European News

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UK and EU Introduce Tougher Steel Import Measures

The UK and European Union have introduced major new steel trade measures, marking one of the most significant shifts in European steel policy in recent years as governments seek to protect domestic producers from surging imports and global overcapacity. Both regimes came into force on 1st July 2026, replacing long-standing safeguard measures with strengthened tariff rate quota (TRQ) systems designed to support local steel production while maintaining access to essential imported materials.

1 UK Cuts Tariff-Free Import Quotas by More Than Half

The UK government's new steel trade measure reduces tariff-free steel import quotas by 51% compared with the previous safeguard system. Imports exceeding the revised quotas will now be subject to a 50% tariff, replacing the safeguard arrangements that expired on 30th June. The measures apply to steel products that can be manufactured in the UK and form part of the government's wider Steel Strategy, first announced in March. Ministers say the policy is designed to strengthen domestic steelmaking, safeguard critical supply chains and bolster industries including construction, infrastructure and defence.

The UK government reports that the new system follows months of consultation with steel producers, downstream manufacturers, and international partners, including the European Union. Officials argue the changes are necessary because of persistent global overcapacity in steel production, which has led to large volumes of lower priced imports entering international markets. The UK says maintaining a viable domestic steel sector is vital for national resilience and security.

Alongside the revised quotas the UK government has introduced exemptions for certain specialist steel products that are not manufactured domestically, helping manufacturers that rely on imported materials unavailable from UK producers – removing 11 individual commodity codes. The principal bar, rod and wire categories used by the fastener industry remain within scope. A transitional arrangement will also protect businesses importing steel under contracts signed before 14th March 2026, allowing qualifying shipments to enter without the new tariff until the end of September.

2 European Union Adopts Revised Steel Trade Framework

At the same time, the European Commission has introduced a new steel trade measure to replace the EU's safeguard regime, with the aim of strengthening the resilience and competitiveness of the European steel sector. The new framework reduces tariff-free import quotas to approximately 18.3 million tonnes per year, representing a 47% reduction compared with the previous system. Steel imports exceeding those quotas will also face a 50% duty. According to the Commission, the measure is intended to address the continuing challenge of global steel overcapacity, which has resulted in increasing volumes of diverted imports entering the European market.

The new rules cover 30 categories of steel products, including wire rod, stainless wire rod, stainless wire, cold draw wire, alloy bars, as well as stainless bars, and introduce strengthened origin requirements through the 'melted and poured' principle, helping to ensure imported products cannot circumvent the measures by undergoing limited processing in third countries before entering the EU. The Commission said the revised system seeks to strike a balance between protecting European steel producers from unfair market pressures while preserving access to imported steel for traditional trading partners and downstream manufacturing industries.

3 A Coordinated Response

Although introduced separately, the UK and EU measures reflect a common approach to addressing the challenges facing the steel industry. Both systems significantly reduce tariff-free import quotas while increasing tariffs on volumes exceeding those allocations. Both also cite persistent global overcapacity, market distortion caused by lower priced imports and the strategic importance of maintaining domestic steel production for critical supply chains.

For downstream sectors, including the fastener industry, the measures are expected to encourage greater use of domestically produced steel where available, while increasing the importance of careful procurement planning as quota allocations become more limited.

Bufab Acquires DC Iron

In-line with its strategy of acquiring profitable companies in attractive niches within C-parts and technical components, Bufab Group has entered into an agreement to acquire 100% of the shares in D.C. Handrails and Ironwork Parts Limited (DC Iron) – completed during July 2026.

UK-based DC Iron is a distributor of wrought iron components, key clamps, handrailing and fencing for fabricators, engineering companies, and building contractors, across the UK – with net sales of GB£14.8 million (€17.3 million) in 2025 and an operating profit margin significantly above Bufab's profitability target.

Based in Newcastle upon Tyne, DC Iron has achieved excellent growth and profit in recent years. Johan Sandberg, group director region UK & Ireland at Bufab, comments: "DC Iron operates in an attractive and resilient niche market with a broad and multi-faceted product range that spans across many applications and has a business model similar to Bufab's. We welcome the DC Iron team to Bufab and look forward to supporting them in their continued growth journey."

Scott Collins, who will remain managing director at DC Iron, adds: "We are pleased to become part of Bufab. Throughout this process Bufab demonstrated a clear strategic vision and a strong appreciation for our culture, our people, and the relationships we have built over the years. I believe that being part of Bufab will provide opportunities to further develop the business, expand into new markets and continue creating value for our customers and employees. I would like to thank our employees, customers, suppliers and advisers who have supported us throughout this journey. This transaction represents not an ending, but an exciting new chapter."

Q2 CBAM Certificate Price Released with Minor Decrease

The European Commission has published the Q2 price of CBAM certificates for 2026, set at €75.28 per tCO_2e – slightly down from the Q1 price of €75.36 per tCO_2e. For 2026 CBAM certificate prices will be determined on a quarterly basis. Therefore, there will be four prices in 2026 (one per quarter). Each price will only apply to emissions in CBAM goods imported into the Union during the quarter it relates to.

"Each quarterly price will be calculated by the Commission as the average of EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) auction clearing prices," comments the European Commission. "This ensures a fair and consistent alignment with the EU carbon market. From 2027 onwards, the Commission will calculate and publish weekly prices."

Although authorised CBAM declarants will only begin purchasing CBAM certificates from February 2027 (covering their 2026 imports) the Commission hopes that early publication of these costs will enhance transparency, provide stakeholders with timely information and reduce the risk of inconsistent or unofficial price estimates circulating in the market. You can keep track of the latest certificate prices here: www.fastenerandfixing.com/ industry-news/latest-cbam-certificate-prices

Hilti Q1 Sales Grow

In the first four months of 2026 Hilti Group increased sales by 4.7% in local currencies. Due to the ongoing appreciation of the Swiss franc, against all major currencies, the negative currency effect rose to 6.2 percentage points. In Swiss francs, total sales reached CHF 2.068 billion (€2.243 billion).

In the Americas, Hilti Group increased sales by 9.6% in local currencies. In Europe, given the continued soft construction market, growth was at 0.8% in local currencies. In the Middle East/ Africa region, sales grew at a double-digit rate (+17.5% in local currencies). Asia-Pacific recorded growth of 6.6% in local currencies in what remained a heterogeneous environment. For the remainder of 2026 Hilti Group expects low to mid single-digit sales growth in local currencies in the current uncertain global environment.

Management Buyout of Anochrome Group

Private equity firm Endless LLP has supported a management buyout of the Anochrome Group, a UK headquartered surface finishing and coatings specialist. The transaction represents a transition from long-standing family ownership and the start of a new phase for the business. Anochrome, which has its headquarters in Wolverhampton, has been trading for over 80 years – providing high-quality surface coatings, corrosion protection and threadlocking sealants services to a diverse customer base across a range of sectors, including automotive, construction, industrial fixings, motor sports and renewables. It operates from sites in the UK, Poland and Czech Republic and is recognised for its technical expertise, strong customer relationships and commitment to quality and service.

The business will continue to be led by its existing senior management team, headed by Mark Jones, who will partner with Endless to deliver Anochrome's growth strategy. Long serving team members Steve Norman, Kev Walton and Pawe Jagustyn will support Mark in overseeing the six companies within the Group: Anochrome Limited, Anotec, Inlex Locking, Wolverhampton Electro Plating, Anocote CR and Anocote PL.

Mark Jones, group chief executive of Anochrome, comments: "This transaction represents not a change in direction, but an exciting new chapter built upon strong foundations. With the support of Endless, we are exceptionally well positioned to accelerate future investment, strengthen our capabilities and continue delivering long-term innovation and growth across the Group." He continues: "On behalf of the entire team at Anochrome, I'd like to thank outgoing owner Rob Gray for his exceptional leadership and personal commitment to the business over the last 35 years. I, alongside the senior leadership team, are committed to building upon the proud legacy and reputation of the business for many years to come."

Rob adds: "It's been a privilege and honour to lead the business. It's been a fantastic journey and my huge thanks go to every single person who has been a part of it. The management team I leave behind is absolutely fantastic. I know the business is in safe hands and I wish the new ownership every success for the future."

Bulten Wins Administrative Court Ruling in Customs Dispute

Bulten Group has secured a favourable ruling from the Administrative Court in Stockholm in its dispute with the Swedish Customs over anti-dumping duties on imports of materials from China. The court upheld Bulten's appeal and annulled the customs authority's decision covering SEK 35 million (€3.17 million) of duties for the 2022 – 2024 period.

The judgment means, if it becomes legally binding, that Bulten will receive a refund of previously paid and expensed customs duties as well as interest, totalling approximately SEK 35 million. "This is a pleasing and welcome announcement from the Administrative Court. The judgment confirms our view that we have classified our products correctly in accordance with the applicable regulations," says Axel Berntsson, president and CEO at Bufab. The Swedish Customs are able to seek leave to appeal the judgment.

Bulten to Divest Chinese Manufacturing Operations

Bulten has entered into an agreement to divest 100% of its shares in Bulten Fasteners (Tianjin) Co Ltd to a local investor group led by Kaikai Chen, as part of the organisation's ongoing work to focus on selected core operations. The purchase price amounts to RMB 1 million (€129,000).

For the financial year 2025, Bulten Fasteners (Tianjin) generated revenue of approximately RMB 88 million (€11 million). The divestment supports Bulten's ambition to reduce complexity and capital intensity while strengthening focus on activities with higher long-term value creation potential. The transaction is subject to customary closing conditions and regulatory approvals in China and was intended to be completed no later than the end of August 2026. ■