

# UK applies to join huge Pacific free trade area CPTPP

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss will speak to ministers in Japan and New Zealand on Monday morning (1 February 2021) to request to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), with formal negotiations set to start this year.

The announcement comes as the UK today celebrates one year since leaving the EU and becoming an independent trading nation.

Joining the CPTPP would deepen the UK's access to fast-growing markets and major economies, including Mexico, Malaysia and Vietnam, for the benefit of UK business.

Joining the £9 trillion partnership will cut tariffs for UK industries including food and drink, and cars, while also creating new opportunities for modern industries like tech and services, ultimately supporting and creating high-value jobs across the UK. Unlike EU membership, joining does not require the UK to cede control over our laws, borders, or money.

UK trade with the group was worth £111 billion last year, growing by 8% a year since 2016. Benefits that CPTPP membership will bring for businesses include:

- Modern digital trade rules that allow data to flow freely between members, remove unnecessary barriers for businesses, and protect commercial source code and encryption.
- Eliminating tariffs quicker on UK exports including whisky (down from 165% to 0% in Malaysia) and cars (reducing to 0% in Canada by 2022, two years earlier than through the UK-Canada trade deal).
- Rules of Origin that allow content from any country within CPTPP to count as 'originating'. For example, this would mean that cars made in the UK could use more Japanese-originating car parts, such as batteries.
- Easier travel for businesspeople between CPTPP countries, such as the potential for faster and cheaper visas.

## **The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson said**

"One year after our departure from the EU we are forging new partnerships that will bring enormous economic benefits for the people of Britain.

"Applying to be the first new country to join the CPTPP demonstrates our ambition to do business on the best terms with our friends and partners all over the world and be an enthusiastic champion of global free trade."

## **International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said**

"Joining CPTPP will create enormous opportunities for UK businesses that

simply weren't there as part of the EU and deepen our ties with some of the fastest-growing markets in the world.

"It will mean lower tariffs for car manufacturers and whisky producers, and better access for our brilliant services providers, delivering quality jobs and greater prosperity for people here at home.

"We're at the front of the queue and look forward to starting formal negotiations in the coming months."

The UK will publish its negotiation objectives, scoping analysis, and consultation response in advance of negotiations expected to start this Spring.

CPTPP membership is a key part of the Government's plan to position the UK at the centre of a network of modern free trade deals that support jobs and drive economic growth at home.

**Julian David, CEO of techUK, said**

"Today marks an important step in the UK's path to developing a modern trade policy that creates new opportunities for the UK tech sector. Building on our recent agreements with Japan and the European Union, the accession to the CPTPP will allow us to join a group of ambitious countries breaking the newest ground in digital trade.

"The UK has been a major beneficiary of the rise of digital trade with over 67% of service exports worth £190.3 billion being digitally delivered. CPTPP will open up new markets for innovative tech SMEs looking to grow and expand beyond our borders. We are looking forward to working with the government throughout the process."

**Mike Cherry, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) Chair, said**

"Membership of the CPTPP would be a hugely welcome development to all small businesses looking to either expand or begin their trading journeys.

"Crucially, at the very heart of this agreement is an SME chapter, something that we have lobbied for the inclusion of in every FTA, ensuring that no business is left behind.

"This is truly a world-leading agreement and one that will genuinely help small firms to thrive and succeed more than ever."

**CBI President, Lord Karan Bilimoria, said**

"This ambition marks a new chapter for our independent trade policy. As one of the largest free trade agreements in the world, these 11 countries contribute over £100 billion to our economy.

"Membership of the bloc has the potential to deliver new opportunities for UK business across different sectors. The CBI will continue to work with the Government to ensure that firms get the most out of an agreement that will

create jobs and deliver wide-ranging benefits to communities across the country.”

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## Vaccine Deployment Minister and Mayor of London collaborate to share benefits of vaccine uptake

This week, we reached the sombre milestone of 100,000 (coronavirus) COVID-19 deaths in the UK. Every death is a tragedy and leaves behind a bereft family, but it is evident some communities have been hit harder than others.

People of black African ethnicity in England are over twice as likely to die from this virus than white people, according to the ONS. The same is also true of South Asian people.

Now, as 2 politicians from Asian immigrant families, we know the reasons for this go beyond ethnicity. It is to do with socio-economics – where and how people live – as well as historic issues of racism and inequality in this country. Those from minority ethnic groups are more likely to work in some of the lowest-paid, public-facing jobs in the country which has put them at increased risk of catching this virus.

It is also to do with history – in the past minorities have not been properly included in some medical research, including trials of vaccines. All this can damage levels of trust. However, this is not the case in the trials of today’s COVID-19 vaccines which have been safely and widely tested across a range of different ages and ethnic groups. It is however incredibly important to acknowledge these lower levels of trust that some from black Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds have in the institutions set up to represent them, and we will continue to do all we can to address this.

We’re incredibly pleased the UK has already started rolling out two COVID-19 vaccines which will save thousands of lives in our communities. The vaccines will eventually get us back to our normal lives, but right now it is how we will protect our communities, our friends and family, our colleagues, our elders.

Today we are calling on people from ethnic minority backgrounds to get their COVID-19 vaccine – it is safe, it is effective and it could save your life or the life of someone you love. This is an issue of vital importance and one that transcends party lines.

This week, black MPs from both the Conservative and Labour parties united against the spread of false rumours about vaccines in a video where they shared heart-breaking stories of losing loved ones to COVID-19. British

Asians have put out a similar video to help dispel vaccine myths.

The NHS has been doing an incredible job, rolling out vaccinations across the country – in GP clinics, pharmacies and vaccination centres, from racecourses and leisure centres to mosques and gurdwaras. Over 7.8 million people have now received the first dose, and we have reached the incredible rate of 250 jabs a minute. But it is vital COVID-19 vaccines are available to everyone, regardless of ethnicity, faith or socio-economic background. We want everyone to get the advice and information they need to make decisions about their personal health. But make no mistake, the decision to take this vaccine could save your life and stop you ending up in hospital.

We are investing a huge amount of time and effort to strengthen the partnership between central and local government and to bring communities closer together in this effort. The government is expanding the community champions scheme so that communities have trusted local leaders who can help answer questions about the vaccine and work with the NHS and public health teams to support local communities. We are both working with faith leaders, grassroots organisations representing our diverse communities and charities and have listened to their ideas about how we can protect our communities from coronavirus and get vaccines to as many people as possible.

Some have shared concerns over what goes into the vaccines, and whether their faith permitted it. The medicines regulator, the MHRA, has confirmed there are no animal products in the vaccines and Imams have declared them to be Halal. In recent weeks we have seen the Archbishop of Canterbury receive the vaccine and Pope Francis encouraging everyone to take it.

Some have worried about how quickly the vaccine was developed. Others want to know how soon they or their loved ones would get the vaccine. We can reassure people that government is on target to offer the first dose of the vaccination to the first 4 priority groups by 15 February and all over-50s by the spring. And that it is safe. Its quick development is all down to the global effort of scientists and countries around the world.

We know people often put their trust in their friends, religious leaders, or family over the government. It is through events like these, across the country, that we are helping community and faith leaders answer whatever questions people have about the vaccines and how and when they will be invited to get a jab.

During the biggest vaccination programme in our country's history, we want to make this an opportunity to unite, and champion the work of our brilliant scientists, researchers, health and social care staff and front-line workers that have cared for our loved ones and played a pivotal part in the scientific breakthroughs that developed the vaccines.

We've asked everyone to play their part to protect the NHS, save lives, and get society up and running again, and we know the sacrifices communities have made to follow the rules.

Now the vaccines have finally given us hope, we urge everyone but especially

people from black, Asian and ethnic minorities, to find trusted advice, call your GP, visit the NHS website, and encourage your family and friends to protect themselves when the call comes, it could save their life.

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## [UK Emergency Medical Team deployed to Eswatini to support coronavirus response](#)

A team of medics from the UK's Emergency Medical Team (EMT) is deploying to Eswatini in southern Africa to provide support and specialist expertise in hospitals that are battling the coronavirus pandemic.

The team of 11, which includes 4 British medics, will fly from London Heathrow today (30 January 2021). They will provide urgent training and use their specialist expertise to provide clinical supervision to those treating patients critically ill with COVID-19.

A biomedical engineer will also train emaSwati staff on how to install, use and maintain critical care equipment, and support the distribution of key supplies including oxygen.

As of 27 January 2021, Eswatini has a total of 15,051 COVID-19 cases and 522 people have died from the illness. The country has seen a surge of new cases and fatalities since December 2020, with limited access to testing and treatment for much of the population.

Minister for Africa, James Duddridge, said:

Our UK Emergency Medical Team will save lives by using their world-leading specialist expertise and skills to make sure medics in Eswatini are best equipped to treat those seriously sick with coronavirus.

We stand by the people of Eswatini in the battle to bring this outbreak under control. This dreadful disease does not respect borders, and none of us are safe until we are all safe.

UK EMT Team Leader Andy Kent said:

UK-Med as part of the UK EMT is proud to be able to support the people of Eswatini in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our team will be working alongside health care teams to support

them with the treatment of increasing numbers of serious and critically-ill COVID-19 patients. They will also supervise and train Eswatini health staff, and help make sure that critical care equipment is functioning and used efficiently.

UK EMT Eswatini Medical Coordinator, David Anderson, said:

It is really important that the UK through the UK EMT continues to support other countries with their COVID-19 response. It is a fantastic opportunity to take our hard-won knowledge and work with the staff in Eswatini to support and improve their COVID-19 response.

The UK EMT is the UK's front-line response to a humanitarian crisis overseas and is able to rapidly deploy resources that include a fully equipped surgical field hospital when needed.

Last year, the UK EMT supported the World Health Organization and health ministries in the fight against coronavirus in deployments to Ghana, South Africa, Cambodia, Burkina Faso, Bangladesh, Chad, Zambia, Armenia and Lebanon.

In addition to supporting the immediate humanitarian response, the UK is at the forefront of efforts to drive unprecedented global collaboration and resourcing for the development and delivery of new vaccines, treatments and tests at the speed and scale required.

Notes to editors

- The EMT is a partnership of the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, emergency health NGO UK-Med, NGO Humanity & Inclusion, the UK Fire and Rescue Service and Palladium.
- The EMT's travel to support the Eswatini Minister of Health is considered essential business on behalf of the UK Government.

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## [£93 million for road upgrades as Transport Secretary pledges to build back better across the country](#)

- vital road upgrades announced in North Yorkshire, Hampshire and the Midlands
- new and improved transport links will boost connections between key economic hubs across the country while making journeys safer and more

reliable for motorists

- funding reaffirms government promise to level up transport infrastructure and build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic, improving access to jobs and opportunities

As part of the government's commitment to fuel the economic recovery from coronavirus (COVID-19), the Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has today (30 January 2021) pledged £93 million for major road upgrades across the country.

The [Northern Powerhouse](#) is set to receive over half of the funding, with up to £56 million for a dramatic overhaul of the Kex Gill section of the A59 in North Yorkshire. This will significantly improve connectivity between the historic northern towns of Harrogate and Skipton. The proposed new road will divert traffic away from the landslip-prone Kex Gill part of the route, helping to remove traffic from nearby villages and offering more reliable journeys to thousands of people in the region every day.

The West Midlands will benefit from a £24 million investment to reduce congestion at Birchley Island, situated at the intersection of the M5, A4123 and A4034 – which is expected to boost employment, improve air quality and increase the region's manufacturing output. The proposed scheme will widen the existing carriageway on the roundabout and introduce additional lanes, all of which will improve connectivity between the Midlands and the national motorway network. Pedestrians and cyclists will also see improved facilities for greener travel at the intersection.

Elsewhere, Hampshire is in line for £13 million worth of crucial upgrades to the Redbridge Causeway bridges over the River Test, which carry roughly 60,000 vehicles a day. The bridges provide important access for local businesses and hauliers to the Port of Southampton, and link the New Forest waterside area to Southampton. Today's funding follows ministers' agreement to speed up delivery of the proposed maintenance work, which will ensure journeys in the region remain safe and reliable for tens of thousands of road users while more disruptive works – hampering people's ability to use the vital route – aren't needed in the future.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps, said:

I am delighted to announce this significant funding package, which will ensure millions of people can continue to travel easily and safely. It's further proof of this government delivering on its promise to level up the country – putting transport at the heart of our efforts to build back better from COVID-19.

The projects will help people access work and education, as well as ensuring vital connectivity for local businesses.

While everyone will see the benefits of these schemes in time, for now, it's important to remember to only travel for the permitted reasons while we continue to prioritise protecting public health and preventing the spread of the virus. Through staying at home,

you can help stop the virus and save lives.

Chief Secretary to the Treasury Steve Barclay said:

Upgrading the country's roads doesn't just help drivers – it'll mean more jobs, safer journeys and more reliable access to things like education and work.

This government is pressing ahead with our commitment to level up the country – even through this pandemic – ensuring that everyone has equal opportunity to get on in life regardless of where they live.

The total cost of the 3 schemes is expected to reach £107 million, with local councils providing the remainder of the funding following the Department for Transport's £93 million investment – pending the completion of all legal processes.

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## All new developments must meet local standards of beauty, quality and design under new rules

- Communities to be at the heart of plans for well-designed neighbourhoods, to help us Build Back Better
- Every council to create their own local design code so new developments can reflect what local communities truly want
- New 'Office for Place' to be set up, to help communities turn these designs into a local standard for all new developments
- More funding to help communities nominate local historic buildings for listing
- Proposals mean local communities will have the power to decide what buildings in their areas should look like, to help the country Build Back Better



Local communities will be at the heart of plans to make sure that new developments in their area are beautiful and well-designed, under proposals outlined by Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP today (30 January 2021).

In response to the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission report, the government is today:

- Proposing [changes to the National Planning Policy Framework](#) to place greater emphasis on beauty and place-making, and to ensure that all new streets are lined with trees.
- Publishing a [draft national design code](#) that provides a checklist of design principles to consider for new developments, such as street character, building type, façade, and the requirements that address wellbeing and environmental impact, which councils can use as a foundation for their own local design codes.
- Encouraging all councils to publish their unique design code, so residents have a real say in the design of new developments in their area.
- Creating an 'Office for Place' within the next year, which will support local communities to turn their designs into the standard for all new buildings in their area.
- Opening a new Community Housing Fund to support community-based organisations to bring forward local housebuilding projects for the £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme, backed by £4 million of support for local plan.
- And doubling the available funding for areas under the "local heritage listing – monuments men" campaign, with up to £1.5 million now available for communities to nominate local heritage sites including historical buildings or modern architecture, art and memorials for inclusion in their council's local heritage list.

Taken together, these measures will help the country to Build Back Better and ensure that current and new residents alike will benefit from beautiful homes in well-designed neighbourhoods as we recover from this pandemic.

Greater concentration will now be placed on the quality, design and the environment in planning than ever before, with the local community fully involved in how they want new developments to look and feel. For example, the proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework will set an expectation that good quality design will be approved while poor quality will

be rejected, and includes a commitment to ensure that all streets are lined with trees.

The measures mean the word “beauty” will be specifically included in planning rules for the first time since the system was created in 1947 – going back to a previous time when there was a greater emphasis on whether a building was considered attractive to local people.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

We should aspire to pass on our heritage to our successors, not depleted but enhanced. In order to do that, we need to bring about a profound and lasting change in the buildings that we build, which is one of the reasons we are placing a greater emphasis on locally popular design, quality and access to nature, through our national planning policies and introducing the National Model Design Codes.

These will enable local people to set the rules for what developments in their area should look like, ensuring that they reflect and enhance their surroundings and preserve our local character and identity.

Instead of developers forcing plans on locals, they will need to adapt to proposals from local people, ensuring that current and new residents alike will benefit from beautiful homes in well-designed neighbourhoods.

The government has published a [new National Model Design Code](#) that outlines the design standards new developments are expected to meet. This provides a checklist that will guide local councils to create their own, unique, local design code, centred on genuine community involvement so residents have a real say in the design of new developments, embracing the history, culture and heritage of their local area.

It is the government’s ambition that every council will produce a local design code and guide, to set expectations for beauty and well-designed homes and places in their local area and to give a simple process to local communities so they can have their say.

Nicholas Boys Smith, Chair of the Design Body Steering Group, said:

There is no fundamental reason that prevents the creation of streets and squares, homes as places where we can lead happy, healthy, and connected lives. In these places we can know more of our neighbours and be more joyful as we go about our daily lives. As a society we have not done this, and we are paying the consequences.

I am delighted that the government is implementing so many of the

Building Better Building Beautiful Commission's findings and would like to thank them for their work to undertake this. I am honoured to be asked to chair the transition board of the Interim Office for Place and look forward to our work to help deliver new places and manage existing places to be beautiful, popular, healthy and sustainable.

Our ultimate purpose will be to make it easier for neighbourhood communities to ask for what they find beautiful and to refuse what they find ugly.

Victoria Hills, chief executive of the Royal Town Planning Institute said:

As a member of the government's Design Body Steering Group, I welcome MHCLG's commitment to good quality design. The RTPI has long called for design to be an integral part of the planning process. A survey in 2020 revealed that 88% of our members wanted greater powers to reject poor design and lacked the capacity and resources to do so.

I am therefore delighted that the government has listened and pledged to not only strengthen the National Planning Policy Framework to empower local planning authorities to prioritise design and drive up quality, but has also committed to inject much-needed funding in this area.

I am also pleased that communities will be at the heart of this process. It has never been more important, in the wake of the pandemic, that communities have a say on how their local area looks. Planners and the planning system must play an active role in driving up design quality in all areas of England and we look forward to making an ongoing contribution to this work in advance of the forthcoming Planning Bill.

The government is also putting support in place for councils and communities to help them set expectations of design quality in their area. This includes the creation of an 'Office for Place' within the next year which will pioneer design and beauty within the planning system. The new organisation will draw on Britain's world-class design expertise to support communities to turn their visions of beautiful design into local standards that all new buildings will be required to meet.

An interim Office for Place will be established in the department immediately with a transition board chaired by Nicholas Boys Smith, tasked with considering what form the organisation should take, informed by responses to the planning reform consultation.

This team will this year be piloting the National Model Design Code with 20 communities and empowering local authorities to demand beauty, design quality

and place-making, through training on the principles outlined in the National Model Design Code.

[Expressions of interest](#) are now open for the first 10 councils to sign up, with these to receive a share of an initial £500,000. The proposals are now out for consultation for a period of 8 weeks.

The government is also relaunching the Community Housing Fund, making £4 million available to help Community Land Trusts (CLTs) bid for funds to support them to prepare bids for the £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme. This programme is the largest investment in affordable housing in a decade and will provide up to 180,000 new homes across the country, should economic conditions allow.

This will help to diversify the homebuilding sector, improving design, sustainability and build quality by developing modern methods of construction.

The government is also encouraging communities to nominate historic buildings and other heritage assets such as memorials and plaques for their council's local heritage list – helping to protect the historic buildings and heritage truly valued in their area.

Following an overwhelmingly positive response to the expressions of interest launched in October 2020, funding has been doubled – to £1.5 million – allowing 22 areas to now be involved in the pilot, instead of the 10 originally announced.

This follows the appointment of Charles O'Brien as the government's Listing Heritage Adviser to help conserve some of England's historic buildings as part of the most ambitious local heritage campaign for 40 years. This is the first time such a post has been created since the 1980s and has echoes of the famous Monuments Men who battled to save historic buildings and artefacts from bulldozers during the Second World War.

Together, these new proposals will make sure that local residents are at the heart of new developments in their community, with beauty, wellbeing and a communal spirit at its centre as we Build Back Better.

The government has also confirmed that £2.2 billion of new loan finance announced in the Spending Review to support housebuilders across the country will be provided this year.

This includes £150 million over 4 years to support a new 'Help to Buy' scheme for self and custom builders.

This is alongside nearly £20 billion in multi-year capital investment to underpin the government's long-term housing strategy, including a National Home Building Fund, with initial funding of £7.1 billion over the next 4 years to unlock up to 860,000 homes.

The 190-page '[Living with Beauty](#)' report published in January 2020 proposed a new development and planning framework, with 3 principle goals – to ask for

beauty, refuse ugliness and promote stewardship.

It contains 45 policy propositions which recommend how central and local government, the development industry, and the wider public can seek to ensure that new development is of high-quality design and is carried out with greater community consent.

Recommendations from the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission's report that government will be taking forward include:

- making beauty and placemaking a strategic policy
- putting an emphasis on approving good design as well as refusing poor quality schemes
- asking local planning authorities to produce their own design codes
- asking for new streets to be tree-lined
- improving biodiversity and access to nature through design

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