

NEWS RELEASE

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Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General

Department for Transport: implementing the UK's exit from the EU

The Department for Transport is making a determined effort to ensure the UK transport system is fully prepared for EU Exit, however the challenge ahead is complex and there is a considerable amount to achieve to ensure the best outcome for UK passengers and road users beyond March 2019, says the National Audit Office (NAO).

In a report published today, the NAO has assessed how the Department is implementing its plans to support a successful exit from the EU across its 18 EU related work streams, spanning aviation, roads, maritime, vehicles, and rail.

The Department has taken on a significant challenge and has a large portfolio of work that it needs to deliver for EU Exit. The NAO recognises that these are not normal times for the Department or for the government as a whole and acknowledges that the Department has already achieved a great deal in its preparations for EU Exit.

The Department needs to have primary and secondary legislation passed by March 2019. In February 2018, the Department introduced a primary legislation bill to provide powers intended to address a range of scenarios, including contingency planning and cover drivers' rights such as enabling a permit scheme and a trailer registration scheme. This was an important milestone for the Department but it still has to process a large volume of secondary legislation, for which the time available is being compressed.

The Department estimates, along with its arm's-length bodies, that it will spend £180 million on EU exit by March 2022. In 2017-18 the Department spent £3.1 million of the £5.6 million allocated to it by HM Treasury for exit work.

The Department faces continued uncertainty around the outcome of the government's negotiations. The government has advised all departments to continue planning in case negotiations are not agreed and to have fully planned contingencies in place by March 2019. However, in the case of the Department for Transport, the NAO's report has found that these plans are not complete and there is an increasing risk that projects will not be delivered on time¹.

The NAO has recommended that the Department prioritises its plans and rapidly strengthens its capacity to oversee the full range of its activities, including determining whether it has the right people and resources to deliver everything it needs to by March 2019.

Amyas Morse, the head of the NAO, said today:

“These are extraordinary times for the civil service and government. The Department has achieved a great deal in its preparations but over the coming months it will, like many other departments, need to scramble to prepare for the UK’s EU exit, particularly if we are faced with a no deal scenario.”

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Notes for Editors

1. The NAO has conducted fieldwork across the Department. It has also reviewed specific projects which support six of the Department’s work streams in more detail to inform our assessment of the quality and progress of the Department’s delivery plans. These projects were chosen to provide insight across the different directorates working on EU Exit and the different challenges the Department must tackle.
2. The NAO’s report intends to provide information on how the Department is organising itself to support a successful exit from the EU. This involves setting out what the Department has done to prepare for Exit. We have not assessed whether the Department has the capacity to carry out all existing priorities asked of it alongside Exit. We provide an assessment of whether the Department’s progress is sufficient to meet the scale of the challenge. We have not examined the development of negotiating positions as we consider them to be outside the scope of this report, which focuses on implementation.
3. In terms of EU exit, the Department’s objectives are to ensure it is prepared to secure the best possible outcome for transport users and businesses in negotiations, and help establish a separate, distinct international trade policy for transport in preparation for leaving the EU. The Department currently has responsibility for 18 of the 314 work streams supporting the EU Exit across government.
4. Press notices and reports are available from the date of publication on the [NAO website](#). Hard copies can be obtained by using the relevant links on our website.
5. The National Audit Office scrutinises public spending for Parliament and is independent of government. The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), Sir Amyas Morse KCB, is an Officer of the House of Commons and leads the NAO, which employs some 785 people. The C&AG certifies the accounts of all government departments and many other public sector bodies. He has statutory authority to examine and report to Parliament on whether departments and the bodies they fund have used their resources efficiently, effectively, and with economy. Our studies evaluate the value for money of public spending, nationally and locally. Our recommendations and reports on good practice help government improve public services. Our work led to audited savings of £741 million in 2017.

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