



Political Intelligence: November 2021

COP26

Following the two week conference, Boris Johnson addressed the House of Commons to announce the outcomes of the COP26 summit in Glasgow. The Glasgow agreement included: ‘keeping 1.5 alive’, ‘calling time on coal’, and ‘building a coalition of more than 130 countries to protect up to 90% of our forests around the world’.

Keir Starmer followed, noting the ‘modest progress’ the summit made, and that if all the pledges made at COP26 were “all fully implemented, [they] represent less than 25% of the ambition required” to halve emissions by 2030 and limit global warming to 1.5 degrees.

Fashion in Politics:

Creative Sector

A debate on the creative sector was held in the House of Lords at the beginning of November, led by Baroness Featherstone making the case that “the Government have signalled so clearly, at home and to the whole world, that the UK creative sector is not a priority or important”. This feeling was echoed throughout the chamber, and it was noted by many the recognition fashion needs to receive as part of this creative sector, notably Lord Marland highlighting the need for fashion production to be nurtured and given government support; Lord Clement-Jones asked the Minister (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for DCMS, Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay) what he is doing to ensure that fashion’s concerns are properly taken into account, the Earl of Clancarty and Baroness Merron drove home the importance mobility in the EU holds for fashion and the added costs and delays Brexit agreements have caused for their travel and work in the EU.

Black Friday: Financial Products

The House of Commons saw a debate on Black Friday: Financial Products on the 23rd November, called by Stella Creasy MP who introduced the debate on the financial burden of Christmas and the pressure to borrow, or get into debt, in order to celebrate properly by the promotion of borrowing and ‘buy now, pay later’ companies. She noted that: “of 111 major retailers of fashion, baby and child and homewares, 62 offered at least one buy now, pay later scheme, and the majority did not provide any information about late fees”. Paul Maynard however, argued against what he sees as people who “believe that BNPL type of product should be banished out of existence and is a

fundamental evil that drives demand for fast fashion” by noting his constituents, from a “relatively deprived part of the country” should not be deprived of access to short-term, low-cost credit. Claire Hanna MP noted the link of such schemes to fast fashion is clear, but that the impact it has is far wider than on the individual consumer and their money - but that the clothing is made in “dubious labour conditions” and “quickly ends up in landfill as it is often “designed to be worn a small number of times”.

Microplastic Filters

Alberto Costa MP presented a Bill in the House of Commons on the last day of November to “require manufacturers to fit microplastic-catching filters to new domestic and commercial washing machines” and to “make provision about the promotion of the use of microplastic-catching filters in washing machines” and “raising awareness about the consequences of microplastics from washing machines for pollution in rivers and seas”. He noted the importance such an introduction would have on allowing the fashion industry to thrive, without polluting the environment. The Bill was supported by: Philip Dunne, Caroline Lucas, Tim Loughton, Derek Thomas, Mr Jonathan Lord, Mrs Pauline Latham, Alexander Stafford, Andrew Selous, Jim Shannon, Patrick Grady and Holly Lynch.

Written Questions:

The Earl of Clancarty, Tourism

The Earl of Clancarty addressed a question to DCMS on what plans they have to “widen the representation of the fashion industry on the DCMS-led working group on touring. Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay responded that the group was set up at the beginning of 2021, includes the British Fashion Council, that all members of the group are encouraged to reach out to others to ensure it herds and understands views from across the sector, and that the government has engaged with fashion industry representatives through the Brexit Business Taskforce on Fashion and Textiles and a seminar organised alongside the BFC.

The Earl of Clancarty, Clothing: Manufacturing Industries

The Earl of Clancarty asked the DCMS what steps are being taken to support the just-in-time nature of the fashion creative business model. Lord Callanan responded citing the Government’s recognition of fashion business’ reliance on efficient supply chains and are taking action through a new Cabinet Committee on logistics; the Minister for Small Business’ roundtables with UKFT and British Footwear Association; Lord Frost’s Brexit Business Taskforce;; and the launch of the Export Support Service helpline and enquiry service.

The Earl of Clancarty, Clothing: Exports

The Earl of Clancarty asked the Treasury what advice is being provided around carnets for those in the fashion industry. Lord Agnew of Oulton provided an explanation of ATA Carnets and other options to move goods temporarily between the UK and EU.

The Earl of Clancarty, Clothing: Exports

The Earl of Clancarty addressed the Treasury to enquire if there are plans to help reduce or remove the costs of carnets for those working in fashion travelling to Europe. Lord Agnew of Oulton pointed to there being further information available on the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry website, and noted the possibility to use the EU's Temporary Admission procedure.

The Earl of Clancarty, Clothing: Exports

The Earl of Clancarty asked the Treasury for their definition of a Duplicate List with regard to sample transportation in the fashion industry. Lord Agnew of Oulton explained that a Duplicate List "is an alternative to using a full customs declaration when exporting goods temporarily or when claiming Returned Goods Relief (RGR)" and that it "involves the exporter preparing two copies of a list of all the goods being temporarily exported and presenting them to Customs, along with other customs paperwork."

Emily Thornberry MP, Teesside Freeport: Switzerland - 19th November 2021

Emily Thornberry MP asked the Department of International Trade whether manufacturers in Teesside Freeport making tariff-free imports of raw material can utilise tariff reductions agreed in UK-Switzerland Trade Agreement when exporting their finished products to Switzerland.

Penny Mordaunt MP responded: "There are currently prohibitions to duty drawback in the UK-Switzerland free trade agreement. Such restrictions can mean that exporters may not be able to make use of certain freeport advantages while also using the Free Trade Agreements for their exports.

The UK and Switzerland have just updated their rules of origin provisions, meaning that duty drawback restrictions now apply only to a limited number of products in the textile and apparel sector."

Emily Thornberry MP, Teesside Freeport: Switzerland - 25th November 2021

Following her previous question, Emily Thornberry MP enquired as to which products that were previously subject to duty drawback prohibitions are now not subject.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena MP responded: “The United Kingdom-Switzerland Joint Trade Committee updated the Rules of Origin protocol through a Joint Committee Decision on 16th July 2021. The changes have been provisionally applied since 1st September 2021, whilst the United Kingdom and Switzerland undergo parliamentary procedures to bring the amendment into force.

The changes reflect the revision of the rules between Switzerland and the EU as part of the updates to the Regional Convention on Pan-Euro-Mediterranean (PEM) Preferential Rules of Origin that Switzerland are subject to. They provide modernised rules of origin provisions, including removing the duty drawback prohibition on all products other than textiles, as is the case in the revised PEM rules of origin.”

Emily Thornberry MP, Teesside Freeport: Switzerland - 25th November 2021

Also further to her question on the 19th, Emily Thornberry MP asked the DIT “when and through which forums” changes were made to the UK-Switzerland FTA.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena MP responded as on the question above.

Coronavirus:

UK:

As of 5th December 51 million people (89%) over the age of 12 have had their first dose, 46 million (81%) have been double jabbed, and 20 million (36%) have had a booster (third dose). Currently 7,268 people with coronavirus are in hospital in the UK. New temporary measures have been put in place due to the new Omicron variant, including the re-introduction of mandatory mask-wearing in shops and on transport.