HM Trade Commissioner for Europe, said:

I am delighted to be appointed as Her Majesty's Trade Commissioner for Europe. Europe accounts for half of UK exports and is our largest source of inward investment. Ratification of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, alongside new FTAs with other European countries, provides a strong basis for further opportunities.

It is my job to build on these firm foundations, encouraging trade and investment between the UK and other European countries by reducing barriers to UK trade in Europe, helping UK businesses to export to Europe, attracting inward investment from Europe, and championing the rules-based international trading system with Europe.

I look forward to working with colleagues, friends and partners across Europe in delivering this exciting agenda.

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ASRC special session on Ukraine: UK statement

Thank you Madam Secretary General. I would like to start by thanking the Swedish Chairpersonship for organising this special session on the security situation in Ukraine and the panel for their valuable insights. I reaffirm the UK's position – which I made at this Conference last year – that we are committed to ensuring a sovereign, stable and prosperous Ukraine.

Since 2014, Russia has violated fundamental OSCE principles and commitments through its illegal annexation of Crimea and through instigating and fuelling a conflict in the Donbas, critically undermining security in the region.

Sadly, the people of Ukraine suffer as a result. In the seven years since the conflict in Donbas began, nearly 14,000 people have lost their lives, including almost 3,500 civilians. We are grateful to Ms Gillette and all of the staff working for the ICRC in Ukraine for seeking to alleviate some of the challenges felt by the most vulnerable in this conflict.

We are firm in our position – Russia is a party to the conflict in eastern Ukraine, not a mediator. It bears a heavy responsibility for this ongoing devastation.

We continue to be deeply concerned about the heightened tensions caused by Russia's military activity on Ukraine's border and in illegally annexed Crimea since April this year. The UK is carefully monitoring the situation, including troops and equipment remaining in proximity to the Ukrainian border and in illegally annexed Crimea. We continue to urge Russia to engage constructively with the OSCE processes and mechanisms available, including under the Vienna Document, to provide necessary transparency.

In the context of this fragile security situation, adherence to the ceasefire is even more important. We are particularly concerned that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine has recorded an increase, since late March of this year, of the use of weapons that should have been withdrawn under the Minsk agreements. Reports of shelling by Russia-backed armed formations in Avdiivka over the weekend, injuring ten Ukrainian soldiers, is a recent concerning example. In this context, we note that roughly 90% of the weapons seen by SMM in violation of withdrawal lines this month have been in areas held by Russia backed armed formations – a recurring trend seen throughout the year. Russia should use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs, to ensure they comply with the Minsk agreement commitments.

We are grateful to Ambassador Çevik and the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission for their factual, impartial reporting on the situation on the ground in Ukraine. The SMM operates in challenging circumstances. The UK condemns continued restrictions on the Mission's freedom of movement, overwhelmingly in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations, as well as high levels of

signal jamming which impede the Mission's ability to carry out its mandate. These restrictions, especially at a time when transparency on the situation on the ground is sorely needed, are unacceptable. We call on Russia to play its part and ensure that the SMM has full, safe, and unhindered access throughout Ukraine, including Crimea.

We welcome Ambassador Kinnunen and his team – you have our full support. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Grau for her service. We commend efforts in the Trilateral Contact Group to make progress on commitments made at the December 2019 Paris Summit, including to implement plans on demining and disengagement. If implemented, these plans could significantly improve the lives of civilians living in conflict-affected areas. Russia must match the political will shown by Ukraine in the Trilateral Contact Group, so that progress can be made.

Finally, I'd like to highlight the UK's concerns at Russia's ongoing militarisation of Crimea, the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. Since, 2015, Russia has conscripted at least 31,000 residents of Crimea. Those who resist conscription face prosecution. We call on Russia to end this appalling violation of human rights immediately.

Russia must withdraw its military personnel and weapons from the territory of Ukraine and end its illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol. The UK fully supports the objectives of Ukraine's International Crimea Platform, which launched last week. Crimea is Ukraine.

We reiterate our support for the Minsk agreements to deliver a peaceful resolution to the conflict in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the work of the Normandy Four. Ambassador Mondoloni, Mr Froehly, we thank France and Germany for your efforts in this regard. We call on Russia to fulfil its commitments and cease its support for the armed formations it backs.

The United Kingdom remains unwavering in our support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and waters. We have and will continue to stand united with Ukraine in calling out unacceptable Russian aggression against Ukraine and its people. As Minister Polishchuk has rightfully outlined today, Russia's aggressive actions undermine not only the security of Ukraine but the entire OSCE region and must remain our top priority. Thank you Madam Secretary General.

Minister Iain Stewart breaks ground on Tay Cities Deal project

Building [work has now begun on the International Barley Hub \(IBH\) and Advanced Plant Growth Centre \(APGC\) at the James Hutton Institute.](#)

The two plant science innovation centres are being supported by £45 million from the UK Government and £17 million from the Scottish Government as part of the Tay Cities Region Deal.

The deal is a £700 million, 10-year regional investment partnership between governments and public and private organisations across Angus, Dundee, northeast Fife and Perth & Kinross.

With completion expected in early 2024, the centres will bring together industry and world-leading science to focus on solutions for the food and drink industry regarding climate change and a green recovery from the disruption caused by COVID-19.

Combined, the two projects aim to create over 470 jobs in the Tayside region and a further 2,200 jobs across the wider Scottish and UK economy, demonstrating the true national importance of the two initiatives.

To mark the commencement of the works formally, a breaking-ground ceremony was held at the James Hutton Institute campus in Invergowrie, led by both Iain Stewart, UK Government Minister for Scotland, and Mairi Gougeon, Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, joined by project stakeholders and supporters.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart said:

These exciting projects will place Scotland at the forefront of agricultural innovation, ensuring our food and drink production remains dynamic, sustainable and secure.

The UK Government is contributing £45 million to these projects through the Tay Cities Deal, which is bringing new jobs and investment to the region. We have committed more than £1.5 billion for regional deals across the whole of Scotland, helping communities to build back better from the pandemic.

The multi-million developments comprise state-of-the-art science, farm and field facilities, and a new access road.

The £35m International Barley Hub seeks to secure the long-term future of the barley sector by helping develop new varieties and growing systems that can cope with future climate change, plus new uses for the crop.

The project is underpinned by decades of research at the James Hutton Institute and partners, including the University of Dundee, SRUC and Abertay University, the Rowett Institute and others.

Businesses and sectoral interest groups such as the Scotch Whisky Research Institute, Maltsters Association of GB, and the National Farmers Union Scotland form part of the project consortium's demand side.

The £27m Advanced Plant Growth Centre aims to revolutionise crop production systems to produce food locally, 365 days a year, with less environmental impact. Such systems can be completely independent of the weather or availability of agricultural land, for example, indoor vertical farms using LED lights that have full environmental control and are located close to the population on unused derelict land. APGC will support a rapidly expanding industry with 25% annual growth and an estimated worth of \$12bn by 2026.

[Work starts on River Tyne eel pass and fish counter improvements](#)

Press release

The Environment Agency is working with Northumbrian Water to open up the River Tyne to migrating eels, as well as carrying out a fish counter refurbishment.



The work to protect, improve and develop fish stocks on the River Tyne at Riding Mill is due to start in the next few weeks.

Northumbrian Water Limited (NWL) and The Environment Agency are coordinating their works to install an eel pass and refurbish the existing fish counter.

NWL is constructing the new eel pass to improve upstream access for the eel, a designated priority species, to ensure they can migrate more freely as part of their life cycle.

While this work is taking place, the Environment Agency is taking the opportunity to replace part of the existing fish counter, used to monitor the number of salmon and sea trout stocks in the River Tyne.

Fish counter has 'enhanced our understanding'

Morton Heddell-Cowie, Fisheries Technical Officer at the Environment Agency, said: Environment Agency said:

The operation of the fish counter at Riding Mill has enhanced our understanding of the status of salmon and sea trout stocks in the River Tyne, as well as of fish movements in response to changes in flow and temperature.

The equipment has counted 750,000 fish since it was installed 25 years ago, and this refurbishment work aims extend its' lifetime another 25.

Precautions will be taken to minimise any disruption to the local environment during the works. Fish will be safely removed from the affected area prior to the work taking place and a fish passage will be maintained. Working in partnership with Northumbrian Water while they construct their vital eel pass means we can minimise disruption by carrying out our two complimentary projects in one go.

Andy Downer, Project Manager at Northumbrian Water, added:

Our new fish pass is an incredibly important environmental scheme, which will help to open up the river so that young eels are able to easily migrate upstream. This vital work follows an £11m project completed last year – which saw eel protection screens fitted along a number of North East locations including the River Tyne to prevent them from being drawn into the inlet pipes.

Over recent years we have seen a decline in the population of European eels in the area, so it is exciting to see how this work hopefully allows this population to flourish again. We have worked closely with the Environment Agency, and co-ordinated with them in order to minimise disruption as much as we possibly can.

As we carry out the work, we will have ecologists on-site to rescue the fish as we divert the flow of the river and drain a very small section of it – making sure that the fish are well looked after and isolated away from any work that is taking place.

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Confidence in a crisis – Conducttr Crisis Training Software

Modern technology, the internet, and social media have been a catalyst for major change in defence and security. As well as fighting on the ground, armies and governments must also win the battle for hearts and minds. This becomes increasingly difficult when adversaries employ more complex tactics to spread misinformation. News, especially fake news, travels fast, so it is imperative that war fighters are prepared for battle in the digital world.

Conducttr began in the entertainment industry, creating augmented and immersive reality for TV and film fans. Following two rounds of DASA funding, the business now focuses solely on providing immersive “life-like” training for influence and information warfare. Their technology provides a comprehensive real-time simulated information environment for social media and news and models target audience reactions.

The additional funding has already led to considerable impact for the business. Since their first round of DASA funding, Conducttr has doubled their staff headcount and expanded their portfolio, gaining the attention of big-name clients, including Vodafone, UEFA and the United Nations.

Robert Pratten, CEO of Conducttr said:

Many of our customers are not aware of the possibilities of the technology before we meet them. DASA gave us the opportunity to work alongside potential end-users so we were able to gain a first-hand understanding of their requirements. This gave us invaluable insights to create something truly leading edge and world-beating.

Working with DASA enabled Conducttr to test its technology in a defence setting by running training activities with Ministry of Defence personnel.

These opportunities have enabled Conducttr to further develop their product for defence and security use whilst also highlighting its potential to strengthen government response to crises such as cyber attacks, pandemics, flooding, earthquakes, terrorist threats, and other major incidents.