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Brexit and the Customs Union

Thank you for contacting me about the Government's proposed customs arrangements after the UK leaves the EU.

Leaving the EU means leaving the single market and the customs union. These are the main and essential elements of the Union. The UK will be free to make its own trade deals after its withdrawal from the EU but it will also need to put in place new customs arrangements. Remaining a full member of the customs union would mean we could not make our own trade deals.

The Government has set out its position on the customs union and I am encouraged by the approach that it has taken. It wants the freest possible trade in goods with the EU and it has proposed that this be achieved either through streamlined customs arrangements or through a new customs partnership with the EU.

The first solution would involve a new customs partnership with the EU that would negate the need for a customs border with the EU. The UK would have the same requirements as the EU for imports from overseas destined for the EU. This would ensure the correct EU duties are paid but would still allow the Government to set its own tariffs for goods destined for the UK market.

The second solution would mean simplifying customs arrangements to the greatest possible degree. Unilateral and negotiated measures would remove barriers to trade and use technology to simplify customs procedures.

Whatever the solution, an implementation phase will give companies the time to adjust to the new arrangements. This phase will not be of unlimited duration but it will prevent any unnecessary disruption to the UK or the EU.

As part of a time-limited implementation period with the EU, the UK intends to pursue new trade negotiations with other countries during this period. It would not bring into effect any new arrangements with third countries which were not consistent with the terms of the interim agreement.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP