



Department for
Business & Trade

Information Note on Bilateral Free Trade Agreements and CPTPP Accession

July 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1 Consultation on UK Trade Relationships

This consultation is to inform UK priorities in potential trade negotiations with

- **Indonesia**
- **The Philippines**
- **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**
- **Uruguay**

The UK is exploring how its trading relationships with these economies could be deepened. CPTPP Parties, including the UK, established an Accession Working Group with Uruguay in 2025, and on 26 June 2026, CPTPP Parties announced the start of preparatory discussions on accession with Indonesia, The Philippines and the UAE. Uruguay's Accession Working Group is now well underway, with meetings scheduled throughout 2026.

The Government therefore wants to hear respondents' views on the opportunities, priorities and considerations associated with deepening the UK's trading relationships with these economies. CPTPP accession represents the most likely route to deepening trading relationships with the majority of them, but the consultation does not assume a single route and also invites views on other appropriate trade policy mechanisms, including bilateral free trade agreements where applicable and relevant.

1.2 Executive Summary

This Information Note brings together data to support informed and evidence-based submissions to the public engagement period regarding the future of the UK's respective trade relationships with Indonesia, the Philippines, the UAE and Uruguay.

The information presented sets out the scope of both UK bilateral Free Trade Agreements and the UK's role in the process of accession to CPTPP.

It also provides an overview of what it means to be an accession candidate, the timelines and insights into an AWG and how the growth of CPTPP is an essential part of its fabric. This Note further details how organisations and individuals can participate in the upcoming public engagement period regarding UK trade agreement priorities and what they should include in their responses.

Feedback submitted will inform the UK's approach and it is the aim of this public engagement period to encourage as wide a range of participants as possible.

A response can be submitted here: [Call for Input on Deepening the UK's Trade Relationships](#) and the questionnaire closes on 14 September 2026.

2. Bilateral Negotiation and CPTPP Accession Processes

CPTPP is a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between its Parties. At present, twelve economies are party to the CPTPP: the UK, Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. Accession to CPTPP is negotiated between the bloc's twelve Parties and the accession candidate. CPTPP is consensus-led, which means all Parties must agree to a candidate's accession. When Parties accede to CPTPP, they commit to the terms of the Agreement. The full Agreement text is available to read here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cptpp-full-agreement-text>

Bilateral FTAs are negotiated between the UK and a single trading partner. Accession to CPTPP, in contrast, involves an economy signing up to the terms of an existing agreement between CPTPP Parties.

An FTA is an international agreement which aims to remove or reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade and investment between partner countries.

Trade and investment barriers make it more difficult and costly to trade or invest overseas. By removing or reducing them, FTAs can make it easier for businesses to export, import and invest. They can also benefit consumers by providing a more diverse and affordable range of products.

FTAs do not prevent governments from regulating in the public interest – for example, to protect consumers, the environment, animal welfare and health and safety. Equally, trade agreements do not require governments to privatise any service or prevent governments from expanding the range of services they supply to the public. For example, the UK Government has been clear about its commitment to protecting public services, including the National Health Service. No future FTA would affect the fact that it would remain up to the UK and the Devolved Governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to decide how to run our publicly funded health services.

The provisions included in FTAs vary across agreements. The World Bank has created a database that summarises the content of all FTAs that were in force and notified to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) from 1958 until 2023,¹ covering 400 FTAs.

The World Bank classifies eighteen of the fifty-two areas of policy cooperation as “core” provisions.² These are provisions which the World Bank identifies as most meaningful from an economic point of view and have appeared most frequently in FTAs. “Non-core” provisions – which sometimes go beyond areas directly associated with trade and

investment – have appeared less frequently in FTAs. As with all provisions, their inclusion typically depends upon the specific objectives of an agreement and the preferences of the partners involved.

Over time the scope and depth of FTAs globally has generally grown, including provisions addressing trade in services and investment. FTAs increasingly address domestic policies inhibiting trade and investment, known as “behind the border” barriers.

A comprehensive trade agreement goes further than just eliminating tariffs between partner countries. For example, a comprehensive FTA could cover a number of areas such as intellectual property, recognition of standards, environment, and provisions to reduce the cost of trading in services and investing across borders. A full list of possible policy areas covered under FTA negotiations can be found in the [World Banks Deep Trade Agreements Database](#).

2.1 About the CPTPP Agreement

CPTPP is a modern and ambitious trade agreement spanning twelve economies across Asia, the Americas, and Europe with the UK. The UK officially acceded to CPTPP on 15 December 2024. The UK signed our accession agreement in 2023, and deposited our instrument of accession in May 2024, having passed the appropriate legislation in Parliament.

The UK is party alongside Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

CPTPP is an agreement that is set to grow. A total of eleven economies have applied to join CPTPP: Argentina, Cambodia, China, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay. Costa Rica’s AWG substantially concluded on 6 May 2026.

On 21st November 2025, CPTPP Parties announced the decision to commence an AWG with Uruguay and on 26 June 2026, Parties announced the launch of preparatory discussions with Indonesia, the Philippines and the UAE. The establishment of an AWG for Uruguay will not prevent the consideration and discussion of the remaining accession requests by CPTPP Members.

2.2 Why the Accession Process is Important for the CPTPP Agreement

The expansion of the CPTPP Agreement creates the opportunity for the UK and other CPTPP members to continue widening trading links over time across the world as new members join, diversifying supply chains, bolstering economic resilience and contributing actively to a high standard of international trade.

Importantly, the benefits of the accession process go beyond just the benefits brought by any individual accession candidate, important though those may be. The expansion of CPTPP means more economies being brought into the orbit of high standard, modern

trading rules, which are well-aligned with the UK's economic and strategic interests. This in turn makes the Agreement – and its rules – attractive to other economies too. This creates a virtuous cycle which is in the UK's economic and strategic interests to support.

The process for an aspirant economy to join the CPTPP is managed through an AWG. The full process is laid out here: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Trade-agreements/CPTPP/Accession-Process.pdf>

The UK, alongside all other CPTPP members, will be part of the AWG. An accession candidate will only complete the AWG process if there is consensus among the Parties.

In the shorter term, the responses to the upcoming public engagement period will help develop the UK's approach to the AWG process. Once analysed, the UK will publish a factual summary of the responses received.

The UK's own negotiation discussions took just under two years, although every accession negotiation will be unique. The negotiation discussions for Costa Rica's accession have taken just over eighteen months.

Overall, it took the UK nearly four years from applying to join CPTPP in February 2021, to our accession on 15 December 2024.

The UK will fully engage in any accession process, assessing accession candidates' compliance with the CPTPP and their respective market access offers in goods, services, and related areas.

To inform these discussions, the UK Government is seeking input from stakeholders, including those involved in trading and investing with the CPTPP accession candidates and those who can provide evidence as to how those candidates' trade relationships with the UK could be enhanced.

2.3 CPTPP Compliance

The first stage of the AWG is to ensure that the accession candidate complies with the terms of the existing CPTPP Agreement. The AWG will take a Chapter-by-Chapter approach to scrutinise how the accession candidate meets the current Agreement's high standards.

The CPTPP comprises thirty chapters, which set out the detailed provisions of the Agreement. The provisions within CPTPP cover a wide range of areas including goods, services, investment as well as areas like e-commerce, intellectual property rights, labour and the environment.

The full list of CPTPP chapters is below. The full CPTPP text is available to read here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cptpp-full-agreement-text>

The UK's Accession Protocol introduced changes to the scope of CPTPP to take into account the respective commitments on liberalisation of goods and services resulting from the accession of the UK.

For more detail on how these chapters relate to the UK specifically, please refer to the CPTPP Agreement Summary published by the UK at Signature:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cptpp-agreement-summary>

2.4 Breakdown of the CPTPP Agreement

Table 2: Glossary of CPTPP Chapter Areas

Chapter title	Chapter Objectives and Main Coverage of Provisions
Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) text	Incorporates the chapters below from the Trans Pacific Partnership into the CPTPP, with the exception of a small number of suspended provisions – the most numerous being in the Intellectual Property Chapter – and some amendments to the provisions on entry into force, accessions and withdrawal in Chapter 30.
Chapter 1: Initial Provisions and General Definitions	Sets out overarching definitions for the CPTPP and clarifies the relationship between CPTPP and other free trade agreements.
Chapter 2: Trade in Goods	Parties agree to eliminate and reduce tariffs and non-tariff barriers on goods. The precise schedules for tariff elimination (including staging periods) by each country is set out in an annex to the chapter (2-D).
Chapter 3: Rules of Origin	A single set of rules that define whether a good is “originating” and therefore eligible to receive preferential tariff benefits under CPTPP, as well as agreeing a common system for verifying origin of goods. The product-specific rules of origin are annexed to the chapter (3-D). In general, inputs from one CPTPP country are treated the same as materials

	from any other CPTPP country, and so can count as “originating”.
Chapter 4: Textiles and Apparel Goods	Sets out some sector specific rules of origin for trade in textiles within the CPTPP region, as well as some additional measures on customs co-operation. A list of the product specific rules of origin is annexed at (4-A).
Chapter 5: Customs Administration and Trade Facilitation	Contains rules designed to improve trade facilitation and transparency in customs procedures; for example, by publishing customs regulations, committing to provide for release of goods without unnecessary delay, and provide expedited customs procedures for express shipments.
Chapter 6: Trade Remedies	Provides for a transitional safeguard mechanism, which allows a CPTPP member country to apply temporary protective measures if an increase in imports as a result of tariff cuts cause harm to a domestic sector. Confirms each Parties’ rights and obligations under the existing WTO Agreements relating to trade remedies and sets out best practice process for anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations.
Chapter 7: Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures	Commits Parties to ensure transparent, non-discriminatory rules based on scientific principles to protect human, animal or plant life or health in their countries. Maintains the Parties’ right to take necessary measures to address risks to food safety, animal or plant life or health and requires that measures should not be put in place to create unnecessary and unjustifiable SPS-related trade restrictions.
Chapter 8: Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT)	Aims to establish transparent, non-discriminatory rules for developing technical regulations, standards and

	conformity assessment procedures for goods that do not create unnecessary barriers to trade.
Chapter 9: Investment	Provides protection for investors in the territory of other Parties, including commitments to: give equivalent treatment to investors from CPTPP countries and domestic investors; to prohibit expropriation that is not for public purpose, without due process, or without compensation; and to prohibit “performance requirements” on, for example, local content or technology localisation. The chapter also includes provisions for investor-state dispute settlement.
Chapter 10: Cross-Border Trade in Services	Includes a commitment between the Parties to liberalise their services markets. It requires Parties to treat service suppliers from other CPTPP countries at least as well as domestic suppliers and it prevents Parties from imposing trade restrictions on the supply of services from CPTPP countries. Parties have made these commitments on a “negative-list basis,” meaning that these commitments apply to all service sectors unless otherwise specified.
Chapter 11: Financial Services	Incorporates and adapts certain provisions from the foreign investment chapter and cross-border trade in services chapter. These aim to increase cross-border trade and investment in financial services within CPTPP countries, while ensuring that CPTPP Parties will retain the ability to regulate financial markets and institutions and to take emergency measures in the event of crisis.
Chapter 12: Temporary Entry for Business Persons	Aims to facilitate the temporary movement of business persons between CPTPP countries; for example, by

	ensuring that decisions on applications for entry are made as quickly as possible, and companies can transfer staff abroad. Each CPTPP country has made commitments on access for each other's business persons, in their schedule of commitments, annexed to this chapter (12-A).
Chapter 13: Telecommunications	CPTPP countries commit to ensuring that their telecommunications suppliers will provide key services in their territory, and to transparent and non-discriminatory regulation.
Chapter 14: Electronic Commerce	Contains a commitment to ensuring the free flow of data and prohibits the imposition of customs duties on electronic transmissions and the imposition of data localisation requirements. It maintains consumer protection laws and ensures that privacy and other consumer protections can be enforced.
Chapter 15: Government Procurement	The Parties commit under this chapter throughout the procurement process to treat suppliers to government from CPTPP Parties in a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory manner. The entities and activities covered by these commitments are listed in an annex to the chapter (15-A).
Chapter 16: Competition Policy	Requires Parties to have a legal regime in place to prevent anti-competitive conduct, and to cooperate around competition law, policy and enforcement.
Chapter 17: State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and Designated Monopolies	Focuses on State-Owned-Enterprises, ensuring that they are regulated impartially, operate on a commercial basis, and do not discriminate against suppliers from CPTPP countries.

Chapter 18: Intellectual Property	Provides a shared baseline of standards on the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights across CPTPP members, covering areas such as trade marks, geographical indications, patents, industrial designs, copyright and related rights, and trade secrets.
Chapter 19: Labour	The Parties agree to protect labour rights, and to eliminate forced labour and child labour.
Chapter 20: Environment	The Parties agree to encourage high levels of environmental protection, reaffirm commitments under international conventions, and commit to protecting the natural environment in several areas including sustainable fisheries and preventing illegal wildlife trade.
Chapter 21: Cooperation and Capacity Building	Establishes a Committee on Cooperation and Capacity Building to identify and review areas for potential cooperative and capacity building efforts.
Chapter 22: Competitiveness and Business Facilitation	Aims to help the CPTPP reach its potential to improve competitiveness, by creating formal mechanisms to review the impact of the CPTPP and establishing dialogues between government, business and non-governmental groups.
Chapter 23: Development	Provides scope for a range of potential joint development activities amongst all members, while also setting high-level aims and mechanisms for establishing regional cooperation.
Chapter 24: Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises	Includes commitments by each CPTPP Country to provide easily accessible information on the CPTPP and ways small firms can take advantage of it.
Chapter 25: Regulatory Coherence	Aims to facilitate regulatory coherence in each CPTPP country and encourages

	widely-accepted good regulatory practices.
Chapter 26: Transparency and Anti-Corruption	Re-affirms commitments to eliminating bribery and corruption in international trade and requires Parties to have an appropriate legal framework in place to tackle it.
Chapter 27: Administrative and Institutional Provisions	Establishes the institutional governance structure of the agreement and sets up the Commission to oversee and review the implementation and operation of the agreement. Additionally establishes overall contact points and an office to provide administrative assistance for a dispute panel.
Chapter 28: Dispute Settlement	Allows countries to address disputes over implementation of the CPTPP and sets up a mechanism to resolve those disputes – initially through consultation and cooperation, then via an impartial panel.
Chapter 29: Exceptions and General Provisions	Reaffirms the principle established in the WTO that nothing in the CPTPP shall be construed to prevent the adoption or enforcement by a country of measures necessary to, among other things, protect public morals, human, animal or plant life or health, intellectual property or national security.
Chapter 30: Final Provisions	Defines the way the CPTPP will enter into force, the way in which it can be amended, and the rules for accession by new members – although these are largely replaced by the CPTPP text that sits above the chapters.

Two common areas of stakeholder interest are the environment and labour standards. A short summary of what it means to be compliant in these areas is below.

2.5 CPTPP and the Environment

This Government is committed to being an international leader on environmental issues. This includes tackling climate change, delivering our clean energy superpower mission, achieving our net zero and other environmental goals, while supporting economic growth. We will continue to preserve our latitude to protect the environment, promote high sustainable standards, and deepen cooperation with trade partners on climate and environment issues.

CPTPP's high standards include an extensive environment chapter. This commits Parties to strive to encourage high levels of environmental protection, to continue to improve their respective levels of environmental protection, and to not derogate from their environmental laws in order to encourage trade and investment between Parties.

It also reaffirms commitments to implement Multilateral Environmental Agreements to which members are a party, recognises Parties' rights to set their own levels of domestic environmental protection and environmental policies, and ensures Parties have recourse to dispute settlement if environment chapter commitments are not met. The Agreement strengthens cooperation between Parties and establishes a dedicated Environment Committee to oversee the implementation of the chapter.

The Chapter facilitates cooperation in the transition to low emission and resilient economies, such as promoting cooperation in energy efficiency, sustainable transport, and the development of low emission technologies. CPTPP recognises the importance of promoting trade and investment in environmental goods and services and endeavours to address and remove barriers to trade in those areas. For example, under the Agreement, there will be no tariffs on UK exports of green goods such as new electric vehicles and wind turbine towers.

Under the CPTPP Agreement, the UK can cooperate with other members on issues such as: addressing deforestation and forest degradation; promoting sustainable fisheries management; promoting conservation and biodiversity; protecting the ozone layer and preventing marine pollution from ships.

2.6 CPTPP and Labour Standards

The UK works internationally to strengthen workers' rights and enhance labour standards globally. The Government is committed to protecting our labour standards in trade agreements, including CPTPP.

CPTPP contains a comprehensive labour chapter with binding provisions that help to protect labour rights, improve working conditions, and promote enhanced cooperation and consultation on a range of labour issues.

The Labour Chapter reaffirms CPTPP Parties' obligations as members of the International Labour Organization and requires Parties to have laws governing acceptable conditions of work, including minimum wages, hours of work, and occupational health and safety.

The Labour Chapter also prohibits Parties from weakening protections afforded to workers under their labour laws, or from failing to enforce them, to gain a trade advantage. This means UK workers can be confident that their jobs will not be threatened or undercut by unfair labour practices and businesses can be confident of a fair trading environment.

The Chapter promotes enhanced cooperation and consultation on a range of labour issues. The Chapter also provides for the application of the Agreement's dispute settlement procedure, as well as a range of mechanisms to facilitate implementation of the Chapter, including public submissions.

2.7 CPTPP Market Access

As well as the compliance process, AWGs will also undertake negotiations on market access, working with accession candidates to achieve the highest possible commitments on trade in goods, services, investment, government procurement and temporary entry of businesspersons.

2.8 CPTPP General Review and Upgrade Negotiations

CPTPP is a living agreement, designed to evolve to maintain its high standards. As such, the Agreement commits the Parties to reviewing its implementation and effectiveness on a regular basis, and at least every five years.

The first 'General Review' of the CPTPP Agreement began in Spring 2024, in line with Articles 27.2.1(b) and 27.2.3 of the Agreement. Parties reviewed the Agreement's utilisation and operation with a view to updating and enhancing it to ensure its disciplines remained relevant to current trade and investment issues. In January 2024, the previous Government ran a public engagement period to seek feedback from stakeholders on what the UK's priorities for the General Review should be, which ran for six weeks.

[Responses to this public engagement period](#) informed the UK Government's engagement in the General Review.

This first General Review was concluded during the [9th CPTPP Commission meeting in Melbourne](#) on 20 November 2025. Parties approved the [General Review final report](#), setting out recommendations that the Parties commence negotiations on updating the Agreement's coverage of:

- Customs administration and trade facilitation
- Trade in services (covering Cross-Border Trade in Services and Financial Services)
- Electronic commerce
- Competitiveness and business facilitation (covering Supply Chain Resilience and Global and Regional Value Chains)
- Trade and women's economic empowerment

The report also included recommendations that the Parties pursue further exploration and initiatives in relation to:

- Investment
- State-owned enterprises (SOEs)
- Innovation
- Gender mainstreaming
- Economic coercion
- Market distorting practices

Responses to the General Review public engagement period will continue to inform the UK Government's approach to this next stage.

Economies interested in accession to CPTPP are expected to remain aware of the progress made in the General Review process and share the perspective that the Agreement is not static.

3. Questions for Stakeholders

This call for input forms part of the Department for Business and Trade's work to consider its approach to future trade policy. It asks for views on deepening the UK's trade relationships with Indonesia, the Philippines, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay.

Respondents will have the option to choose which economies from the above list they would like to submit views on.

For each economy the respondent chooses to submit views on, the survey asks two main questions:

1. What issues would you like us to consider regarding deepening the UK's trade relationship with this economy?
2. Based on your selection(s) in the previous question, please provide further detail on why you think the UK Government should consider these issues, regarding deepening the UK's trade relationship with this economy?

With this in mind, responses to this call for input could highlight:

- Challenges or constraints when trading or investing in this market, and if so, what are these challenges and constraints, and how significant is the impact on your business activity?
- How would you expect your business to respond if restrictions were removed on trade or investment with this market? For example, might you look to increase trade and investment or attract increased trade and investment from this market?
- Are there any areas where you see opportunities from increased liberalisation of trade between the UK and this market?
- Are there any areas where you would have concerns about increased liberalisation of trade between the UK and this market?

4. Drafting a Response to the Questions

The Department for Business and Trade is committed to delivering benefits across the UK.

The responses to this call for input will help inform the UK's strategy and positions for engaging with Indonesia, the Philippines, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay, and so it is important that you set out your priorities in your response.

Prior to submitting your response, we encourage you to talk to a range of experts in your organisation to understand the full picture of current trading priorities.

Where it is relevant, we welcome the inclusion of figures, data and evidence to illustrate the examples you give in your response. More detailed answers will help the UK to best understand your needs. Further, we are keen to ensure consideration is given to those with characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 as part of this questionnaire.

Once you have answered several questions to tell us who you represent, this call for input provides the opportunity to provide information in three ways:

1. You will be able to answer the questionnaire
2. You may submit your own evidence directly.
3. You will also have the option to complete both the questionnaire and submit your own evidence.

Please follow the link to see the questions: [Call for Input on Deepening the UK's Trade Relationships](#) and the consultation closes on 14 September 2026.

5. Conclusion

This Information Note has presented guidance explaining the accession process for CPTPP and an overarching view of what constitutes a bilateral FTA. It is available for respondents to this call for input to use this in their responses if they wish to do so.

Information Notes about the UK's trade relationship with each of these economies can be found here:

- Indonesia
- The Philippines
- UAE
- Uruguay

Respondents can also refer to experiences and insights from other sources to support their submission. The more detail that can be provided the better as this enables a more informed UK stance in negotiations. Ideas for what to include in a response have been provided in Section 3 of this document.

The UK Government encourages feedback from as wide a range of stakeholders as possible.

A response to the public engagement period can be submitted here: [Call for Input on Deepening the UK's Trade Relationships](#) and the questionnaire closes on 14 September 2026.

6. Glossary

Accession: becoming party to CPTPP, signing on to its agreements.

Accession Working Group (AWG): a workstream made up of representatives from CPTPP Parties to take forward the CPTPP accession process for a particular candidate.

Auckland Principles: the three overarching benchmarks by which a new candidate joining the CPTPP must be assessed.

Bilateral Agreement: agreement between two parties.

CPTPP: Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. A trade agreement spanning 12 economies including the UK, which the UK officially acceded to on 15 December 2024. The other 11 Parties to the agreement are Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

Economy: a broader term for an aspirant or candidate that wishes to join the CPTPP.

Free Trade Agreement (FTA): a treaty among two or more countries to form a free trade area. This means having zero tariffs (or reduced tariffs) and reducing other regulatory restrictions on trade in substantially all goods and/or services.

International Labour Organization (ILO): United Nations agency for promoting labour rights.

Market access: conditions set by governments to control which goods or services can or cannot enter their domestic market.

Member: a broader and more inclusive term for economies in CPTPP regardless of their ratification / Entry into Force status in the agreement.

Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA): binding international agreements for promoting cooperation on environmental issues.

Party (plural Parties): an economy that has ratified or acceded to the CPTPP and for which the treaty is in force, or a party to a bilateral agreement.

Tariffs: refers to customs duties on imports of goods, levied either as a percentage of value or on the basis of a formula (e.g. 10 per cent or £7 per 100 kg).

WTO: World Trade Organization. International organisation dealing with the rules of trade between nations.

Department for Business and Trade

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