



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster  
Cabinet Office 70 Whitehall London  
SW1A 2AS

All MPs

Our reference: MC2020/13802

8 October 2020

Dear Colleague,

At the end of December, the UK will leave the EU Single Market and Customs Union. This will be a moment of great opportunity – but also of significant change.

The Government is committed to seeking to negotiate a new free trade agreement with the EU before the end of the transition period. Colleagues will know that those talks are progressing. **With or without an agreement there will, however, be changes at the border - and businesses and citizens must prepare for them now.** EU Member State controls will be made on all imports and exports at the end of the transition period.

To support those preparations the Government has **today published an updated Border Operating Model**, which explains how the border between Great Britain and the EU will operate from 31 December 2020. A simple explainer guide to the new requirements which will be in place at each stage is included in **Annex A**.

The Government is taking every step possible to ensure that systems, infrastructure and resourcing are in place to support our readiness for the end of the year. But, as I set out when I published the Government's 'Reasonable Worst Case Scenario' on 23 September, the readiness of traders, particularly those exporting goods to the EU, is key to avoiding disruption.

I write to you today to ask you to help ensure that all businesses in your constituencies which trade with the EU understand the new arrangements and are taking necessary action. You can encourage them to take three simple steps.

Firstly, if they do not already have a GB EORI number (a number which helps customs identify their goods) they should go online and apply for one. They will need this to trade with the EU after 31 December 2020.

Secondly, they should decide how they want to fulfil new customs requirements – some businesses will do this themselves; many will want to use a customs agent or intermediary and should identify one now.

Thirdly, they should talk to the businesses in the EU with whom they trade. Those businesses will have to comply with new import and export requirements from the end of the transition period, including those of Member States.

These steps will be important for all businesses which trade with the EU. For those who trade in food, agrifood, controlled or specialist goods, there will be additional requirements which are detailed in the Operating Model. The Operating Model does not cover the movement of goods under the Northern Ireland Protocol, and separate advice is available for businesses on this.

Businesses should go to [gov.uk/transition](https://www.gov.uk/transition) to use the transition checker which will help them understand not just new border requirements but all of the steps they need to take to be ready for the end of the transition period.

On [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk), businesses will find a range of simple explainer guides. They will also find information about webinars which the Government is organising to provide expert advice. Large businesses which currently trade only with the EU will also get a phone call from HMRC. **Please encourage businesses in your constituency to take up these offers of advice and support.** But particularly encourage smaller businesses and SMEs to get ready.

For those businesses who trade currently only with the EU, they may find that getting ready for our new trading relationship with the EU will mean they are in a position to expand their horizons and trade beyond, with the rest of the world. The Government hopes that many businesses will seize those opportunities and will do all it can to facilitate this through our commitment to having the best border in the world by 2025, streamlining requirements for businesses and individuals, while improving security

**With every good wish,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael Gove". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" and the last name "Gove" clearly distinguishable.

**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster  
and Minister for the Cabinet Office**

## Annex A: Staging of UK Controls

From 11pm on 31 December 2020, the transition period with the EU will end, and the UK will operate a full, external border as a sovereign nation. This means that controls will be placed on the movement of goods between GB and the EU.

Recognising the impact of coronavirus on businesses' ability to prepare, and following the announcement in February that the UK Government will implement full border controls on imports coming into GB from the EU, the UK Government has taken the decision to introduce the new border controls in three stages up until 1 July 2021.

This flexible and pragmatic approach will give industry extra time to make necessary arrangements. The stages are:

**1. From January 2021:** Traders importing non-controlled goods, covering everything from clothes to electronics, will need to prepare for basic customs requirements, such as keeping sufficient records of imported goods. Traders will also need to consider how they account for and pay VAT on imported goods. Traders will then have up to six months to complete customs declarations. While tariffs will be payable where due on relevant goods, payments can be delayed until the customs declaration has been made. UK Safety and Security (S&S) declarations will not be required on imports for the first six months.

Full customs declarations will be needed from this date for controlled goods (as listed in annex C) and excise goods like alcohol and tobacco products. There will also be physical checks at the point of destination or other approved premises on all high-risk live animals and high-priority plants and plant products, and a requirement to obtain the relevant documentation and pre-notify for certain movements, but they will not be required to enter GB via a point of entry with an appropriate Border Control Post (BCP).

Export declarations and UK exit S&S declarations will be required for all goods. Traders importing and exporting goods using the Common Transit Convention will need to follow all of the transit procedures – these will not be introduced in stages. The Goods Vehicle Movement Service (GVMS) will be introduced from January only for transit movements.

**2. From April 2021:** All products of animal origin (POAO) – for example meat, honey, milk or egg products – and all regulated plants and plant products will also require pre-notification and the relevant health documentation. Any physical checks on plants or plant products will continue to be conducted at the point of destination until July 2021. Physical checks on POAO will not be introduced until July 2021.

**3. From July 2021:** Traders moving any goods will have to make full customs declarations at the point of importation and pay relevant tariffs, delaying declarations will not be possible. Full S&S declarations will be required, while for commodities subject to sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) controls, these must arrive at an established point of entry with an appropriate BCP and there will be an increase in physical checks and the taking of samples. SPS checks for animals, plants and their products will take place at GB BCPs. The GVMS will be in place for all imports, exports and transit movements at border locations which have chosen to introduce it.