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Trade Developments

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Welcome to this edition of Trade Developments, brought to you by Deloitte's trade policy team in the UK. This newsletter brings you curated insights, updates and analysis, helping you to understand and navigate the complexities of the rapidly evolving trade landscape.

For in-depth resources and support, check out our dedicated webpage or contact our team at tradesupport@deloitte.co.uk.

US Trade Policy

Read Deloitte's latest analysis of US trade policy developments, including President Trump and President Xi's meeting in Washington, policy developments regarding polysilicon and pharmaceuticals and sanctions on Russia. Access the article here.

Labour Conference

The Labour Party's Annual Conference was held from 27-30 September and brought renewed attention to the UK's long-term relationship with the EU, with Prime Minister Andy Burnham stating that 'Brexit has done more harm than good'. Burnham said he would 'take the opportunity around the summit' to set out the different options to the public and seek consensus on one. He subsequently suggested that, over time, these could include a customs union, participation in the single market, potentially going 'all the way', or having no change at all. Minister for European Relations Hamish Falconer stated that the government aims to go 'further and faster' on rebuilding the UK-EU relationship. Burnham's full speech can be accessed here.

Burnham remains committed to Labour's red lines of not rejoining the EU single market or customs union, until the next general election.

The postponed UK-EU summit, which is widely expected to take place in late November, is expected to finalise previously agreed areas of cooperation, including a sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) agreement and the linkage of the UK and EU emissions trading schemes.

EU E-commerce Handling Fee

The European Commission published draft legislation on 21 September 2026 establishing a handling fee for goods sold directly to EU consumers by non-EU online retailers. Unless the measure is rejected by the European Parliament during the scrutiny period, UK online retailers sending goods directly to consumers in the EU will be subject to a 2 EUR fee from 1 November 2026. The handling fee applies per item rather than per parcel, and applies in addition to customs duty. Read more in our article here.

UK Tariffs on China-origin Goods

The UK Government has accepted recommendations from the Trade Remedies Authority (TRA) to maintain anti-dumping measures on imports from China in two cases.

Firstly, provisional anti-dumping measures have been imposed on Chinese glass container imports whilst the investigation is being completed. Interim measures came into effect on 9 September, after the TRA found preliminary evidence that these Chinese products were being sold in the UK below their normal value, resulting in price undercutting and injury to UK manufacturers. The government's press release can be found here.

Secondly, anti-dumping duties on Chinese wire rod imports have been extended for a further five years. The measure will remain in force until 28 January 2031. The TRA recommended extending the measure after completing an expiry review and receiving no evidence to support excluding any of the products covered. The government's announcement can be found here.

UK Steel Council

Blair McDougall, the UK's Minister for Reindustrialisation, chaired a meeting of the Steel Council on 23 September where he set out his vision for Britain's steelmaking industry to 'thrive'. The Steel Council was re-established in January 2025 and brings industry leaders and trade unions together to discuss the delivery of the Steel Strategy and the long-term future of the sector with government. The meeting was held at British Steel's Scunthorpe site, with discussions including the implementation of the UK's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) due to be operational from January 2027, and the British Industrial Competitiveness Scheme (BICS) due to launch in April 2027.

The meeting follows the government's intervention earlier this year to bring British Steel into public ownership and its subsequent announcement that it intends to pursue public acquisition of Speciality Steel UK. This follows the publication of the Steel Strategy in March earlier this year, as well as the UK's steel safeguard trade measure which has applied since July. The government press release can be found here.

UK-Singapore Pharmaceuticals Negotiation

The UK and Singapore have launched negotiations on a new Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) covering pharmaceutical good manufacturing practice (GMP). The proposed agreement will allow the UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and Singapore's Health Sciences Authority to rely on each other's lab inspection results, streamlining the trade of medicines between the two countries by reducing duplicate regulatory checks.

The negotiations build on the UK-Singapore Free Trade Agreement and also align with the objective set out in the UK Trade Strategy to pursue more MRAs in the growth sectors from the Industrial Strategy. Goods trade between the two countries reached £12 billion in 2025, up 24% from the previous year, while medicines trade exceeded £300 million. The government's press release can be found here.

UK-Philippines Infrastructure Partnership

On 23 September, UK Trade Minister Lord Sarwar and Philippine Finance Secretary Frederick Go signed a government-to-government (G2G) partnership designed to allow Philippine government infrastructure projects to benefit from UK finance. Under the agreement, priority projects will be eligible for support from UK Export Finance (UKEF), which has up to £5 billion of financing capacity available for projects in the Philippines. The partnership will allow the Philippines to leverage UK expertise in areas such as clean energy, digital infrastructure and advanced technology.

The announcement follows the second UK-Philippines Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO) meeting which was held on 22 September. Both sides agreed to a programme of work for the next 12-18 months which will deepen collaboration in agriculture, energy, infrastructure and economic development, and discussed potential collaboration in areas such as trade digitalisation.

The government announcement can be found here and the Joint Statement from the JETCO meeting can be found here.

What do Andy Burnham's priorities mean for the UK's trade strategy?

A little over a year after Keir Starmer's government published the UK's Trade Strategy, Britain has a new Prime Minister with a new set of priorities.

On coming to office, Andy Burnham set out a series of aims and priorities for his government including the aspiration of "reindustrialising Britain and "rewiring the state", devolving greater power to local areas.

Find out more

CPTPP – is UK membership delivering for business?

Almost two years after joining the CPTPP trade area, modest gains are being reaped by UK businesses – in particular, those benefiting from accelerated tariff liberalisation and more flexible rules of origin.

The UK has bilateral trade agreements with several CPTPP members, which provides traders with optionality but limits the potential gains from CPTPP in isolation. Greater economic value is expected with expansion of the bloc and by deepening existing trade provisions.

Find out more

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