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**Department for Business and Trade  
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We are writing on behalf of the members of BritishAmerican Business, to provide a contribution to the drafting of the Department for Business and Trade's new Trade Strategy, which will set out how the UK can achieve long-term sustainable, inclusive, and resilient growth through trade. This is in response to the call for views set out by DBT.

BritishAmerican Business (BAB) is the leading US-UK transatlantic trade association, incorporating the British-American Chamber of Commerce in the US and the American Chamber of Commerce in the UK. We are committed to strengthening the economic corridor between the US and the UK, and support policies and actions that enhance the environment for transatlantic trade and investment on behalf of our 470+ members.

We are proud to be recognised as one of the UK government's most trusted industry partners. We support the UK's economic and trade portfolio through regular interventions and by participating in government events and initiatives. Our work is informed by our wide membership, as well as members of the Strategic Working Group on UK-US Trade (SWGTT), which includes some of the most prominent organisations, businesses, and thought leaders on both sides of the Atlantic.

In December 2024, BAB sent a letter to the attention of DBT Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Jonathan Reynolds MP, and DBT Minister of State, the Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP, noting our appreciation for the determination of the new government to increase the rate of economic growth agenda in the UK. We noted our support for the government's objective to achieve this through, amongst other initiatives, a proactive trade strategy that complements the UK industrial strategy, adding that we agree that a future UK trade strategy should emphasise the importance of trade as a key driver of economic prosperity. Overall, BAB appreciates that the UK has pursued a proactive trade agenda globally since the responsibility for trade strategy was returned to the UK from the EU.

When it comes to the UK-US trading relationship specifically, we know the US will remain a central pillar to any future thinking around the UK trade strategy, given its relevance to the UK economy, and the political and security links that underpin this important relationship.

As the leading trade association representing businesses active in the UK-US economic corridor, we appreciate the opportunity to provide our views on DBT's Trade Strategy, and to highlight those areas of trade that are important to transatlantic businesses. We will set out our response following the three main questions posed in DBT's call for views, i.e.:

- How we can facilitate trade for businesses and provide practical tools to support them to drive growth through trade now and in the future;

- How we can build the right partnerships internationally through trade mechanisms to promote growth, and
- How the UK should operate in the international context to support and protect businesses.

### **Executive Summary**

BAB's submission to DBT's call for views on the upcoming Trade Strategy identifies the following points in response to the three main consultation questions:

#### **1. Facilitating Trade for Businesses**

- Strengthen trade promotion capacity and provide clear guidelines and support structures
- Improve trade promotion success by revisiting insights from the Industrial Strategy response.
- Streamline support and expand coverage for small companies.
- Integrate industrial strategy with trade promotion efforts.

#### **2. Building International Partnerships**

- Identify and address trade barriers through comprehensive reports and dialogues.
- Champion and promote trade agreements, including a potential UK-US Free Trade Agreement.
- Improve and implement existing trade agreements and mechanisms.
- Link dialogues to policymaking for effective trade strategies.

#### **3. Supporting and Protecting Businesses Internationally**

- Promote trade as part of the UK's competitiveness agenda.
- Identify opportunities for key sectors and support businesses in domestic and international markets.

## **Full submission**

### **How we can facilitate trade for businesses and provide practical tools to support them to drive growth through trade now and in the future**

#### Enhancing trade promotion capacity

Trade promotion capacity is crucial for driving growth through trade, and as such, the UK Government (UKG) should focus on strengthening this capacity to support businesses effectively. Overall, the UK already has some successful instruments around trade promotion and support to businesses, such as, for instance, the Export Academy. However, in the context of UK-US trade, BAB believes there is confusion around the referral and account management system offered to UK companies with trade and investment ambitions abroad. For example, it seems that the previous International Trade Advisor (ITA) system has been discontinued, leading to uncertainty for companies, and trade bodies such as BAB, seeking or referring to export assistance. For example, if a business based in Yorkshire wanted to start exporting to the US, it is currently unclear who they should approach within UKG to get assistance, as well as how and when UKG would be able to help, and how this then links to sector teams in the US. In order to properly facilitate trade for businesses and support them to drive growth through trade, clear guidelines and support structures are needed. While the UKG's role in trade promotion should have some defined limits, a well-established trade promotion capacity is essential for helping companies trade. This includes providing general trade promotion support and specific sector expertise.

#### Improving Trade Promotion Success

In our [Industrial Strategy response](#), we highlighted and addressed some aspects that can make trade promotion more successful. These included, among others, improving investor account management within the respective teams, a review of skills levels and resource attribution, as well as efficient governance of the investment and growth teams. These insights should be revisited and implemented.

#### Streamlining Support and Expanding Coverage for Small Companies

The current system for servicing companies, particularly smaller businesses, is unclear. There is confusion about how government support works for companies that want to export. Addressing these inefficiencies will make the process more effective. More specific sectoral expertise is also necessary. Smaller firms often do not qualify for Department for Business and Trade (DBT) support - expanding the coverage to include these firms will ensure broader access to trade promotion resources.

#### Industrial Strategy and Growth Sectors

It is important to remember that a robust industrial strategy that identifies and nurtures growth sectors can drive trade from these sectors to other markets. This strategy should be integrated with trade promotion efforts to maximise impact.

### **How we can build the right partnerships internationally through trade mechanisms to promote growth**

BAB appreciates that the UK has pursued a proactive trade agenda globally since the responsibility for trade strategy was returned to the UK from the EU, and we believe that the UK should remain a leading actor when it comes to trade. There are a series of different mechanisms a country can utilise to build international partnerships that promote growth. This includes understanding demand and potential for UK trade in foreign markets and identifying barriers accordingly.

#### Identifying trade barriers

First and foremost, it is fundamental that the UK Government understands what barriers businesses face when trading internationally and/or exporting. While gov.uk does have a dedicated page on information relating to trade barriers, including how to check for them and how to report them through great.gov.uk, it does not seem that UKG produces an annual report on foreign trade barriers like the US does with its National Trade Estimate (NTE) Report on Foreign Trade Barriers. BAB believes that such a report would be a helpful tool to provide a comprehensive review of significant foreign barriers to UK exports of goods and services, UK foreign direct investment, and UK electronic commerce in key export markets. By identifying these barriers through such a report, UKG would have a new tool that would help shape UK trade policy and address issues that hinder market access for UK businesses.

Moreover, fora such as the SME Dialogues can help UKG identify trade barriers that affect smaller businesses, thus providing valuable information for shaping trade strategies.

#### Championing Trade Agreements

BAB believes trade agreements are a vital tool to embed the UK market into the broader trading system among friends and allies. As such, these mechanisms should be taken into consideration where appropriate – for instance, when it comes to the UK-US trading relationship. The [annual BAB/Bain & Company Transatlantic Confidence Index](#) shows consistent and strong support for a UK-US Free Trade agreement, and BAB believes that there is a unique opportunity to explore a new economic agreement that addresses tariffs, market access and non-tariff barriers to trade and investment; that gives concrete meaning to ‘ally-shoring’ and other economic security concepts; and

that focuses on regulatory cooperation, supply chains, and alignments on actions vis-a-vis non-market economies.

#### Promoting Existing Agreements

BAB believes that the UK should promote, and be more positive about, existing trade agreements, such as, for instance, the CPTPP, or the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) with the EU, which is the largest and most comprehensive FTA in the world. These and other existing agreements should continue to be promoted and highlighted. To this end, BAB also appreciates recent positive comments by the UK and the US to re-open negotiations around a trade deal.

#### Improving Existing Agreements

Another mechanism for trade promotion is the improvement of existing trade agreements, where possible. For instance, the UK Government could look into improving things like customs related challenges and argue for greater use of equivalence agreements in regulation, while being careful not to tie itself fully into one regulatory framework which prevents it from doing other things.

#### Implementing Trade Deals, MoUs, and other agreements

Other existing trade mechanisms, such as the Atlantic Declaration and the state-level Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), can be beneficial for promoting trade if fully resourced and implemented. The value of these mechanisms can only be fully realised if real outcomes are reached in the areas identified by these agreements. As such, UKG should make sure that both existing and upcoming trade agreements, whether in the form of trade deals, declarations, MoUs, or other, are fully resourced so that they can be properly implemented and in turn produce growth through trade.

#### Linking Dialogues to Policymaking

BAB believes that dialogues can also be a useful tool to promote growth through trade, but only if they are linked to policymaking and their objectives are clear. In the context of UK-US trade, during the first Trump Administration and the Biden Administration, several dialogues were established between the two countries to identify common challenges and opportunities across various issues. These include, for instance, the UK-US Strategic Energy Dialogue, the UK-US Comprehensive Dialogue on Technology and Data, and the UK-US SME Dialogue. Some of these dialogues have proven more effective than others, so BAB would encourage the UK Government to conduct a comprehensive review of all existing dialogues to assess their effectiveness, thus enhancing trade strategies and achieving growth.

### **How the UK should operate in the international context to support and protect businesses**

#### Promoting Trade as Part of a Competitiveness Agenda

Trade should be promoted and protected as an essential part of the UK's competitiveness agenda. Core sectors at home should be promoted, with sufficient and qualified resources in foreign markets to complement trade efforts. In practice, the UK Government should help identify opportunities for key sectors, while promoting core sectors back home. This dual approach will support businesses in both domestic and international markets.

By addressing these points, the UK Government can develop a comprehensive trade strategy that facilitates business growth, builds international partnerships, and supports and protects businesses in the global market.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our views and input into DBT's upcoming Trade Strategy, and we are available to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,



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