

Elizabeth Truss outlines bold new era for trade

Introduction

I am delighted to be the first Trade Secretary to represent the UK's independent voice at an international meeting since Peter Walker, almost half a century ago.

The UK has now, following its exit from the EU, resumed its independent membership of the WTO, taking back control of our trade policy, our sovereignty, and our future.

Free Trading Nation

The UK is and always will be, an open, liberal, outward looking nation.

We are the home of Adam Smith and his 'invisible hand'...

... of David Ricardo and his theory of comparative advantage...

...of the abolition of the Corn Laws, seeing ports like Liverpool, Glasgow and Teesside flourish with new commerce, trading cheaper goods more efficiently, and overcoming the objections of vested interests and wealthy land owners to the benefit of the majority and levelling up Britain in the 19th century.

The UK was one of the original signatories of the GATT, cementing the most favoured nation principle in international commerce, and ushering in a wave of industrial tariff reductions and trade liberalisation.

And this year, Britain is back, as an independent, free trading nation.

I believe we retake our seat at an opportune moment.

World trading volumes are lagging behind global growth, which is itself anaemic, 2019 being its slowest year since the 2008 recession.

The rate of decline in global poverty is also beginning to slow.

And in some cases we are seeing a worrying retreat from market principles.

Now that the UK has left the European Union I know some of you are wondering what sort of member we are going to be.

First, the UK wants to turn the rise in protectionist measures around. We are at heart a free trading nation and we see the WTO as central to this vision.

We know human ingenuity has limitless potential.

The more we allow people to shape their own lives, remove barriers to

enterprise within and between nations, and allow human ingenuity to flourish, the more rewards we will all reap.

The greatest economic advances from steam engine to the internet, have resulted from increasing international trade and connectedness, the ideas chain reaction.

So we will work with all nations that share this multilateral vision, to lead the defence of free, fair, rules-based international trade, pioneering a route to prosperity that lies through working together, not protectionism. That is why the MC12 in June is so important.

And I am delighted to announce today that the UK is contributing £50,000 through our TAF 2 project, to ensure that Trade Ministers from developing countries can attend.

WTO reform

Secondly, we will work to make sure the rules-based system is based on open, market orientated policies and is transparent and fair.

When it works, the multilateral system allows us to deliver outcomes that are better in aggregate for all of us.

As we retake our independent seat at the heart of the world trading system, the UK is more committed than ever to ensuring that, the WTO, is forward looking, modernised and reformed.

The UK will, like every other sovereign country, assert its ability to set its own laws and regulations in line with our WTO commitments, reflecting our own circumstances and ideas, while working tirelessly alongside other WTO Members to drive reform.

We will make the case to update the WTO rulebook to tackle underlying trade tensions such as industrial subsidies, state-owned enterprises and forced technology transfer.

We will encourage and empower small countries to play a role in shaping the global trading system, to trade their way out of poverty, and seek a fairer deal.

And we will support WTO negotiations wherever we can by providing quality data analysis and policy research.

Leaders in services, tech and the environment

Thirdly, we will seek to advance trade for the modern era.

The WTO has had many successes.

Average import tariffs globally have fallen by two-thirds.

Global trade has tripled in volume.

And 75% of global merchandise trade takes place on the WTO's most favoured nation terms.

But the stark reality is the system of rules-based trade has not moved on since the Uruguay round, while non-tariff barriers have proliferated.

Meanwhile the world has experienced a revolution in technology and automation.

And this revolution itself came about through an 'ideas chain reaction'...

From the invention of numbers in ancient India...

...through Ada Lovelace and Alan Turing's pioneering conception of the first computers in Britain...

...to the development of the modern World Wide Web and Silicon Valley in America...

And while these services have changed our world and account for close to half of the value of international goods and services, the barriers to trade in services are around three times higher than for goods.

As a services orientated economy, a world leader in sectors ranging from tech to finance, and the world's second largest services exporter, this is a huge opportunity.

The UK will push to ease restrictions on cross-border data flows...

... preventing unnecessary data localisation requirements...

...and ensure customs duties do not apply to electronic transactions.

We will do this through multilateral or plurilateral groups at the WTO, a coalition of the willing, such as the JSI on e-commerce...

... And through wider reform to trade in services, the UK seeks to be a future leader in these areas.

Free trade is allowing us to use resources better and to find new ways of producing energy and managing resources.

We will also take the lead in tackling climate change, not least as hosts of COP26.

The UK has already cut our carbon emissions by 44% since 1990 while growing our GDP by around 70%.

We are proud the UK has undertaken to become carbon neutral by 2050.

We will stand up to end environmentally wasteful practices that arise from state subsidies, such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated, fishing, and

press for successful conclusion of the fisheries subsidies negotiation at MC12.

Conclusion

After almost 50 years of EU membership, Britain is back as a fully independent WTO member.

Our vision is of a newly independent UK, championing the cause of free, fair, rules-based trade.

I am proud of the UK's record in pioneering, firstly, the liberalisation of agricultural tariffs with the abolition of the Corn Laws, and secondly, industrial tariffs with the GATT.

A UK that explores the new frontiers of the 21st century global economy, pushing for that same liberalisation in trade in services and data, helping to turn around recent protectionist trends and to help deliver the benefits of the global digital revolution for all members, large or small.

To push for a WTO that not only retrains its role as the repository of the rules that govern our global economy, but one that does so while continuing to enjoy the confidence of all Members.

[Legislation to ban plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds enters Parliament](#)

The legislation to ban the supply of plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds will be laid in Parliament today (Tuesday, 3 March), marking an important step in the Government's fight against single-use plastics.

[In England, it is estimated that we use](#) 4.7 billion plastic straws, 316 million plastic stirrers and 1.8 billion plastic-stemmed cotton buds every year. [An estimated 10% of cotton buds are flushed down toilets](#) and can end up in waterways and oceans and threaten precious marine wildlife.

Following a public consultation in Autumn 2018 which saw huge support, the Government [confirmed in May 2019](#) that it would implement a ban with exceptions to ensure that those with medical needs or a disability are able to access plastic straws.

In a bid to strike the right balance between reducing environmental impact while protecting the rights of people with medical conditions and disabilities, registered pharmacies will be allowed to sell plastic straws

over the counter or online. Catering establishments such as restaurants, pubs and bars will not be able to display plastic straws, automatically hand them out, or offer them – however, these establishments will be able to provide them on request.

The Government will carry out a stocktake after one year to assess the impact of these measures and whether the balance is correct.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

We must turn the tide on the widespread use of single-use plastics and the threat they pose to our natural environments. Our ban on plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds is yet another measure to clamp down on unnecessary plastic so we can better protect our precious wildlife and leave our environment in a better state for future generations.

This ban strikes the right balance, ensuring that we accommodate those with medical needs or disabilities while also protecting the environment.

The ban on straws, stirrers and cotton buds is just one of a range of measures to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste, underpinned by the Government's [landmark Resources and Waste Strategy](#). Other key government actions include a [world-leading ban on microbeads](#), introducing a [5p charge on plastic bags in major supermarkets which has reduced usage by 90%](#), and consulting on [introducing a deposit return scheme](#) to drive-up the recycling of drinks containers.

More information

- The Statutory Instrument will be laid in Parliament, entitled: Environmental Protection (Plastic Straws, Cotton buds and Stirrers) (England) Regulations 2020. It will be debated and approved by Parliament in the usual way
 - [Single-use plastics can be defined as](#) all products that are made wholly or partly of plastic and are typically intended to be used just once and/or for a short period of time before being disposed of
 - The government will ban the supply of plastic stirrers
 - The government will ban the supply of plastic stemmed cotton buds, with an exemption for scientific uses. This will cover use in medical practice, scientific research and forensic purposes to support criminal investigation
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Enhanced Domestic Abuse Bill introduced to Parliament

The government has set out an enhanced version of the landmark Domestic Abuse Bill to Parliament, which will go even further to support and protect victims and punish perpetrators.

The bill is the most comprehensive package ever to tackle this horrendous crime and has been widely welcomed by charities and stakeholders.

Following through on the pledge to bring the bill back to Parliament, it includes new measures, such as requiring tier one local authorities (county councils and unitary authorities) in England to provide support and ensure safe accommodation for victims and their children. The bill will also improve on the previous pledge to ban abusers from cross-examining their victims in the family courts, to apply to all family proceedings where there is evidence of domestic abuse.

Domestic Abuse Protection Orders and Protection Notices are powerful tools to protect victims immediately and offer flexible, longer-term protection by imposing requirements on perpetrators. This could include prohibiting contact with the victim or forcing a perpetrator into alcohol or drug treatment programmes.

The government has also announced it will fund any court costs for police applying for these Orders under the pilot, ensuring cost will not be a barrier to police implementing this important tool.

The bill's measures are part of a wider response to tackle crime including recruiting 20,000 additional police officers and offering a record funding settlement to police forces.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

An astonishing 2.4 million people in England and Wales have suffered domestic abuse. That is unacceptable, and the reason why it is so important to shine a light on this crime.

The Domestic Abuse Bill is a monumental step to empower victims and survivors, provide protection and tackle perpetrators at the earliest stage.

Through this bill and bolstering law enforcement, we will be able to keep millions of victims safe.

Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice Robert Buckland said:

This bill will bolster our response to domestic abuse on every level – strengthening protections for victims, whilst ensuring perpetrators feel the full force of the law.

From giving courts greater powers through new prevention orders, to barring abusers from cross-examining their victim in the family courts, we are delivering a justice system more resilient than ever to the tackle this horrific crime.

Minister for Safeguarding Victoria Atkins said:

Too many people have to live in fear of abuse – whether it be physical, emotional or economic – from those who should make them feel safe and loved.

This bill will provide support to the victims and survivors of this horrendous crime so that they can go some way to feeling safe again.

Sandra Horley CBE, Chief Executive of national domestic abuse charity Refuge said:

Refuge welcomes the re-introduction of the Domestic Abuse Bill, which is significantly enhanced by the addition of a legal duty on local authorities to provide refuge accommodation.

This bill offers the government a real opportunity to transform the response to domestic abuse in this country, but key to its success will be meeting this duty with adequate funding, so that no woman or child is ever turned away when seeking safety.

Refuge will continue to work with the government to strengthen the bill as it progresses into law, and to ensure it best protects the survivors whose very lives depend on it.

Adina Claire, Acting co chief executive of Women's Aid Federation of England, said:

With the number of women killed at a 14 year high, the return of the Domestic Abuse Bill to parliament is welcome. Crucially, the legal duty on local authorities could be life-saving, and we will continue to call on the government to deliver a secure funding future for specialist women's services to support this new legal duty.

We are pleased the government has listened to our calls for a wider ban on cross-examination to protect all survivors who face this traumatising practice, but there remains a long way to go before

the family courts are truly safe.

We will now work with government and parliament to strengthen the bill to meet the needs of every woman and child experiencing domestic abuse, including migrant women who continue to face dangerous barriers to protection and support.

The bill has been designed to be future-proof from any new ways perpetrators try to control their victims. It will encompass worrying new trends such as 'tech abuse' – where abusers use personal and home devices and smart gadgets to control their victim. Recent figures from the charity [Refuge](#), whose domestic abuse helpline is funded by the Home Office, show that almost three quarters (72%) of people who spoke to them had been abused through technology.

Economic abuse, which limits access to a victim's fundamental economic resources such as money, food, transport, clothing, utilities, employment and housing, will also be specifically referenced in the definition of domestic abuse to raise awareness of this type of abuse.

Further to these measures, the government has begun a review into what support can be provided to migrant victims of domestic abuse, in addition to looking at what more can be done to stop the so called 'rough sex' defence being used by perpetrators in court to attempt to escape justice.

Since the bill was first announced, the government has appointed Nicole Jacobs to be the designate Domestic Abuse Commissioner, who has already begun her important work championing victims and survivors, while constantly monitoring UK legislation to make sure the UK remains a world leader in tackling domestic abuse. This includes looking at what support the government can provide children who have been affected by domestic abuse.

[National recruitment campaign for paramedics, radiographers and nurses begins](#)

The Department of Health and Social Care campaign is aimed at:

- teenagers preparing to apply for university
- career switchers
- people who are already qualified and ready to apply for vacancies

It's the latest phase of the 'We Are The NHS' recruitment campaign, which will use a mix of media channels including TV, cinema, video on demand,

social media and radio to encourage people to find out more about the careers. People can also register to receive personalised career advice by email.

It's the first government campaign to recruit [allied health professionals](#). In particular it aims to recruit the roles most in need based on the NHS Long Term Plan and the interim NHS People Plan. These are:

- occupational therapists
- paramedics
- podiatrists
- diagnostic radiographers
- therapeutic radiographers
- orthoptists
- physiotherapists
- prosthetists
- orthotists

It also recruits for all nursing roles.

The campaign aims to help the government reach its target of 50,000 more nurses and 26,000 more primary care professionals working in the NHS by 2024 to 2025.

Students training towards the careers highlighted in the campaign will benefit from the [new £5,000 annual maintenance grant](#) to help with their living costs.

Extra payments worth up to £3,000 a year will also be available for specialisms that are struggling to recruit, or those with childcare responsibilities. This funding is expected to benefit around 100,000 students each year.

The NHS first launched 'We are the NHS' in 2018. Then the priority was to increase the nursing workforce and inspire the next generation of NHS nurses.

Over the last year [the number of nurses in the NHS has increased by over 8,500](#).

The [latest UCAS statistics](#) show the number of people applying to study nursing at English universities has risen for the second year running, with 6% more applicants compared to 2019.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

I am in awe of the skill and dedication our NHS people demonstrate every day, and I'm determined to deliver on our commitment to have 50,000 more nurses and 26,000 primary care professionals in the NHS by 2025.

From the split-second life-saving decisions made by paramedics to the cool, calm analysis carried out by radiographers, everything

they do is underpinned by talent, teamwork and compassion. It's also one of the most rewarding jobs out there, helping to save and improve people's lives on a daily basis.

If you think you have what it takes, I encourage you to consider a career in the NHS as an allied health professional or nurse. From September this year, students will benefit from a generous new financial support package worth at least £5,000 a year.

Prerana Issar, Chief People Officer for the NHS, said:

The NHS is extraordinary and as well as already being the best place to get care, I'm committed to making it the best place to work, through the NHS People Plan.

As our health service continues to roll out our Long Term Plan and treat record numbers of patients it is vital that, alongside recruiting an additional 50,000 nurses, we champion what a fulfilling and varied career the NHS provides.

We need to ensure we're attracting the most talented and motivated people so we can continue to deliver the world class service our patients have come to expect.

[68 new parks to inject green space into urban areas](#)

- On World Wildlife Day, Communities Secretary announces winners of £1.35 million fund to create 68 new Pocket Parks
- Community groups in every region of England will receive funding to revive unloved or run-down urban spaces and transform them into thriving parks and green spaces
- They will be transformed into thriving parks and green spaces to increase biodiversity, encourage community integration and tackle loneliness.

Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick has today (3 March 2020) announced dozens of community groups will receive funding to transform neglected urban spaces into thriving green havens for the whole community to use.

Announced on World Wildlife Day, the £1.35 million funding will help community groups to create 19 brand new parks and refurbish 49 currently unused and unloved plots of land, breathing new, green life into our towns

and cities and increasing biodiversity across England.

The new parks and green spaces will provide new areas for children to play, outdoor fitness facilities for residents, and places for families and friends to come together, helping encourage community integration and tackling loneliness.

These new grants will fund the third round of Pocket Parks since the scheme launched in 2016.

The government has now funded 352 grants to support community groups to create 146 new parks and give a vital boost to 206 derelict urban spaces in towns and cities in every region of the country.

Communities Secretary, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Pocket parks are used for everything from exercise and gardening to socialising and relaxing. They have huge benefits for our mental and physical health and allow us to take a moment out of our busy lives to connect with nature.

We are determined to protect our nation's parks for future generations to enjoy, and on World Wildlife Day, I am delighted to announce the recipients of the extra £1.35 million for the Pocket Parks fund – adding 68 new parks, which will take the total we've backed to 352.

Creating more pocket parks is part of this Government's ambition to ensure that communities have a real sense of identity and place, and that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy green spaces in their local area.

Allison Ogden-Newton OBE, Chief Executive of environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy which runs the Green Flag Award scheme for parks and green spaces, said:

This is great news for people and for the environment, creating more parks and green spaces at the heart of communities.

We look forward to seeing many of these sites achieve the Green Flag Award and Green Flag Community Award in the years to come.

Pocket Parks range approximately from the size of 1 tennis court to the size of 16, between 0.02 to 0.32 hectares. They inject green space into our towns and cities and provide opportunities for the whole community to benefit from spending time in nature.

Among the successful schemes to be funded are:

- The **Groundwork Trust in Oldham and Rochdale** are receiving more than £15,000 to totally transform the currently over-grown and unloved Rochdale Boarshaw Clough Nature Reserve into a pocket of peace and tranquillity for local residents. They will build new paths through the reserve, improving the whole community's access to nature. They will also breathe new life into the disused amphitheatre which will become a new focal point in the neighbourhood – a space for different community groups to encourage people to spend time outdoors.
- **Dukeries Active Zone in Hull** are receiving more than £25,000 to totally transform an existing park with plans to turn it into a green sanctuary which encourages young families, teenagers and adults to get outdoors. They will introduce new natural zones to improve the area's biodiversity and involve residents in the creation of a new mural – giving local residents a sense of community pride. They will also encourage gardening activities and provide improved equipment to increase physical activity among people of all ages.
- **Chacewater Projects and Chacewater Parish Parks Group in Cornwall** are receiving more than £15,000 to develop brand new community allotments, encouraging local residents to socialise, exercise and reap the rewards of being outdoors. The Community Garden will be a vibrant and safe space, offering support for elderly residents and people with physical or mental disabilities as well as young families and teenagers experiencing isolation or loneliness. The allotments will be a new hub for the community and instil a sense of pride in the neighbourhood.

The government is working with the Parks Action Group, which represents leaders from across the parks sector, to support community empowerment programmes, professional development for the parks workforce and alternative park management models to ensure our parks are fit for the 21st Century.

Alongside today's announcement the government are supporting Parks Action Group to establish a reference group to establish a reference group of parks managers who are responsible for delivering government policy on the ground.

This round of Pocket Parks funding was announced on 27 October 2019.

The [prospectus](#) invited community groups interested in establishing a new pocket park or renovating an existing park to bid for grants from the £1.35 million fund from.

You can view the full list of successful applicants to the 2019 to 2020 Pocket Park grant:

PDF, 128 KB, 2 pages

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[Parks Action Group \(PAG\)](#) is made up of organisations who are national leaders in the parks sector who help government to develop policy on parks.

The parks managers reference group will support government by sharing invaluable insight from those who are responsible for delivering government policy on the ground, including how programmes and initiatives will impact on day to day management of parks.

Parks managers are at the front line of many of this government's priorities, from tackling climate change and increasing biodiversity, to increasing physical activity and reducing levels of childhood obesity.