



April 3rd 2025

Sent electronically

The Online Safety Act and US trade negotiations

Dear Secretary of State,

This morning's Politico Playbook includes well-sourced reports that your Department has negotiated a draft UK US trade agreement that includes a review of enforcement of the U.K.'s Online Safety Act.

The report states the deal includes a specific commitment to undertake a review of both the Digital Markets and Competition Act and the Online Safety Act. Comments which presumably come from your department state: 'whether the Prime Minister or Secretary [of State] are able to overrule the rights of the consultation, the right of Parliament in agreeing something [...] that's where I think that's probably politically ambitious for government.'

Molly Rose Foundation was founded by the family and friends of Molly Russell following her death in November 2017. Molly is one of far too many young lives that have been lost because of the irresponsible and ineffective approach taken by social media firms to children's safety. The appalling reality is that we lose the life of a young person aged 10 to 19 by suicide where technology plays a role every single week.

We are deeply dismayed and appalled by the apparent willingness to trade-off children's safety in the pursuit of avoiding President Trump's imposition of tariffs. How many young lives are we prepared to lose to agree a trade deal?

Does the Government truly believe that it is in the national interest to consider watering down this vital regulation when if anything there is emerging consensus that this legislation, which the Science and Technology Secretary has himself described as 'uneven and unsatisfactory', in fact needs to be urgently strengthened?

We do not believe that your negotiating position attracts the support of the British public. Our recent polling shows that by a nine to one margin, UK adults believe the Government should pursue policies that prioritise the online safety of children and young people, even if this means tech companies invest significantly less than in the UK.

I would also note that the Chancellor herself has acknowledged to us that 'the UK's online safety regime is expected to drive economic growth by tackling the harms that blight the adoption and enjoyment of online products and services here in the UK.' DSIT's own figures

show that a strengthened online safety regime could stand to deliver £4 billion in annualised economic return, an inherently pro-growth, pro-safety set of policies that it appears your department now appears actively ready and willing to sacrifice.

We fully understand the fraught and incredibly challenging situation that the UK now finds itself in. The Trump Administration has repeatedly targeted the Online Safety Act and there is evidently a concerted push to incentivise us to accept a free-for-all exported agenda in which our children's safety is determined by the worldview of JD Vance and Elon Musk rather than Britain's elected officials and independent regulators.

Across this country, parents and the public demand and expect that you stand firm and put children's safety firmly before a trade deal. A blighted future for our next generation is simply not a price worth paying.

I would strongly encourage you to meet with bereaved parents and those with lived experience of the deliberate harm inflicted by US tech companies before taking any further action, and I would be pleased to facilitate this at your earliest convenience.

Yours Sincerely

Andy Burrows

Chief Executive