



ESTABLISHED 1855

## Our long-term approach to trade

**T**he UK began life outside the European Union one year ago today and it is a measure of our newly independent outlook that we are applying to join a free trade area with 11 Asian and Pacific nations many thousands of miles away.

In a globalised world, geographical proximity is not a requirement for trade nowadays any more than it was during the days of Empire.

Had the Government failed to land an agreement with the EU then such a distant relationship might have appeared an odd substitute for trading freely with our continental neighbours. But the deal reached with the EU before Christmas allows the UK to do both, assuming it can negotiate its way into the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). As Liz Truss, the Trade Secretary, observes on these pages, if successful, Britain would be the first non-founding country to join.

Since the UK already has trade deals with several CPTPP members there is an element of symbolism in this process. However, it serves to emphasise a crucial point that Brexiteers made throughout the protracted arguments over Britain's place in the world: the areas covered by the CPTPP are where future growth will be fastest and strongest.

For all its claim to be the world's biggest single market, the EU bloc has shrunk as a percentage of global trade and will continue to decline as Asian economies grow. Forging good trading relations with the world's fastest-growing nations is a far-sighted approach and a welcome departure from the short-termism often seen in government.

Moreover, the bureaucratic sclerosis of the EU as witnessed in the row over vaccines makes the institution singularly ill-equipped to respond to a changing world. By today, for instance, Britain will have vaccinated all care-home workers even as some EU countries struggle to obtain supplies because of the mess created by Brussels.

Ms Truss is right to urge British companies to take advantage of these new opportunities, as indeed many will. But post-Brexit issues remain over the operation of the free trade agreement with the EU. Some small and medium-sized companies are struggling with pettifogging red tape and may lose their businesses as a result of lost orders and stranded deliveries.

## The EU's chaotic vaccine pro...

**SIR** - I was never a committed Brexiteer, but after much soul searching I voted Leave in the referendum as I felt that, on balance, Britain's interests were best served as an independent nation.

I was bitterly disappointed to learn that I could no longer take a pork pie to treat my son and grandchildren when next we are able to visit them in Finland and began to wonder if I had made the wrong decision.

The recent chaos surrounding the European Union's vaccination programme and its attempts to bully Britain and AstraZeneca have convinced me that I was right all along.

**Michael Price**  
Ashford, Middlesex

**SIR** - It took just 28 days for the EU, as predicted, to throw Ireland under a bus.

**Jill Davies**  
Northampton

**SIR** - The triggering of Article 16 of the Brexit agreement by the European

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## Clergy living in fear

**SIR** - Lord Carey of Clifton ("The Church has created an unjust culture of fear", Comment, January 30) is right to criticise the Church of England's processes for dealing with allegations against clergy. I am increasingly concerned about the flawed, slow and secretive procedures of what are called "core group" investigations.

I have three senior clergy friends whose cases have been, to put it mildly, badly handled by the core group: Lord Carey; Christopher Lowson, Bishop of Lincoln, and Martyn Percy, Dean of Christ Church. Their permissions to officiate have been humiliatingly withdrawn long before the resolution of the complaints against them or their exonerations could emerge.

Such delays are not tolerated when it comes to complaints against parliamentarians, civil servants, business executives or prison and probation service staff. Why should clergy be treated so much worse?

The culture of fear and secrecy is a big factor here. At my old Oxford college, Christ Church, the Charity Commission is asking vital questions as to whether the 60 trustees on the governing body have properly exercised their responsibilities by ensuring due diligence at meetings and avoiding conflicts of interest. It is also examining the legal advice leading up to the current imbroglio, which has cost the charity in excess of £4million in legal fees and lost donations.

Root-and-branch reform of the Church's disciplinary procedures and Christ Church's governance is needed.

**Rev Jonathan Aitken**



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