

HMRC accelerates 95,000 firms onto simplified import procedures

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has automatically registered 95,000 businesses for its simplified import procedures allowing most traders up to six months to pay import duties and submit customs declarations, if the UK leaves the EU without a deal on 31 October.

The scheme, known as Transitional Simplified Procedures (TSP), will make importing after Brexit on 31 October much simpler, particularly for businesses who would be completing customs processes for the first time. Up to now, businesses have had to apply for it – over 30,000 had previously registered.

This TSP scheme will allow most businesses up to six months to send in customs declarations and pay any customs duties to HMRC after importing goods from the EU. This will prevent congestion at the border when goods enter the UK.

The government has chosen to automatically enrol VAT-registered businesses who import from the EU into the TSP scheme as it is the best option for businesses who are new to customs processes and haven't yet appointed a customs agent. Businesses who are not registered for VAT should apply for the scheme if it would benefit them.

HMRC Interim CEO, Jim Harra, said:

“We are doing everything we can to help businesses get ready for Brexit on 31 October. This move will support the trade of thousands of businesses and is part of our longstanding policy of making sure we continue to keep trade flowing.”

Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) said:

“At a time of change, the top priorities at the border have to be keeping trade flowing and minimising the potential for disruption.

“Automatically registering companies for Transitional Simplified Procedures at the border means one less immediate demand on traders' limited time and resources in the unwanted event of a 'no-deal' exit.

“In particular, it would help the thousands of UK firms who import from the EU but have little experience of dealing with customs processes. We are pleased that ministers have again listened to BCC's calls to reduce the number of administrative hoops businesses will need to jump through as they navigate major changes to the way they trade across borders.”

Businesses registered for TSP today are UK-based traders who HMRC has a record of having imported goods from the EU in 2018.

HMRC has sent letters to these traders with further details of their TSP registration, and they only have to take a few simple extra steps – such as checking if their goods attract tariffs, and getting a Duty Deferment Account if they do – to make sure that they are ready for 31 October.

Importers do not have to use TSP: they still also have the option to use full import processes instead. However, HMRC strongly advises traders new to dealing with customs to take advantage of the benefits of TSP.

The UK remains committed to ensuring the country's borders remain secure, and simplified customs measures will not change that. Border Force will continue to carry out intelligence-led checks.