

Trevelyan: Break down digital trade barriers to help British businesses thrive



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Trade Secretary unveils five-point plan for digital trade in speech to London Tech Week

Plan will reduce costs for British businesses, cut red tape and shore up data protection

Figures show digital trade is vital for business growth in the UK - worth £326 billion in 2019

The UK must break down unfair or discriminatory digital trade barriers to help British businesses export their world-leading services, the International Trade Secretary will say today.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan will set the challenge in a virtual keynote speech kicking off London Tech Week to an audience of industry leaders – her first speech since being appointed last week.

The Department for International Trade will today publish a five-point plan for establishing a free and fair digital trade landscape to help UK businesses and consumers thrive.

Many businesses currently face barriers that restrict their ability to benefit from digital technology, such as paperless trading, or force them to meet unjustified requirements to localise data or disclose their intellectual properties such as source code.

Making digital trade easier will allow businesses in every sector to reach more customers by making it simpler to sell online and helping them trade efficiently and cost-effectively.

Consumers will enjoy greater access to international

marketplaces offering wider variety and more affordable products and services. They will also benefit from a secure digital economy which will remain underpinned by the UK's strong data protection safeguards.

Under the five-point plan, DIT will:

Facilitate more open digital markets to ensure British consumers and businesses benefit from greater access to digital markets in other countries.

Advocate free and trusted cross-border data flows that will make it simpler and cheaper for businesses who use data to trade internationally while maintaining the UK's high standards for personal data protection.

Champion consumer and business safeguards through enhanced consumer and intellectual property protections.

Promote the development and adoption of innovative digital trading systems such as digital customs processes, e-contracting and paperless trading, which can cut red tape and make trade easier, cheaper, faster, and more secure.

Establish global cooperation on digital trade via free trade agreements with international partners and using our G7 presidency and seat at the WTO to push for countries to become more open to digital trade.

International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

All of us depend on digital trade, yet British businesses face digital barriers in countries who take a protectionist approach. I want the UK to break down these barriers and open up new, exciting opportunities for businesses and consumers so we can see improved productivity, jobs and growth.

Our five-point plan is the first step in shaping international digital trade policy for decades to come. Through our network of international agreements, we are breaking new ground, pushing forward innovative ideas and setting a new gold standard for digital trade.

International digital trade is already a key driver of productivity and business growth in the UK. The digital sector contributed £150.6 billion to the UK economy in 2019, employing 4.6% of the national workforce.

Last year, the UK agreed a comprehensive digital chapter as part of the Free Trade Agreement with Japan and in June, negotiations were launched on a cutting-edge Digital Economy Agreement with Singapore, pushing the frontiers of digital trade further.

In the coming months, the UK will look to conclude negotiations with other key partners such as Australia and New Zealand, driving forward our accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and continuing to cement the UK as a key partner in the fast-growing Indo-Pacific region. We will also conclude the G7's first ever trade track, working with our partners to establish some shared principles on our approaches to digital trade.

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