

Drew Henry MP
Shadow SNP Spokesperson (Trade)
(via email)

8 December 2022

Dear Mr Hendry,

Thank you for contacting us with your concerns about a trade infographic shared by the Conservative Party on Twitter¹, which stated that the Government has “secured new free trade deals with over 70 countries since 2016. That’s over £800 billion worth of new global trade”.

As regards the figure of £800 billion, we presume that this has been calculated from figures for UK trade by country published by the Office for National Statistics². These show that the value of total trade with the EU was £559 billion in 2021 (exports of £267 billion plus imports of £292 billion) and that the value of total trade with the 71 non-EU countries with which the UK has agreed trade deals since 2016, including those where existing deals with the EU have been rolled over, was £245 billion, giving a total of £804 billion. These non-EU countries include 67 listed by the Department for International Trade³ plus Australia, Brunei, Malaysia and New Zealand (with whom the Government has signed deals that are not yet in force).

Under the principles of intelligent transparency⁴, we would expect the infographic to include a source for the figure so that the public can verify the numbers, understand the definitions used and put the data into context. More specifically in this case, it is misleading to describe the £800 billion figure as a measure of “new global trade” resulting from the recent deals. That would imply that there had been no trade with these countries before the recent deals and that there would be none now without them.

We have spoken to the Conservative Party and asked that any future communications include a link or reference to the source of statistics. We have also requested that the Party be more transparent about the context and assumptions that have been made to construct such statements and infographics.

Yours sincerely,



Sir Robert Chote
Chair

¹ twitter.com/Conservatives/status/1587843184834617345, Conservative Party on Twitter, 2 November 2022

² [UK total trade: all countries, seasonally adjusted](#), Office for National Statistics, 27 October 2022

³ [UK trade agreements in effect](#), Department for International Trade, 3 November 2022

⁴ [Regulatory guidance for the transparent release and use of statistics and data](#), Office for Statistics Regulation, 2 February 2022