# Brexit red tape creates nearly two billion pieces of paperwork for UK businesses



The aftermath of Brexit continues to generate significant challenges for British businesses, with a recent analysis revealing that the transition has resulted in nearly two billion additional pieces of paperwork necessary for trade. This staggering figure is enough to encircle the globe fifteen times or to extend to the moon and halfway back again.

The findings, which stem from research conducted by the Chartered Institute of Export & International Trade and were brought to light by the Liberal Democrats, highlight the extensive bureaucratic hurdles that have emerged since the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the European Union. Clive Jones, the party's trade spokesperson, expressed concerns about the implications of this red tape, describing the situation as “mind blowing.”

Jones stated that the “Conservatives’ botched Brexit deal” has resulted in a “Gordian Knot of red tape,” severely hindering businesses in their efforts to export British goods globally. He suggested that these requirements have contributed to rising prices on the high street.

Prominent among the businesses affected is Marks & Spencer, which has reported the need to rent an additional warehouse specifically to accommodate its backlog of Brexit-related paperwork. Archie Norman, the retailer's chairman, remarked on the “extraordinary” volume of documentation, which includes thousands of pages that must be stored for six years after transporting food across the border into Ireland.

Furthermore, the official Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has projected that the UK economy will be approximately four per cent smaller in the long term due to the ramifications of Brexit. The Chartered Institute of Export & International Trade found that the two billion additional documents required for exporting goods to the EU since Brexit is equivalent to the height of Mount Everest being created 66,751 times. Additionally, the analysis noted that extracting the necessary paper for these documents would deplete 248,603 trees and the total worth of the used A4 paper is approximately £19.5 million.

The Liberal Democrats contend that the true costs of this administrative burden could exceed their estimates, given that they assumed each piece of paper was printed only once. Jones further emphasised that every minute spent on these forms detracts from valuable time that businesses could invest in growth opportunities essential for boosting the economy.

The party is advocating for the government to pursue a bespoke UK-EU customs union to alleviate these bureaucratic pressures and to improve trade conditions. Jones stressed the importance of acknowledging the reality of these barriers and called upon a potential Labour government to address the situation. He argued that failing to remove this increased administrative burden will hinder the necessary growth required to support public services and protect individual finances.

The Department for Business and Trade has been approached for comment regarding these findings and the ongoing impact of Brexit on businesses across the UK.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/whats-the-story-with-uk-trade-in-2024-so-far/> - This article discusses the post-Brexit trade landscape, highlighting the challenges faced by British businesses due to increased non-tariff barriers and paperwork, which aligns with the bureaucratic hurdles mentioned in the article.
* <https://www.aston.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-09/Full%20Report.pdf> - The report from Aston University details the significant impact of Brexit on UK-EU trade, including disruptions and declines in trade volumes, which supports the notion of increased administrative burdens and trade challenges.
* <https://obr.uk/box/how-are-our-brexit-trade-forecast-assumptions-performing/> - The Office for Budget Responsibility's analysis on Brexit's impact on trade intensity and the UK economy corroborates the long-term economic effects mentioned, such as a projected reduction in the UK's economic size.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-eu-agree-new-deal-on-future-relationship> - This official government announcement about the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement provides context on the deal that has led to increased paperwork and bureaucratic challenges for businesses.
* <https://www.libdems.org.uk/> - The Liberal Democrats' website may contain statements or press releases from Clive Jones regarding Brexit and its impact on businesses, supporting the political stance mentioned in the article.