July 2020



Thank you for contacting me about the Trade Bill and New Clause 17.

The Trade Bill is a continuity Bill. The powers within the Bill could not be used to implement new free trade agreements with countries such as the US. Instead, the Bill only allows for trade agreements that we have been party to through our EU membership to be transitioned into UK law.

As I have explained before the NHS is already protected by specific carve outs, exceptions and reservations in these trade agreements and the Government has no intention of lowering standards in transitioned trade agreements; indeed, the very purpose of these agreements is to replicate as close as possible the effects of existing commitments in EU agreements. Thus I can reassure you that none of the 20 continuity agreements signed have resulted in standards being lowered.

I also want to be clear that no future trade agreement will be allowed to undermine the guiding principle of the NHS:  that it is universal and free at the point of need. I welcome the Government’s clear and absolute commitment that the NHS will be protected in any future trade agreement. Indeed, the price the NHS pays for drugs will not be on the table and nor will the services the NHS provides.

I also want to stress that Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) does not, and cannot, force the privatisation of public services or oblige the Government to open the NHS to further competition. There is also yet to be a successful ISDS claim against the UK and nor has the threat of potential disputes affected the Government’s legislative programme.

I hope this response is reassuring and thank you again for taking the time to contact me.



Yours faithfully,

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**

**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**