



Chris Heaton-Harris

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Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about parliamentary scrutiny of future free trade agreements.

I welcome the Secretary of State for International Trade's announcement regarding the shape of arrangements for the scrutiny of international trade agreements.

Beginning with the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, the House of Commons' International Trade Committee and House of Lords' International Agreements Sub-Committee will receive advanced copies of trade agreements. I also welcome the Government's assurance that these committees will have at least 10 sitting days to examine the texts of trade deals.

The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 provides the legislative framework by which international agreements are scrutinised by Parliament. Under the Act, the Government must lay any agreement before Parliament for 21 sitting days and provide explanation of the treaty's provisions and the reasons for seeking ratification. If Parliament is not willing to support a particular agreement, it can resolve against ratification and indefinitely delay any primary or secondary legislation which would implement an agreement.

The Government is putting the Trade and Agriculture Commission on a statutory footing and confirming that the body will produce a report, to be laid in Parliament at the start of each 21-day scrutiny period, on the impact on animal welfare and agriculture arising from each new free trade deal.

As the UK continues to redevelop its trade policy capacity following our exit from the European Union, there will be increased engagement between the Government, Parliament and other interested parties to develop and strengthen means of scrutinising future trade agreements.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

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