

Negotiations on the UK's future trading relationship with the US: Update

More trade is essential if the UK is to overcome the unprecedented challenges posed by Covid-19. New FTAs will be an important factor in facing that economic challenge, providing new opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs who have faced significant challenges in this difficult period. An FTA with the US can help create opportunities for UK businesses, provide better jobs and boost the economy in every part of the country.

Both sides are hopeful that negotiations for a comprehensive trade agreement can proceed at an accelerated pace. Ambassador Lighthizer and I agreed that a second virtual round will take place in the weeks of 15 and 22 June, and that in advance of that negotiating teams will continue their work and meet virtually on a rolling basis, with meetings continuing throughout this week and beyond.

Negotiations over the past two weeks were conducted virtually but proceeded efficiently, with UK and US negotiators participating in extensive discussions in nearly 30 different negotiating groups covering all aspects of a comprehensive trade agreement. The discussions covered the following workstreams:

- Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- Legal Group – Disputes
- Trade Remedies
- Rules of Origin
- Investment
- Legal Group – Core Text
- Technical Barriers to Trade
- Competition
- Digital
- Telecoms
- Economics
- Customs
- Sectoral Annexes
- Cross cutting services
- Market Access for Goods, Overarching and Industrial Goods
- Good Regulatory Practice (GRP)
- Financial Services
- Sustainability, Environment and Labour
- General Coordination
- Market Access for Goods, Agriculture
- State Owned Enterprises
- Services Sectors
- Intellectual Property
- Procurement

- Sustainability, Anti-Corruption
- Market Access for Goods, Textiles
- Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS)
- Subsidies

The meetings were positive and constructive, reflecting the mutual commitment to secure an ambitious agreement that significantly boosts trade and investment between our economies, the first and fifth largest in the world.

Both sides recognised the unprecedented circumstances in which these negotiations took place, with significant emphasis placed on supporting the post-Covid economic recovery.

During the meetings, the teams discussed their respective objectives and agreed on ambitious next steps for coming talks. Our preparatory work makes it possible for the UK and United States to quickly advance negotiations in a number of substantive areas that will shape our future bilateral trade relationship.

A number of areas showed particular progress, including where both teams identified positive alignment between respective negotiating positions. They identified a mutually high ambition for services, investment and digital trade, among other areas.

Both sides also set out a mutual commitment to creating new opportunities for businesses on both sides of the Atlantic and to delivering benefits for workers, consumers and farmers. This includes the confirmation that both sides will quickly pursue a standalone Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Chapter and will continue the UK-US SME Dialogue.

In the same manner as this negotiating round, discussions in the second round will cover all areas to be included in a Free Trade Agreement.

The Government is committed to negotiating a comprehensive agreement with the US and we look forward to making further progress at the next round of negotiations. The Government will make a further statement on progress following the second round of talks.

Funding and manufacturing boost for UK vaccine programme

- Global licensing agreement signed between Oxford University and AstraZeneca
- AstraZeneca will work to make up to 30 million doses available by September for the UK, as part of an agreement to deliver 100 million doses in total

- government backs top scientists at the University of Oxford and Imperial College London with new funding of £84 million
- funding includes £65.5 million for the vaccine being developed at the University of Oxford and £18.5 million for Imperial College London, as coronavirus vaccine trials accelerate

UK's top researchers rapidly working to find a coronavirus vaccine will benefit from £84 million of new government funding, Business Secretary Alok Sharma has announced today (Sunday 17 May).

The funding comes as Oxford University today agrees a global licensing agreement with AstraZeneca, the UK-based pharmaceutical company, for the commercialisation and manufacturing of their potential vaccine.

This means that, if the Oxford vaccine is successful, AstraZeneca will work to make up to 30 million doses available by September for people in the UK, as part of an agreement to deliver 100 million doses in total.

This will mean the UK will be the first country to get access to the vaccine, should it be successful.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Our scientists are at the forefront of vaccine development. This deal with AstraZeneca means that if the Oxford University vaccine works, people in the UK will get the first access to it, helping to protect thousands of lives.

The agreement will deliver 100 million doses in total, ensuring that in addition to supporting our own people, we are able to make the vaccines available to developing countries at the lowest possible cost.

The UK continues to lead the global response to find a vaccine, and the government is backing our scientists to do this as quickly as possible.

Pascal Soriot, Chief Executive Officer, AstraZeneca, said:

AstraZeneca is at the forefront of the response to COVID-19, and we are proud to be working with Oxford University to help make this vaccine available as quickly as possible. I would like to thank HM Government for its commitment to the vaccine and welcome its leadership and generosity for its help in expanding access beyond the UK. Our company is working hard to establish parallel supply agreements with other nations and multilateral organisations to ensure fair and equitable access around the world.

Professor Sir John Bell, Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford University,

said:

The University of Oxford is immensely proud of the scientists at the Jenner Institute and the Oxford Vaccine Group who have worked tirelessly to discover and develop this vaccine in record time. We now have a partner in AstraZeneca who are ideally positioned to help us evaluate the vaccine, manufacture it and distribute it to UK citizens as well as to the rest of the world. They share our commitment to true global access to end this pandemic.

Professor Robin Shattock of Imperial College London said:

This funding will greatly accelerate our efforts to demonstrate the effectiveness of our vaccine and make it available to at risk populations as rapidly as possible. Access to such support allows us to move at unprecedented speed.

The UK is at the forefront of international efforts to research and develop a vaccine. The government has already pledged £250 million to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), the highest contribution of any country. This is part of the UK committing £388 million to the international drive to develop vaccines, tests and treatments. In June, the UK will also host the upcoming global pledging conference for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

Expert Advisory Board members

The expert advisory group advises, challenges and support the Vaccine Task Force in their goal to ensure that the UK population has access to clinically effective and safe vaccines as soon as possible.

Chair: Patrick Vallance – GCSA, Government Office for Science

- Jonathan Van Tam – Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England
- Charlotte Deane – Deputy Executive Chair of the EPSRC
- Robin Shattock – Head of Mucosal Infection and Immunity, Department of Medicine at Imperial College
- Sarah Gilbert – Professor of Vaccinology, Jenner Institute & Nuffield Department of Clinical Medicine
- Janet Downie – CEO at RoslinCT
- Kate Bingham – Managing Partner at SV Health Investors
- John Bell – Government Life Science’s Champion and Regius Chair of Medicine at the University of Oxford
- Jeremy Farrar – Director at Wellcome Trust
- Menelas Pangalos – Executive Vice-President, BioPharmaceuticals R&D at AstraZeneca
- Ian McCubbin – Independent Pharma Specialist and Chair of Manufacturing Advisory Group
- Andrew Pollard – Professor of Paediatric Infection and Immunity at the University of Oxford

- Richard Hatchett – CEO, Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)
 - June Raine – Chief Executive at the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency
 - Andrew Witty – WHO Vaccine Special Envoy
 - Jeff Almond – former Vice President and Head of Discovery Research and External R&D at Sanofi Pasteur
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Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre to open 12 months ahead of schedule

- Up to £93 million government investment to open the UK's first dedicated Vaccine Manufacturing and Innovation Centre 12 months early
- A further £38 million will establish a rapid deployment facility this summer
- The new Centre is a key component of the government's coronavirus programme in boosting the UK's capacity to develop and mass produce vaccines

The race to manufacture millions of doses of a coronavirus vaccine has been boosted with a multi-million-pound government investment, Business Secretary Alok Sharma has announced today.

The government will invest up to £93 million to accelerate construction of the new Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre (VMIC) which, when completed, will have capacity to produce enough vaccine doses to serve the entire UK population in as little as six months. The funding will ensure the centre opens in Summer 2021, a full 12 months ahead of schedule.

The new Centre, which is already under construction, is a key component of the government's coronavirus vaccine programme – ensuring that once a vaccine is available it can be produced quickly and in mass quantities.

To be located on the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus in Oxfordshire, the new Centre will be the UK's first not-for-profit organisation established to develop and advance the mass production of vaccines. This will boost the UK's long-term capacity against future viruses. The centre will also accelerate the production of vaccines for existing illnesses such as the flu virus.

While the Centre is being built, the government will establish a rapid deployment facility thanks to a further investment of £38 million to begin manufacturing at scale from Summer 2020. This facility will support efforts to ensure a vaccine is widely available to the public as soon as possible.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

As the biggest contributor to the international coalition to find a vaccine, the UK is leading the global response. Once a breakthrough is made, we need to be ready to manufacture a vaccine by the millions.

The new Vaccine Manufacturing and Innovation Centre and temporary facility will build 'fill and finish' capacity, bringing the UK vaccine programme together from discovery to distribution.

The Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre's Chief Executive Dr Matthew Duchars said:

Today's announcement by the Business Secretary is an important endorsement for the work the Vaccine Manufacturing and Innovation Centre will deliver in shoring up future domestic supply of vaccines in response to a pandemic.

This investment will rapidly accelerate the construction of the facility, enabling us to bring it online a year sooner. In addition, the capacity will be significantly increased, so that enough vaccines could be made for everyone in the UK within a matter of months of opening.

UK Research and Innovation Chief Executive Sir Mark Walport, said:

The Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre is an essential new weapon in the UK's arsenal against diseases and other biological threats, ensuring sufficient vaccines get to the public in the fastest possible time.

The UKRI-funded teams at the University of Oxford and Imperial College London have developed potential coronavirus vaccines at unprecedented speed. By working with partners including government, VMIC and the Vaccines Taskforce to fast-track the manufacturing capability, we are ensuring that momentum will continue all the way from lab to patient.

The UK is at the forefront of international efforts to research and develop a vaccine. The government has already pledged £250 million to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), the highest contribution of any country, and the UK is hosting the upcoming global pledging conference for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, on 4 June. This is part of the UK committing £388 million to the international drive to develop vaccines, tests and treatments.

The announcement follows the government appointing leading figure in the life

sciences sector Kate Bingham as chair of the UK's Vaccine Taskforce – the group set up by the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Deputy Chief Medical Officer and Business Secretary to lead UK efforts to find and manufacture a COVID-19 vaccine.

Notes to Editors

1. Plans for the Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre have received a total public and private sector funding of £207 million, including today's new £131 million investment.
2. The Vaccines Taskforce is supported by an Expert Advisory Board, led by Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance and Deputy Chief Medical Officer Jonathan Van Tam, to coordinate efforts to accelerate the development and manufacture of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Prime Minister's article in the Mail on Sunday: 17 May 2020

If 2020 has taught us anything, it is truly that the worst of times bring out the best in humanity.

Every day brings heart-breaking news as more lives are lost before their time to this vicious coronavirus. Every victim leaves behind family, friends and loved ones who mourn their loss. They remain constantly in my thoughts; each death a spur to redouble our efforts to defeat this virus.

We can only defeat it by acting together. In recent weeks we have seen phenomenal bravery, compassion and selflessness as people go above and beyond to protect the lives of others.

The staff in our care homes and NHS doing all they can to bring the sick back to health. Teachers helping critical workers go to work by looking after their children, while still teaching those at home. Police and prison officers keeping order on our streets and in our prisons. Those producing, processing, distributing and selling food. Engineers keeping the lights on and our broadband connected. Our armed forces rising to every logistical challenge with awesome professionalism. Civil servants working round the clock to implement every policy decision – all these people are putting others first.

They are the best of us, punctuating each day with a million acts of love and kindness. And their efforts have not been in vain for a simple reason – because the British people as a whole have risen so magnificently to the challenge we set: to stay at home.

I don't underestimate how difficult it has been for everyone to be cut off

from friends and parents, children and grandchildren, brothers and sisters. Unable to visit places of worship or even just spend time with others. We thrive off social contact and having those we love around us – it's human nature. Yet those vital human connections have been cruelly denied to all of us by this insidious disease.

These enormous sacrifices have paid off. We have seen the number of positive cases plateau and fall, even as testing capacity has increased tenfold. The number of people admitted to hospital with Covid has steadily fallen. Despite predictions that critical care capacity would struggle to cope, the NHS was emphatically not overwhelmed.

I made clear from the outset that we can only make changes to the lockdown when it is safe to do so, guided by science. We set five tests, of which three have been met and progress is being made on the remaining two. We are setting up a system of COVID-19 Alert levels, which will be overseen by a new UK Joint Biosecurity Centre designed to assess the spread of the virus and inform decisions over how we lift the lockdown.

It is the British public's fortitude, their perseverance, their good common sense and their desire to return to the freedoms they hold dear that has allowed us to inch forwards.

We have announced new rules on what people can and cannot do in England. You can now spend as much time as you like outdoors, for example sitting and enjoying the fresh air, picnicking, or sunbathing. You can meet one other person from a different household outdoors, provided you maintain social distancing. You can exercise outdoors as often as you wish and play sport.

Even with these changes, it's vital that people stay alert, keep their distance from others and carry on washing their hands regularly.

These changes are possible because the evidence shows that the risk of transmission is significantly lower outdoors. Being able to see a friend or family member at a safe distance, in a park or at the end of the road, provides significant benefits to our physical and mental wellbeing – but crucially, it does not risk reversing the gains we have so far won in the fight against the virus. I am confident that the balance of risk, taking everything into account, means we can safely make this change.

Now that we have driven the rate of infection down, and there are fewer infections, some people can also start returning to work. We have held extensive talks with employers, trade unions and the devolved administrations about how to make workplaces safe. The COVID-19 Secure guidelines we developed together mean we can encourage people who can't work from home to go to their place of work in a safe way.

The message is: work from home if you can but travel to work if you can't. And avoid public transport if you can, but use it if you can't.

No earlier than June, we hope to move to step two, opening schools to more children and re-opening some shops. And no earlier than July, we can move to

step three, opening parts of the leisure and hospitality sectors. Over time we can gradually get closer to a kind of normality – but only if the evidence shows these adjustments are compatible with our five tests. And if at any stage we need to tighten the restrictions, we will not hesitate to act. Nothing is more important than saving lives.

I understand that people will feel frustrated with some of the new rules. We are trying to do something that has never had to be done before – moving the country out of a full lockdown, in a way which is safe and does not risk sacrificing all of your hard work. I recognise what we are now asking is more complex than simply staying at home – but this is a complex problem and we need to trust in the good sense of the British people.

If we all stick at it, then we'll be able, gradually, to get rid of the complexities and the restrictions and make it easier and simpler for families to meet again. But we must move slowly, and at the right time.

I want to thank you personally for sticking with us and – most of all – for being so patient. And I want to reassure you that there is a route out of this.

In the darkness of March, I said that with hard work, we could turn the tide within three months. We have now passed through the peak.

I said that, if we could get an antibody test showing whether you have had the disease, it would be a huge step forward. This week Public Health England have approved an antibody test which is 100% accurate.

I said we would throw everything we could at finding a vaccine. There remains a very long way to go, and I must be frank that a vaccine might not come to fruition. But we are leading the global effort. Some of the most promising research into vaccines is happening right here in the UK – and this weekend we are announcing a £93 million investment to open the new Vaccine Manufacturing and Innovation Centre a full 12 months ahead of schedule.

We are also supporting research into drug treatments for the virus which can bring as many people who have caught the virus back to full health as possible.

Despite these efforts, we have to acknowledge we may need to live with this virus for some time to come. We need to find new ways to control the virus. We will do that through testing and tracing – testing individuals who have symptoms to see if they have the virus and tracing contacts who may have been infected.

The NHS app and an army of contact tracers will help us alert anyone who may have caught the virus. By asking them to self isolate, we will help them protect their friends, family and loved ones, while stopping the spread of the virus in the wider community.

By screening arrivals at ports and airports and introducing quarantine measures, we will be able to keep the number of infections at low levels, and we can give everyone else more freedom to lead their lives as normally as

possible.

We have achieved a lot together so far. Let's not throw it all away now. In return for the small freedoms we are now allowing ourselves, we must stay alert. We must do so in the knowledge that our self-discipline will, eventually, lead to the return of our much-missed normality.

I know this will not be easy – the first baby steps never are. But I hope that, when we look back, the changes we have made this week will be seen as an important moment on the road to our nation's recovery.

[British Embassy Warsaw staff wear pride-themed masks to mark IDAHOBIT](#)

World news story

The International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia is observed on 17 May to raise awareness of LGBTI rights.



Ambassador Knott wearing a pride-themed mask

Every year, this Embassy flies the Pride flag on 17 May, to mark the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia.

The date marks the decision in 1990 to remove homosexuality from the International Classification of Diseases of the World Health Organisation, and aims to raise awareness of LGBTI rights work worldwide.

This year, due to COVID19, members of the Embassy teamstaff working from home decided to mark the day in a different way: by wearing pride-themed protective masks.

British Ambassador to Poland, Jonathan Knott, said:

While right now we all need to focus on fighting COVID-19, we must not forget to continue protecting the values in which we believe.

On International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, we reaffirm our support for efforts to raise public awareness of issues affecting the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community, and pay tribute to the hard work of LGBTI people in Poland, the UK and around the world to ensure human rights and dignity for all.

We continue to be committed to protecting all people from violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, and ensuring that every individual enjoys equal opportunities.

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