

Gulf Cooperation Council trade negotiations update



The first round of negotiations for a [Free Trade Agreement](#) (FTA) between the United Kingdom (UK) and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) took place between 22 August and 29 September 2022. The negotiations were conducted virtually.

In this round of negotiations, the UK and GCC discussed their objectives for the FTA and exchanged technical information. Technical discussions were held across 29 policy areas over 33 sessions. In total, more than 100 UK negotiators from across government took part in this round of negotiations.

An FTA will be a substantial economic opportunity, and a significant moment in the UK – GCC relationship. Government analysis shows that, in the long-run, a deal with the GCC is expected to increase trade by at least 16 percent, add at least £1.6 billion a year to the UK economy and contribute an additional £600 million or more to UK workers' annual wages.

Both sides have committed to secure an ambitious, comprehensive and modern agreement fit for the 21st century.

The government remains clear that any deal will be in the best interests of the British people and the UK economy. We will not compromise on our high environmental and labour protections, public health, animal welfare and food standards, and we will maintain our right to regulate in the public interest. We are also clear that during these negotiations, the NHS and the services it provides is not on the table.

Published 12 October 2022

Last updated 13 October 2022 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 12 October 2022

First published.

[TRA announces interim conclusions on welded tubes reconsideration](#)

News story

The TRA announces its interim conclusions in a reconsideration of a trade remedy measure on welded tubes and pipes from China, Belarus and Russia.



The Trade Remedies Authority (TRA) proposes to change its original decision to re-include galvanised tubes in goods covered by the measure, as it has since been established that this product is produced within the UK. The [rationale for this](#) is explained in a report on the TRA's [public file](#).

Galvanised tubes (non-threaded WTP plated or coated with zinc) are used for a range of purposes including construction uses such as scaffolding poles. If implemented, the change would mean that imports of this product would be subject to a tariff imposed at the border, along with other types of welded tubes and pipes covered by this measure.

The TRA's intended recommendation is being published on the public file on 12 October and will be available for 14 days to allow interested parties to consider the findings. The TRA will then make its final recommendation to the Secretary of State for International Trade.

Original investigation of the measure

In August 2021, the TRA recommended to the Secretary of State for International Trade that the UK continue to apply the anti-dumping duties to imports from China and Belarus but not to imports from Russia. This was because the TRA's analysis found that if the measures were removed, producers in Belarus and China would be likely to dump these products in the future and cause harm to UK industry, but that Russian producers would not. The TRA also recommended that the description of goods to which the anti-dumping should be applied be changed to exclude one of the four types of product covered by the measure, as it was not manufactured within the UK. This recommendation was accepted by the Secretary of State for International Trade.

A domestic steel producer subsequently requested that the TRA reconsider its recommendation and provided new data for TRA to consider as part of its investigation. Reconsiderations are an established part of the UK's tax regime, with many different arms of the Government incorporating them as part of their standard operating procedures. They are one of the main ways businesses can continue to make their case once a decision that affects them has been made.

The TRA's reconsideration covered the same remit as the original transition review. It considered, within the rules set in the UK's regulatory framework and the underlying World Trade Organization obligations, whether its original recommendation was correct. As part of this process, the TRA reviewed all relevant material, including additional information provided by interested parties.

Background information

- The Trade Remedies Authority is the UK body that investigates whether new trade remedy measures are needed to counter unfair import practices and unforeseen surges of imports. Read more about the TRA's mission in its [Business Plan](#).
- The TRA is an arm's length body of the Department of International Trade (DIT) launched on 1 June 2021. Before its launch, it operated as the Trade Remedies Investigations Directorate (TRID) of DIT.
- Trade remedy investigations were carried out by the EU Commission on the UK's behalf until the UK left the EU. Forty-four EU trade remedy measures of interest to UK producers were carried across into UK law when the UK left the EU and the TRA is currently reviewing each one to assess whether it is suitable for UK needs.
- The Welded Tubes and Pipes measure was the first of these measures to be reviewed and the TRA's review completed in August 2021.
- UK industries concerned about imports have also been able to submit applications for a new trade remedy measure since January 2021. These applications are considered by the TRA to see if there are grounds for an investigation.

Published 12 October 2022

[Man receives increased sentence after referral to the Court of Appeal](#)



A man who raped and abused a woman has received an increased prison sentence after his case was referred to the Court of Appeal.

The offender, who cannot be named for legal reasons, raped the victim twice and subjected her to controlling and coercive behaviour. He also subjected the victim's daughter to physical and verbal abuse.

On 15 July 2022, the offender was sentenced to 8 years' and 3 months imprisonment for two counts of rape, controlling and coercive behaviour, child cruelty and common assault. The offender also received a restraining order.

Following the sentencing, the case was referred to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme.

On 12 October 2022, the Court found the original sentence to be unduly lenient and increased it to 11 years 9 months' imprisonment.

Speaking after the hearing, HM Attorney General Rt Hon Michael Ellis KC MP said:

The offender subjected the victim to despicable assaults and controlling, coercive behaviour, which will have a lasting impact on the victim and her daughter.

Increasing the sentence sends a clear message that any type of abuse is not acceptable and will be met with tough punishment.

Published 12 October 2022

Last updated 12 October 2022 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 12 October 2022

Since publishing this, it has come to our attention that the offender cannot be named for legal reasons.

2. 12 October 2022

First published.

CMA to take action to give private patients access to information

- Private hospitals and consultants could face enforcement action for failing to provide key information for prospective patients
- David Stewart: “Prospective patients need this information to make important and, at times, difficult choices about their private healthcare.”

Some private healthcare providers have not been providing prospective patients with clear and consistent information that would allow them to compare providers, in breach of the Private Healthcare Order, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has warned. As a result, the CMA is set to launch enforcement action.

To ensure people have access to clear and consistent information, the CMA issued the Private Healthcare Order in 2014 – a legally binding order that requires, amongst other things, providers to submit key data to the Private Healthcare Information Network (PHIN). PHIN collates and publishes this data online, allowing prospective patients to compare healthcare providers by important markers such as pricing, customer satisfaction and infection and success rates.

The order has been in place for several years and some providers have not supplied the information required, meaning patients are still unable to make meaningful comparisons when choosing their provider. As a result, the CMA is set to launch targeted enforcement action against a number of private consultants and hospitals.

The first step would be to name those in breach of the Order and then seek the swiftest possible way of addressing their non-compliance – this could be through voluntary commitments from the providers, or if necessary, the CMA could issue legally binding directions or begin court action.

David Stewart, Executive Director of Markets and Mergers, said:

Prospective patients need this information to make important and, at times, difficult choices about their private healthcare – and currently, they don't have the full picture.

We know this isn't an easy task for hospitals and consultants. However, hundreds of hospitals and thousands of consultants have already supplied the right information to PHIN. We thank them for working hard to meet this requirement.

There are still some providers that have failed to make any

progress, or even attempt it. If they now show a commitment to making the changes needed, we will support them to achieve this, alongside PHIN. However, those that continue to fail to can expect to face enforcement action.

All updates on this work can be found on the [Private healthcare market investigation](#) page.

Notes to editors

1. [PHIN](#) is the independent, government-mandated organisation publishing performance and fees information about private consultants and hospitals.
2. The CMA recently approved a new Strategic Plan proposed by PHIN to ensure the industry delivers full compliance with the Order.
3. The CMA has issued a letter to the private healthcare sector announcing it is set to launch enforcement action under the Private Healthcare Market Investigation Order 2014.
4. The CMA's Private Healthcare Market Investigation Order 2014 can be found [here](#).

[The Student Loans Company appoints new CEO](#)

SLC has undertaken a significant transformation programme to implement more modern, customer-focused processes and systems to better serve its eight million customers. This has improved the overall health of the organisation while navigating the Covid-19 pandemic, delivering student finance to record numbers of students. SLC will continue to deliver towards its [vision](#) of enabling opportunity and delivering an outstanding customer experience while also playing its critical role in the delivery of the UK Government's education reforms, including the new Lifelong Loan Entitlement (LLE).

Chris has been instrumental in leading the Operations Directorate through the last 18 months, and his leadership and operational experience will be key for the organisation when he becomes CEO.

Peter Lauener, SLC Chair, said: "Chris joined our organisation in May 2021 and has played a central role in establishing new structures and leadership in our Operations Directorate, while successfully leading us through two challenging student finance applications cycles. Chris has a wealth of business and transformation experience, ensuring he is the right person to continue to deliver our strategy and build on our successes. He has a real commitment to putting customers and colleagues at the heart of SLC, which will be critical as we move forward."

Chris has spent more than 30 years in the financial services sector. He joined SLC from the Co-operative Bank where he was Director of Customer and Strategy and previous to this, he was Director of Customer Experience at Barclays. Chris has also held senior roles with Virgin Money, Tesco Bank and the Royal Bank of Scotland.

Chris said: "I am honoured to have been appointed SLC's next CEO and to be given the opportunity to lead such an important organisation. SLC has an inspiring vision and mission – we make a real difference to the lives of our customers and to the future prosperity of the UK economy.

"Paula has done an exceptional job in driving SLC forward in our transformation journey and we are a better organisation because of her leadership. I look forward to continuing this work as we strive to deliver an outstanding customer experience to our eight million customers."

SLC underwent a competitive recruitment process which involved input from a colleague panel as well as receiving approval from the new Secretary of State for Education, Kit Malthouse. It's the first time SLC has recruited from within the organisation to the post of Chief Executive.

Andrea Jenkyns, Minister for Skills, said: "Our world-class higher education system wouldn't be possible without the work of the Student Loans Company, which provides a critical service to the UK's students and graduates, enabling opportunity and supporting their education ambitions.

"Chris Larmer's appointment as the new Chief Executive of the Student Loans Company is fantastic news – not only because of his impressive business accolades but for the leadership he has provided to the SLC in the past 18 months in the Operations Directorate. I cannot wait to start working with him for the benefit of students up and down the country."