

Are You Ready for Brexit? Shipping Through Zeebrugge and Europoort

As one of Europe's leading ferry operators we know how important it is for our customers to have an easy and efficient way to do business with us. Brexit will affect you whatever the outcome. That is why we have been planning for all eventualities including the possibility that the UK leaves the EU without an agreement.

We have set up a freight portal containing information about freight shipping in the event of a 'no deal' Brexit at <https://www.pofcustoms.com/>. It will be updated to enable customers to enter any extra data needed after lodging your declaration in the relevant customs system as outlined below. Along with the changes we have made to our booking systems, this will enable us to link up the required customs data for shipping between Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands and maintain flows through our ports and get you on your way.

This document sets out a summary of the default operational procedures required by public authorities and our policies for implementing them. During the transitional period immediately after Brexit, P&O Ferries may need to implement other interim arrangements. Given the nature of Brexit, this is still subject to change, but we will update you as soon as possible.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO NOW

To move goods into or out of the EU you need an Economic Operator Registration and Identification (EORI) number. You can register for and create an EORI number via the customs agencies in the states that you operate in. This applies to importers or exporters who use a forwarder or customs agent for import and export declarations.

Decide who takes care of the import and export declarations after Brexit and determine whether you will submit import and/or export declarations to each customs authority yourself or whether you will use a forwarder or customs agent for this. It is very important that you make clear agreements with your supply chain partners as to who performs what action. P&O Ferries do not currently envisage providing a customs agency service.

Once you have a UK EORI number and if you are a company registered in the UK, you can also register for Transitional Simplified Procedures (TSP) to reduce the amount of information you need to give in a UK import declaration when the goods are entering on RO-RO and LO-LO services. TSP also allows goods to leave the UK port immediately following arrival, with customs formalities handled remotely in the following 24 hours to six months depending on the type of goods transported.

Make plans now to ensure that your drivers have all the relevant documentation for the consignments carried on their vehicle before reaching the port and know the procedures for leaving the port of arrival.

More details including links to the web pages of customs authorities can be found on our freight portal at <https://www.pofcustoms.com/>. The situation is, however, still evolving but you can monitor the position closely through the official websites in each country.

For shipping exports and imports through Europort, please register in advance with the Portbase port community system which will be used to pre-lodge and track import and export shipments. After Brexit, it will be mandatory to pre-notify all customs documents for goods via the Portbase port community system and you should allow sufficient time to register with them now at: <https://www.portbase.com/>.

Similarly, for shipping exports and imports through Zeebrugge, you must register in advance with the RX/Seaport system. After Brexit, it will also be mandatory to pre-notify for goods all customs documents via the RX/Seaport port community system and you should register with them now at <https://rxseaport.eu/en/>.

BOOKING PROCEDURE

You will need to submit much more information about your booking, consignment and goods than you are used to today. We have amended our terms and conditions to reflect these new obligations and these are available at <https://www.pofcustoms.com>

Booking

Please continue to book with us as you do now.

All your existing bookings and data already contained in the current system remain available to you in our updated systems.

For shipping to and from Belgium and the Netherlands, you will need to tell us at the point of booking whether you:

- are shipping an empty load;
- intend to make a full customs declaration or you are using Transitional Simplified Procedures; or
- intend to ship goods under the Common Transit Convention.

For existing bookings, you must submit this information to us manually through our Brexit web freight portal at <https://www.pofcustoms.com/>

You will need a booking reference number (waybill) before completing a customs declaration with the relevant customs authorities via your port community system to import and export goods.

Customs / Safety and Security Declarations

Having previously determined who is responsible for the pre-notification of customs documents you need to ensure that you, or your delegate:

- pre-lodge a UK import or export declaration in your local customs system (freight forwarder/customs broker) and you update the Port Community System (PCS);

- pre-lodge an EU import or export declaration in your local customs system (freight forwarder/customs broker) and you update the PCS; and,
- there will also be a requirement for carriers or agents to ensure that they lodge a Safety and Security Declaration in the relevant customs system. Please note that the UK has waived its requirement for a Safety and Security declaration for imports to the UK in the first six months after Brexit, although this might change in the future.

For groupage this could mean several declarations per transporting unit.

We have adapted our systems to capture and transmit information to customs authorities and port community systems. When the required information has been completed with the port community system in time prior to check in, P&O Ferries will receive the relevant Movement Reference Numbers (MRNs) for checking against the MRNs, EORI number and any other supporting documentation you must send with your driver before they reach the port.

If you are importing to the EU via Belgium or the Netherlands, then the respective customs authorities will require you to supply supplementary safety and security information after you have pre-lodged your customs declaration with them. To do this you must submit the information through our Brexit web freight portal at <https://www.pofcustoms.com/> and ensure your driver has a copy of all required documents, including the pertinent MRNs before reaching the port.

If the required information has not been completed with the port community system, P&O Ferries will not receive the MRNs and you will not be able to enter the terminal.

BEFORE ARRIVAL AT PORT OF DEPARTURE

You can use the port community systems to check beforehand whether the terminal has received the relevant customs documents. Only cargo that has been digitally pre-notified can enter and leave the terminal. Otherwise, the container or trailer will be refused entry or retained in the port. Therefore, make sure to always use your port community system to check the customs status at the terminal.

If you are sending freight for shipping on our ferries after Brexit, you must always ensure that your driver has all the relevant documentation for the load before reaching the port or your goods will not be able to enter the terminal.

AT CHECK-IN

P&O Ferries will not be able to process emails containing customs information at check in.

Drivers of empty trailers should complete our 'standard check-in process' including border exit checks and move to the loading lanes in preparation to board the vessel (accompanied) or take the trailer where instructed within the yard (unaccompanied).

Drivers of all loaded trailers must present the correct declaration MRNs (This can be in physical paper form or digitally via a smart device) to our booth staff if asked on arrival.

BEFORE DEPARTURE, DURING THE CROSSING AND AT PORT OF ARRIVAL

Arrival at UK terminal

Current UK Government Transitional Simplified Procedures (TSP) enables accompanied freight to exit the terminal and for unaccompanied units to be picked up immediately after vessels arrive at the terminal of arrival, subject to border force security checks, as they do today. This is because Hull, Teesport and Tilbury are on the approved list of UK RO-RO locations receiving TSP. HMRC currently require you to pre-lodge the UK import declaration before the vessel departs from Zeebrugge or Europoort and to finalise customs formalities after the unit has left the UK terminal.

Before vessel arrives at Zeebrugge or Europoort

You, or your delegate must inform the relevant PCS of the required import declarations per consignment prior to the arrival of the vessel in port.

Before the vessel arrives, information from Belgian or Dutch customs on any further required checks before you can leave the terminal will be sent to the PCS. It is the customer's responsibility to check the status for unaccompanied freight and to ensure that your driver is informed of the customs status for accompanied freight.

Arrival at Zeebrugge or Europoort

If not cleared on arrival, accompanied and unaccompanied units will enter the local temporary storage process and be placed under a temporary custom hold. You will need to provide P&O Ferries with proof of the customs status of the consignments in the unit, typically with the import MRN which will make the unit available for release. Our systems will provide the functionality for you to complete and confirm the unit booking information before you reach the port.

SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY CHECKS

It is your responsibility to organise and ensure that all documentation (physical or digital) accompany the driver/unit for shipments. You will also need to check that it is permitted to ship such goods via our ports as currently only Tilbury is in an approved Border Inspection Post (BIP) area. We currently expect mandatory checks to apply to import goods entering EU terminals. Zeebrugge and Europoort terminals are in an approved BIP area but you will be responsible for organising these checks, including making appointments at the BIP facility.

CONTACT

Should you have any queries in relation to the above and the attached, please do not hesitate to contact us further through your usual contact or brexit@pofferries.com