

Applications open for £50 million funding to boost UK customs intermediaries

From today (29 July 2020), customs intermediaries can apply for £50 million of new funding, first announced in June 2020, to increase their capacity to make declarations ahead of 2021.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), which is running the scheme, is encouraging customs intermediaries and traders who make their own declarations to take advantage of the funding now.

After the transition period ends, intermediaries, such as brokers, freight forwarders and express parcel operators, will play a critical role for businesses, and the government wants to create conditions for a diverse market.

HMRC had already made up to £34 million available to bolster the intermediary sector, which was used very quickly.

In total, the government has now made available £84 million to grow the customs intermediary sector to encompass EU trade after 2020. At the moment, agents cover non-EU trade though many, like parcel companies, do operate in the EU market.

As well as injecting £50 million to support businesses with recruitment, training and supplying IT equipment to handle customs declarations, the government also intends to change rules which will remove the financial liability from intermediaries operating on behalf of their clients, plus allow parcel operators to continue declaring multiple consignments in a single customs declaration.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Michael Gove, said:

After the UK transition period with the EU ends on December 31, intermediaries will play a vital role in helping UK businesses trade and seize new opportunities around the world. This funding and support will increase capacity as we get ready for the UK's new start next year.

Applying for this funding is simple and I urge the intermediary sector and businesses to take advantage of the help on offer now.

Liam Smyth, Director of Chamber Customs at the British Chambers of Commerce, commented:

The Customs Intermediary Grant Scheme has been a real enabler for businesses. It's enabled firms to hire more people, to upskill their employees and to drive efficiency through upgraded IT.

We have helped almost 2,000 businesses across the UK to upskill their staff through our training courses and we have benefitted directly by taking on more people and equipping them to be ready for the end of the Transition period.

Firms need many more customs agents to be ready, this fund can help to make that happen.

HMRC will continue to monitor the preparation of the customs intermediary sector closely.

[For full details of criteria and how to apply](#) please read the guidance on GOV.UK.

The customs grant scheme was launched in November 2018 to support the intermediary market to expand.

To date, HMRC has made a total investment of £34 million available to support the sector, which has supported more than 20,000 training courses, nearly 15,000 units of IT and the recruitment of over 600 new customs agents.

The grant scheme is being run by HMRC and administered by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) on its behalf.