**Trade Justice Wales**

**Forward Work Programme**

At the first meeting of the Trade Justice Wales network stakeholders discussed a wide variety of policy interests that were felt to be impacted by the UK’s emerging trade policy and trade negotiations. These included:

* Agricultural standards
* Animal welfare
* Climate change
* Consumer interests
* Environmental standards
* Equality
* Food and farming
* Human rights
* International development
* International donations
* Labour standards
* Preference erosion
* Public health
* Sustainable land management
* The interests of communities in the UK’s trading partners
* The seven wellbeing goals
* Trade policy governance

There were varying degrees of understanding and capacity to explore how the UK’s new trade policy may impact on these areas as this is a new work for some. However, three cross-cutting themes and sets of questions emerged from the discussion which we propose be used to direct Trade Justice Wales’ support of network participants.

**1 – Trade cuts across many policy areas and as such requires robust governance**

There is a lack of opportunity for inclusive input, transparency and scrutiny in the UK’s approach to trade policy. Currently it is very difficult for stakeholders across policy areas to engage with the formulation of UK policies on trade – leading to the overarching question of how do we ensure that voices from civil society are heard in this process? How do we coordinate amongst ourselves across policy areas to ensure that interests are joined up including across governmental departments?

The challenge is multidimensional:

* Trade agreements being considered are numerous with a focus on securing as many as possible as quickly as possible.
* Consultations are short, occur late in the process, involve technical questions and do not provide enough information for meaningful engagement. Topics like health, human rights, equality and labour rights are given only cursory coverage.
* There is no overarching trade policy at the UK level to provide a strategic vision for stakeholders to engage with.
* **While distinct, many of these policy areas are interconnected in trade which requires very robust governance qualified by early, regular and meaningful stakeholder engagement, appropriate constitutional arrangements ensuring a voice for devolved legislatures and governments and holistic impact assessments.**

In responding to these challenges – Trade Justice Wales could:

* Focus on governance improvements by coordinating stakeholders to advocate for a paradigm shift in how the UK Government, the Welsh Government and our sectors work together to inform the development of trade policy.
* Support stakeholders to build relationships with relevant actors and officials, both within Wales and at the UK level.
* Support participants to work together to substantively explore **what good governance looks like** by engaging with Welsh and UK Government trade policy officials and exploring how to improve stakeholder inclusion at an earlier strategic level as opposed to being briefly consulted via written consultation containing too little information and purely on highly technical issues.

**2- Trade should be reframed as a vehicle to pursue policy objectives beyond purely economic opportunity**

The second overlapping cross-cutting theme to emerge from discussions was the need to reframe the notion of trade in a variety of ways:

* **Trade should not be viewed as choice between economic opportunity and wider social values, but instead as a vehicle by which other policy areas like environmental policy, human rights, and sustainable development are supported and pursued**.
* Trade should not be seen as responding to a consumer desire to always have access to cheaper products.
* Trade policy should not be developed in isolation by a single government department – there is a need for inter-departmental and intergovernmental dialogue on the use of trade in relation to these wide policy objectives.
* Similarly consultations on trade should not be geared solely towards businesses.

As such, Trade Justice Wales could/should:

* Connect stakeholders across a wide range of policy areas to coordinate joint dialogue, actions and relationship building with key trade policy actors.
* Work with partners like the Centre for Inclusive Trade and the Trade Justice Movement to advocate for a reframing of how trade policy is viewed and used.
* Advocate for trade agreements to have impact assessments through the lens of sustainable development

**3 – UK trade policy can have significant impacts on the communities outside of the UK**

The third cross-cutting theme to emerge from discussions was that trade policy should not be considered purely from the Welsh or UK perspective. The world is interconnected and with the climate and global supply chains, the impact on the people and communities in the UK’s trading partners should form an integral part of the UK’s trade policy formulation and impact assessment process. This is crucial if the wellbeing goal of a globally responsible Wales is to be reflected in post-Brexit trade policy.

As such, Trade Justice Wales could:

* Advocate for trade agreements to have impact assessments through the lens of sustainable development
* Provide training opportunities on the interconnectedness of Wales and its impact globally
* Connect with the Future Generation Commissioners office

**Proposed upcoming network activities:**

The project team would welcome suggestions from participants for areas where webinars, expert talks and training opportunities would be helpful. At the first meeting activities and training opportunities and activities were suggested on the following:

* Learning on the basics of Trade Agreements and how they are made and implemented in the UK
* The Internal Market Act and its implications for international trade.
* Learning more about the approach of other civil society and third sector organisations working on these international issues.
* Gaining a better understanding of issues to help with advocacy, campaigning and the raising of public awareness of some the issues at hand.
* Developing partnerships and relationships with actors in other parts of the UK, in various specific areas where organisations in Wales would share an agenda with organisations in other parts of the UK.

**List of proposed upcoming actions:**

* **16 May 2022** - A training session with the Trade Justice Movement on introducing stakeholders to influencing the development and influencing of trade policy in the UK context. TJM would be invited to share their experience of influencing in this space, where they feel critical junctures are that stakeholders could focus on, what works in their experience, where the challenges and opportunities.
* **Afternoon of the 9 June 2022** - face to face joint launch event in the Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay to build relationship with the Centre on Inclusive Trade Policy.
* Potential future training on intersection between international trade and the UK Internal Market Act.
* We recommend the network send around notification of upcoming Welsh Government Trade Policy Advisory Group meetings for an informal discussion between available stakeholders on any questions or points participants would like to make. There is not much notice of the topic being discussed at the TPAG meetings, as these are dependent on the Welsh Government receiving timely information from the UK Government. So, our zoom calls on this will need to be reactive and informal.
* Try and set up and stakeholder engagement session with the Department for International Trade for them to talk to the network about their process for establishing trading priorities and for TJW to work towards a more inclusive approach to trade policy.