

## **Back the Australian trade deal**

The UK has now rolled over the EU deals with other countries as promised in the referendum. The draft Australian Free Trade Agreement could be the first of the new UK negotiated deals, which will go much further than the EU went in opening up opportunities for more trade and business activity. The Australian one will go some way to restore the losses we experienced with Australia thanks to EU protectionism against them. Australia is a key ally and partner, a fellow member of the 5 Eyes Group and a willing collaborator. For example, Australia is buying the rights and support to build 9 Type 26 UK designed frigates.

The Agreement will sweep away tariffs and quotas, and open up services. It will provide great opportunities for the UK dairy industry to sell more UK cheeses, the whisky industry to sell more drink and the car industry to sell more vehicles. UK consumers will have access to some great Australian products at cheaper prices, with a likely rise in interest in Australian wines as one of the consumer wins.

Some now say we need to offer protection to our beef and sheep meat sectors through tariff quotas to limit the amount of product Australia can sell us at better prices. To argue in this way is to seek to wreck the agreement. Australia has rightly not signed Free Trade Agreements with any country whilst accepting tariff rate quotas. The people who think the UK needs this protection from food produced on the other side of the world did not of course offer any such protection from EU food products, where we have tariff and quota free food trade and plenty of EU imports. It is difficult to believe our beef and sheep meat sectors will lose out to Australia given the distances involved and the relative costs. Australia has high standards of animal welfare and husbandry. UK beef and sheep meat are quality products with plenty of scope for us to export more and to sell more at home.

We owe it to ourselves and to Australia to do this deal. When we joined the EEC we turned our backs on Australia and other Commonwealth allies, placing heavy barriers in the way of their exports to us to give a big advantage to European product. Australia is a willing friend keen to promote our joint interests by freer trade. Doing a deal with Australia also gets us closer and sooner to a deal with CPTPP, the Pacific partnership countries. That is another large prize, a free trade deal with the fastest growing part of the world.

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## **Sort out the GB/Northern Ireland trade**

It is wrong that many GB businesses now find they cannot send their goods to willing buyers in Northern Ireland without a large amount of extra paperwork

or even EU inspired bans. Both sides to the UK/EU Agreement opposed a hard border on the island of Ireland. Both wished to protect the EU single market and the UK internal market, and allow NI easy access to both. That is what the Protocol says.

The EU has decided to use the Protocol to create a hard border in Northern Ireland against Great Britain. This border is not in the Irish Sea but is enforced against containers, vans and trucks on arrival in Northern Ireland. The EU seems to think a North-south border has to be open but an east-west border needs to be tightly controlled by them. They should try reading the Good Friday Agreement which is about looking after the interests of both the Protestant and the Catholic communities in Northern Ireland. This heavy handed approach by the EU violates the Good Friday Agreement as far as the loyalist community in Northern Ireland is concerned.

Lord Frost's recent article is right in tone and content. He now needs to be careful in negotiations not to allow the EU to insert its controls in the way of GB/Northern Ireland trade. That trade should be regulated and policed by the UK and NI authorities. Of course they should make sure people are not using easy access to NI to then send things onto the Republic which are not EU compliant. There is no evidence this is happening. The UK authorities have every interest in not allowing that. There is no need to submit trucks taking supermarket produce from GB to named stores in Northern Ireland to special checks in case they were planning to go on to the Republic, because they are not. In an age of computer manifests, truck tracking, pre filed journey and stock schedules trade should be allowed to flow. Any checks or audits that are needed in NI should be for the UK to carry out, and any needed in the Republic for the EU. There have been smuggling problems on the UK/Republic border during our time in the EU which were always sorted out by co-operation from each side whilst respecting the different jurisdictions. .

Either the EU agrees sensible mutual enforcement with each jurisdiction taking responsibility on its own territory or the UK must simply impose that on the UK side. It is the best and most practical way of implementing the stated aims of the Protocol.

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## [EU prefers its UK forecast of growth to its EU one](#)

The Spring 2021 official EU forecasts show the EU growing at 4.2% in 2021 and 4.4% in 2022, compared to their UK forecast of 5% in 2021 and 5.3% in 2022. Yet when they put the detailed forecasts for each member state and for the EU as a whole in an appendix you open up the EU one and discover they have used the numbers from the UK forecast instead. Not surprising they prefer the UK forecast, even though their version still looks a bit low.

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## Winnersh bypass

The new bypass includes new prohibitions on turning right at the light controlled crossroads between King Street Lane and the new bypass. Please observe the signs, as accidents have resulted from people who disagree with the controls. Councillors say that it will help cut congestion to have the new bypass with these restrictions. The new bypass can be entered from the roundabout on the Reading Road for westbound and from the Early Way junction for eastbound.

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## The Israel/Palestine crisis

I am receiving around 15 emails day from the two sides in the conflict seeking U.K. support for their respective positions.

The U.K. is working with the USA and the UN to favour a diplomatic solution where Hamas stops its rocket attacks on Israel and Israel stops her military attacks on Hamas. Both sides would then show a willingness to enter talks under independent chairmanship to try to sort out answers to the many outstanding disagreements. The UK regrets all loss of life in this conflict which is why it supports a ceasefire and talks.