

Freeports bidding process opens for applications

- the new hubs of business and enterprise will create thousands of jobs, regenerating communities and turbocharging Britain's post-Brexit growth
- those granted Freeport status will benefit from generous tax reliefs, simplified customs procedures and wider government support, boosting the local economy in the industrial heartlands

The bidding process to establish new, innovative Freeports that will boost the economy, create thousands of jobs and turbo-charge post-Brexit trade opened today.

Seizing on the opportunities presented by leaving the EU, ports and their communities across England can now apply for Freeport status in a move that will transform historic sea, air and rail ports into national hubs for trade, innovation and commerce to regenerate communities in our industrial heartlands as the nation levels up and builds back better.

Designed to attract major domestic and international investment, areas given Freeport status will benefit from a wide package of tax reliefs, simplified customs procedures, a streamlined planning processes to boost redevelopment and government support to promote regeneration and innovation.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:

Our new Freeports will create national hubs for trade, innovation and commerce, levelling up communities across the UK, creating new jobs, and turbo-charging our economic recovery.

As we embrace our new opportunities as an independent trading nation, we want to deliver lasting prosperity to the British people and Freeports will be key to delivering this.

At the centre of the new Freeports policy is an ambitious new customs model, drawing on international best practice, and building on the UK's existing customs arrangements. A firm can import goods into a Freeport without paying tariffs, process them into a final good and then either pay a tariff on goods sold into the domestic market, or export the final goods without paying UK tariffs.

Areas given Freeport status will also benefit from a wide package of tax reliefs, including on purchasing land, constructing or renovating buildings, investing in new plant and machinery assets and on Employer National Insurance Contributions.

Streamlined planning processes and government funding will also boost redevelopment and promote regeneration and innovation.

The first Freeports will be open for business in 2021, and sea, air and rail ports from across England are encouraged to apply, working in tandem with their local leaders, businesses and others in their communities.

Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick said:

Our Freeports will be international centres for trade and investment, powering regeneration, job creation and entrepreneurship. I am delighted that ports, councils and their private sector partners can now apply for Freeport status – with all the special opportunities it will bring to their communities and the country.

The government is working constructively and collaboratively with the devolved administrations to establish at least one Freeport in each nation of the UK, in addition to those allocated in England.

Richard Ballantyne, Chief Executive, British Ports Association, said:

The launch of the Freeports bidding process in England today represents a huge step forward in the establishment of fair and inclusive Freeports in the UK. We are pleased that Government recognises and supports ports as drivers of economic development and prosperity. Ports, and the wider maritime industry, are eager to play their part in the solution to national economic recovery and the regeneration of coastal communities.

Tim Morris, Chief Executive Officer, UK Major Ports Group, said:

We welcome the launch of the Freeports Bidding Prospectus. Port operators all across the UK are developing ambitious proposals to respond to the Freeports opportunity. The UK Major Ports Group and the port operators themselves look forward to working closely with the Government to build ever stronger gateways for the UK's global trade, boost prosperity for coastal and inland communities and maintain high standards.

The government is committed to levelling up all regions of the UK by spreading opportunity through private enterprise; creating jobs and seizing the opportunities presented by leaving the EU.

Notes

- the full Bidding Prospectus will be live on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) at 11am on Monday 16 November
- bidders will need to submit bids by Friday 5 February 2021, and bids

will be assessed by a MHCLG chaired assessment panel in March 2021, with decisions made in Spring

- the government remains committed to ensuring its Freeport model maintains the UK's high standards with respect to security, safety, workers' rights, data protection, biosecurity and the environment, while ensuring fair and open competition between businesses
- freeports will adhere to the OECD Code of Conduct for Clean Free Trade Zones, and current obligations set out in the UK's Money Laundering Regulations 2017 will be maintained