

£20 million SME Brexit Support Fund opens for applications

Smaller businesses can today (15 March 2021) apply for grants of up to £2,000 to help them adapt to new customs and tax rules when trading with the EU.

The £20 million SME Brexit Support Fund enables traders to access practical support, including training for new customs, rules of origin and VAT processes.

[Katherine Green and Sophie Dean](#), Directors General, Borders and Trade, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), said:

We recognise that changes to customs rules have been challenging for small and micro businesses, and this is why we are encouraging business owners to apply for support through the SME Brexit Support Fund.

We do not take for granted that the UK's small businesses – from designers creating bespoke handmade pieces from their kitchen tables, to those selling sweet treats – are vital to the growth and prosperity of our economy, so we look forward to supporting them with practical help to do business with our European partners, on top of a wide range of support available from the government.

Small and medium sized businesses that trade solely with the EU – and are therefore new to importing and exporting processes – are encouraged to apply for the grants.

The fund, [announced in February](#) by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Michael Gove, is the latest round of government support for UK trade.

To be eligible, businesses must import or export goods between Great Britain and the EU, or move goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

This follows the government setting out a new timetable for introducing import border control processes to enable UK businesses to focus on their recovery. Full import border control processes will now be introduced on 1 January 2022, six months later than originally planned.

Mike Cherry, Federation of Small Businesses National Chairman, said:

The vast majority of UK small firms that do business overseas trade with the EU. Not only are they trying to stay afloat as lockdowns gradually ease, they now have new, unfamiliar paperwork and costs to navigate when they buy from, or sell to, Europe.

That's why we asked the government for targeted funding to help them navigate these fresh demands, and it's brilliant to see that funding go live today.

We encourage all eligible small businesses to take a look and apply for this new source of help.

Jon Geldart, Director-General, Institute of Directors, said:

Smaller firms have long needed assistance with managing the host of new requirements that come with changing our EU trading arrangements, and that need has only grown in the current adjustment phase.

This is why the Institute of Directors has campaigned for so long to help companies with the cost of accessing the professional advice they need, and we commend the government for stepping in to do so.

More [information about the SME Brexit Support Fund, including details of how to apply](#), can be found on GOV.UK.

In addition to this new support, the government is:

- meeting businesses from specific sectors across all parts of the UK weekly through the Brexit Business Taskforce chaired by Michael Gove – the latest meeting focused specifically on businesses in Wales
- leading the Seafood Exports Working Group, meeting twice a week to troubleshoot issues raised by the industry, and a newly established Scottish Seafood Exports Task Force
- offering support to businesses moving goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland through its Trader Support Service
- providing numerous [helplines](#) which businesses can contact if they need further information – this includes a dedicated [HMRC imports and exports enquiry service](#) which is available via phone on 0300 322 9434 or via [online webchat](#)
- running regular [webinars with policy specialists](#)
- providing the [Brexit Checker Tool on GOV.UK](#) which gives businesses a personalised list of actions that they need to take
- providing one-to-one support for exporters in delivered via a network of around 300 International Trade Advisers
- leading a specific taskforce working with businesses across Northern Ireland and Great Britain on issues related to the Northern Ireland Protocol
- operating a range of other support schemes including a guarantee scheme aimed at SMEs which means the government can provide an 80% guarantee on financial support from lenders to help with general exporting costs, up to the value of £25 million