



Lord Agnew Kt
Minister of State
HM Treasury and Cabinet Office
1 Horse Guards Road London SW1A 2HQ

By email:

10 November 2020

Dear Members,

Preparing for the Northern Ireland Protocol

I am writing to you to ask for your help in reaching members of your trade association who are involved in moving goods into or out of Northern Ireland.

As you will be aware, the Northern Ireland Protocol comes into force on 1 January 2021 when the Transition Period ends. The Northern Ireland Protocol to the Withdrawal Agreement was designed as a practical solution to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland, whilst ensuring that the UK, including Northern Ireland, could leave the EU as a whole.

The UK's approach to the Northern Ireland Protocol outlines how the protocol can be implemented in a way that would protect the interests of the people and economy of Northern Ireland, ensure the effective working of the UK's internal market, provide appropriate protection for the EU Single Market and uphold the rights of all Northern Ireland's citizens.

In preparation for the end of the Transition Period, the Government has launched the Trader Support Service – a free-to-use service that will help businesses and traders of all sizes to navigate the changes to the way goods move once the Northern Ireland Protocol comes into effect on 1 January 2021.

Why we need your help

The Trader Support Service opened for trader registration on 28 September 2020. It is vital that businesses moving goods into and out of Northern Ireland prepare for the changes that are coming at the end of the year.

We have made excellent progress in registering large businesses for the Trader Support Service. However, despite extensive marketing activity, we are concerned that micro, small, and medium sized enterprises are proving much slower to act. By delaying registering, those traders are risking serious disruption to their businesses after January.

The service will:

- Provide guidance and training to support traders with changes under the Northern Ireland Protocol, including new declarations requirements
- Enable traders to complete declarations without needing to purchase specialist software
- Save traders significant time in completing declarations
- Reduce traders' declaration costs as the Trader Support Service is free-to-use

If traders do not register in good time and get ready to supply the Trader Support Service with the information it will need to make declarations on their behalf, they are likely to experience significant disruption to their business – including an inability to move goods into or out of Northern Ireland.

We understand that this is a difficult time for many businesses, as they respond to the covid-19 pandemic, but it is vital that they prepare for the changes that are coming in Northern Ireland. If traders register with the service before 23 November, they will be automatically issued an XI EORI number, which they will need from January. If they register later than this, they may need to apply separately to be issued with this number. We are therefore encouraging traders to act now and register for the Trader Support Service.

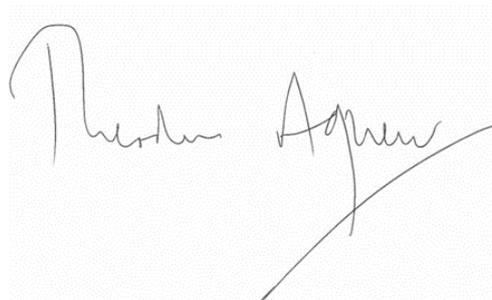
What you can do

I'm asking you to use your trusted voice to help us get the message to members of your trade organisation, and to emphasise the urgency and importance of acting now, to avoid disruption to their businesses. Please share with them the link to register, which is:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/trader-support-service>

I very much appreciate your support in this matter. Together, we can help your members to avoid disruption to their business.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lord Agnew', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Lord Agnew Kt