

Trade Bill Speech 20 May 2020

Dr Neil Hudson MP

Thank you Mr Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in this debate on this important piece of legislation. I welcome this Trade Bill and believe that it is vitally important for us as a country as we move forward as an independent trading nation and as we navigate through the turbulent economic situation that we face as a result of the global Coronavirus pandemic.

This Trade Bill is important in that it gives the Government the power to implement rolled-over trade agreements that currently exist from the UK having been part of those agreements as a former member state. These trade agreements account for a significant proportion of UK trade, so it is crucial that the Government can roll them over. These agreements and the future ones we can sign will be crucial in our recovery from the Coronavirus shock to the economy and will give us the platform to become a major international independent global trader. It will say to the world, the UK is open for business, come trade with us.

I also welcome the announcement this week from my Right Honourable Friend the International Trade Secretary about the introduction of the UK Global Tariff. It is great that this will back our manufacturing and production, whilst also protecting UK

sectors like agriculture, retaining tariffs for goods such as lamb, beef and poultry. Trade cuts both ways and I welcome the fact that the US market has opened up again for UK Beef, which will benefit British farming to the tune of £66 million.

I do recognise that this Bill does not pertain to future trade deals, but I do maintain as I said last week in the Agriculture Bill Debate that it is so important that we uphold our high animal health and welfare and farming standards in trade deals. This should be the case for existing and future deals. I have to say as a vet and MP, I was absolutely gutted last week that the EFRA Select Committee amendment in the name of my Honourable Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton was not passed. I believe we missed a real opportunity to make a powerful statement from the UK that we can be a beacon in these areas. If you wish to trade with us, then you must come up to high standards in animal health and welfare and farming.

I will continue to stand up for the farmers in Penrith and The Border and across Cumbria and the wider UK. We have the best farmers and produce great food using high standards. We should be very proud of that.

I note that this iteration of the Trade Bill does not contain the Government-introduced amendment from the 2017-19 Bill that ensured that UK statutory protections are maintained in areas such as the protection of human, animal or plant life or health,

animal welfare and the environment. I would hope that this could be considered again by the Government as this new Bill goes into Committee stage.

Finally, it is exciting that this Bill fires the starting gun for laying down in law the UK setting its own trade policy. As a local example of an area where a boost to trade decisions could help in my constituency and the surrounding area, I would like to highlight Carlisle Lake District Airport in Penrith and The Border. Obviously, this airport has taken a hit with the shut down of the aviation sector at the moment. But I would ask the Government to look closely at the proposal for this airport to achieve Free Port status. This will boost the trade options for the area, bring businesses and jobs to the area and be a real shot in the arm for the Borderlands Partnership. In addition, the cross-border nature of this enterprise, will be a strong binding force in the maintenance and strengthening of the precious Union that is our United Kingdom.

In conclusion, I truly believe that we have the potential to have an outward looking, ethical, progressive Trade policy in the UK and that this Conservative Government has the appetite to bring this into being. Maintaining our high standards in areas such as animal health and welfare and farming and food production are pivotal. As this Trade Bill starts that journey, I wish it well.

Thank you