

Government advisors discuss future independent trade policy

This is the second meeting of the representatives from business and interest groups who regularly convene to advise the government on the UK's new independent trade policy as we leave the EU.

Minister Burns said:

I am delighted to have chaired my first meeting of the Strategic Advisory Group today.

As we take back control of our trade policy, we must make sure it works for households and businesses across the whole of the UK.

This group of experts from across business, civil society and beyond will ensure we're ready to trade as we seize the opportunities of Brexit.

Today they were informed about the department's priorities in addition to preparing for Brexit on 31st October – to negotiate new and ambitious free trade agreements, prepare business to trade and focus on attracting investment, specifically through free ports.

The group was also introduced to the work of DIT US trade policy team, the World Trade Organisation and work being done to reduce barriers to trading for businesses.

The group is comprised of 16 representatives from business, trade union and civil society organisations that cover a wide range of interests from all parts of the UK. It will meet at least 4 times a year and membership will be reviewed on a yearly basis.

This is part of the government's commitment to an inclusive and transparent trade policy that works for all regions and nations of the UK.

They previously met in 6 June and are expected to meet again in the New Year.

The [Strategic Trade Advisory Group](#) was established in April 2019 following a [public expression of interest by government in July 2018](#). The expression of interest set out the selection procedure and selection criteria against which applications would be assessed including, evidence of relevant experience and expertise.

The group will meet as required but approximately quarterly. DIT will make available the dates and times of the meetings.

Members have been selected to provide a breadth of knowledge and experience

across trade policy. Members will serve in a personal capacity to advance the interests of the United Kingdom and will not represent the interests of any specific organisation.

Membership for the period 2019 to 2020 are:

- Professor Holger Breinlich, University of Surrey, (academia)
- Carolyn Fairbairn, Confederation of British Industry, (business representative organisation)
- Gary Campkin, City UK, (services, business representative organisation)
- Dr Scott Steedman CBE, British Standards Institution, (standards)
- Caroline Normand, Which?, (consumer)
- Dr Dirk Willem te Velde, Overseas Development Institute, (developmental)
- Mark Abrams, Trade Finance Global, (new entrant)
- Michael Gidney, Fair Trade Foundation, (non-government organisations)
- Nick Coburn CBE, Ulster Carpets, (Northern Ireland business)
- Denise Valin Alvarez, Burberry, (regional business)
- Liz Cameron OBE, Scottish Chamber of Commerce, (Scottish business)
- Sean Ramsden, Ramsden International, (small and medium enterprise)
- Mike Cherry OBE, Federation of Small Business, (small and medium enterprise, business representative organisation)
- Sam Lowe, Centre for European Reform, (think tanks)
- Paul Nowak, Trade Union Congress, (trade unions)
- Prys Morgan, Kepak Group Limited, (Welsh business)

The group's purpose is to:

- advise on the adequacy and effectiveness of government mechanisms for stakeholder engagement
- advise on the practical implementation of trade agreements and measures
- perspectives on the government's discharge of its commitment to transparency and inclusivity in trade policy
- suggestions to inform the government's trade priorities
- suggestions to assist the development and delivery of UK trade policy including market access measures.

UN Human Rights Council 42 – UK delivers statement under Item 2: General Debate

The United Kingdom welcomes the High Commissioner's report.

Continued human rights violations and abuses in Cameroon's North-West and South-West regions and the lack of protection of human rights through judicial process are deeply concerning. Cameroon's openness to engage with the UN on human rights must be matched by action to establish a credible political dialogue.

In Zimbabwe, we are concerned by the heavy-handed police response to protests in Harare on 16 August and the recent arrests and abductions of opposition activists; those responsible must be held accountable. We urge Zimbabwe to respect constitutional rights to protest peacefully, and to translate commitments on economic and political reform into actions.

In Bangladesh, we are concerned about action that undermines freedom of expression, and the narrowing of political space following the 2018 election. Bangladesh's stated commitment to engage on human rights and uphold democratic principles now needs to be matched by action, reflecting the values enshrined in its constitution.

We continue to be concerned about the limitations on freedom of expression in Vietnam. We welcome Vietnamese engagement with the UPR process and acceptance

of our recommendations. We look forward to seeing swift progress on implementation. We welcome Vietnam's commitment addressing the legacies of conflict, as well women, peace and security issues during its UN Security Council tenure.

We urge the Philippines to thoroughly investigate killings associated with the war on drugs; to take meaningful steps to ensure the safety of human rights defenders, labour rights activists and media professionals; and not to reinstate the death penalty.

We remain concerned about Hong Kong but welcome the Chief Executive's recent announcements as important steps. Meaningful political dialogue, under Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy, is essential. We re-iterate our support for and call for all to respect 'One Country, Two Systems' including the rights and freedoms in the Joint Declaration.

Finally, we are concerned by the recent use of the death penalty in Bahrain, and urge Bahrain to introduce a moratorium on its use.

Peace, fair elections and equal representation in Afghanistan

Thank you very much, Mr President. And as it's the first time I'm taking the floor in the Russians' presidency, let me congratulate you. You have our full support. And also thank our Polish colleagues for their stewardship of the month of August. And I'd like to thank our briefers, the SRSB and Mr Fedotov and also our colleague from Afghanistan.

Like other speakers, Mr President, I'd like to particularly highlight four issues: peace, the presidential elections, UNAMA itself and the issue of women, peace and security. And along with other speakers this morning, I want to set out the United Kingdom's strong condemnation of the Taliban for the recent attacks. Taliban representatives at the intra-Afghan peace conference in Doha in July this year committed to reducing civilian casualties to zero. But the Taliban's actions are not matching their words. And indeed, on the eve of a historic meeting with United States representatives, the Taliban chose to carry out yet more attacks in Kabul. And the Afghan ambassador set these out. But the list I have before me, Mr President, lists at least five attacks since the month of August. These are not the actions of a group that is searching for peace. At a minimum, the leaders of the Taliban need to condemn violence when it occurs and undertake to do everything in their power to stop the rest of their groups from carrying out violence.

But they also need, Mr President, to get a united view that peace is in their interests as much as it is in the interests of the people of Afghanistan. And as I'm talking about the Taliban, I'll take the opportunity now to reiterate

what the SRSg said about him fighting them to retract the threats against the election.

President Ghani, we note, remains committed to direct peace talks and we share the speaker's wish that the intra-Afghan negotiations can proceed apace. President Ghani has appointed a 15 strong negotiating team and he said only this Monday: "We are ready for peace talks. But if the Taliban think they can scare us, look at these warriors. But peace without a ceasefire is impossible." And if there is to be lasting peace in Afghanistan, Mr President, the Taliban must enter into meaningful negotiations with an inclusive and representative Afghan negotiating team.

My second point concerns the elections. We are encouraged by what the special representative said about the elections remaining scheduled for 28 September. I know from experience in Kabul there are often many stories around the elections and many fears that they will be cancelled. So what I saw SRSg Yamamoto was able to say about these elections and the arrangements for them has been very important. They represent an important opportunity for the Afghan people to make decisions about their future at a critical time. And our ambassador in Kabul has in recent weeks met with Hawa Nuristani, the chair of the Afghanistan Independent Election Commission, and with Zohra Shinwari, the chair of the Electoral Complaints Commission. I think it's important, Mr President, that the Council offer its full support to the Afghan authorities to help ensure the elections are credible, transparent, participatory and free as possible from violence, and that we encourage all the leaders to engage faithfully in the democratic process and to take a stand against electoral fraud.

Turning to my third point, Mr President, about UNAMA, we very much welcome the work UNAMA has done, especially in coordinating international support for the elections. And we hope that UNAMA will be able to continue this work at the same pace up to Election Day and beyond. Other speakers have referred to the UNAMA mandate that is due for renewal by 17 September. We hope all Security Council members will be able to support a text that gives UNAMA the clear and strong mandate it needs to support Afghanistan at this critical time.

And then turning to the issue of women, which the Afghan ambassador set out so eloquently. In all cases, the United Kingdom remains committed to a peaceful and democratic future for Afghanistan. And we will continue to work with partners and the Afghan authorities to ensure Afghanistan has the support it needs. And it is particularly important that she maintains the gains she's made on human rights over recent years. Women play an essential role in Afghan society. This was underscored by the Deputy Secretary-General's visit in July. And for the United Kingdom, we will continue to support the full implementation of Afghanistan's National Action Plan on women, peace and security.

And I want to end, Mr President, by stressing the vital importance of women's participation in the elections, but also in an inclusive peace process.

Thank you.

Government pledges £62m flood funding for communities in England

New flood boost will better protect over 9,004 homes.

Government pledges £62m flood funding for communities in England

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers has announced a new round of flood defence investment today (Tuesday, 10 September 2019) for communities across Yorkshire, Cumbria, the North East and the South East of England.

Thirteen projects across England will benefit from a share of over £62 million, which as well as helping develop existing flood defences, will boost economic regeneration and increase prosperity in those areas. Many of the projects are located in communities which suffered from flooding during winter 2015.

In total, more than 9,004 homes will be better protected against flooding through this round of funding. The extra funding is in addition the government's commitment to invest a record £2.6 billion over six years up to 2021 to better protect 300,000 homes across the country.

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers said:

I am delighted to announce over £60m of additional funding to better protect communities which are vulnerable to flooding, particularly across parts of northern England.

Events this summer have shown that investing in flood risk management is more important than ever, and this funding builds on our long-standing £2.6 billion commitment to better protect 300,000 homes from flooding and coastal erosion over six years.

Funding will support the development of 11 projects in the Northern Powerhouse, including seven in Yorkshire, four in Cumbria and Lancashire and two in the North East.

£19m is set to go to Calder Valley, where the Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge and

Brighouse schemes will be developed. More than 3,000 properties flooded in the West Yorkshire valley during the 2015 floods, leaving communities in the area badly affected. With this new boost, the two projects at Hedbden Bridge and Brighouse are now to be developed, with work due to begin next year. Communities in Yorkshire will also receive additional funding with more money for the Tadcaster Flood Alleviation Scheme and additional funding for defences at Sowerby Bridge.

Minister of State for the Northern Powerhouse, the Rt Hon Jake Berry MP said:

This new funding for flood defences in the North of England adds to the £5.4 billion already invested into the Northern Powerhouse to drive jobs and economic growth, and a record £13 billion to upgrade transport infrastructure across the North.

We're investing in public infrastructure so that local communities have the support and backing they need to flourish and seize all of the opportunities that come with leaving the European Union on the 31st October.

Cumbria and Lancashire are due to receive the second largest amount of funding, with £22.8m now available to support four flood projects in Kendal, Egremont, Flimby and Preston and South Ribble. The proposed scheme for Kendal involves three phases, of which the first will provide a 1 in 50 level of protection for 1,480 homes and 1,151 businesses.

Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury Simon Clarke said:

Flooding can have a devastating impact on communities.

The government's injection of an additional £62.35m will help protect communities, and ensure they remain vibrant places for people to live, work, and visit.

This round of funding will also allocate £6.3m to projects outside of the Northern Powerhouse, in Essex and Lincolnshire. In Essex, the River Roding project at Shonks Mill will better protect 550 homes in Woodford and its surrounding areas, while in Lincolnshire, the Lincoln Defences project is set to reduce flood risk to 1,842 homes and 424 businesses.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency and UK Commissioner on the Global Commission on Adaptation said:

This extra funding will help us to go even further in our mission to better protect communities up and down the country from the terrible effects of flooding. We will work closely with these communities to design and build projects which not only reduce

flood risk but which also benefit wildlife and the local economy for decades to come.

This vital investment comes on the same day that the Global Commission on Adaptation has released a report which issues a rallying cry to the international community to invest more in climate resilience including better protection for flood risk.

The Environment Agency has completed construction of more than 500 new flood and coastal erosion schemes since April 2015, better protecting over 195,000 and thousands of businesses. By the end of this year, the government will set out its policies to better prepare the country for flood and coastal erosion in a government policy statement. Informed by this policy, the Environment Agency will update its national strategy for flood and coastal erosion risk management, which sets out a long term plan for tackling, preparing for and adapting to the additional risks that climate change will bring.

Further information

A table with details of the schemes is below.

Project	Location	Additional Funding (£m)	Potential leveraging of partnership funding contributions (£m)
Lincoln Defences	Lincolnshire	1.2	0.8
Stokesley Flood Alleviation Scheme	North Yorkshire	1.8	0.0
Marton West Beck – Middlesbrough	North Yorkshire	1.8	0.4
Shonks Mill Flood Storage Area (River Roding Project)	Essex	5.1	4.8
Preston and South Ribble	Lancashire	15.8	9.5
Sowerby Bridge	West Yorkshire	1.7	0.0
Tadcaster Flood Alleviation Scheme	North Yorkshire	9.0	1.0
Kendal	Cumbria	5.0	6.8
Egremont	Cumbria	1.6	5.0
Flimby	Cumbria	0.4	0.0
Mytholmroyd	West Yorkshire	3.0	4.5
Hebden Bridge	West Yorkshire	11.0	1.5
Brighouse	West Yorkshire	5.0	6.4