

# Fisking the NAO's report on the UK's border preparednes...

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The [National Audit Office](#) has issued a report today on the UK's preparedness for border controls as and when Brexit happens (as I think it will, I am afraid).

Their conclusion (with my comments) is as follows:

*Effective management of the border is critical for the UK after it leaves the EU.*

It's a pity no one told the Leave campaign, in 2016 or those remnants of it that still exist now.

*It is fundamentally important to our national security, economy and international reputation.*

Keep reading, and you'll realise all three are being shredded, right now.

*Leaving the EU will trigger some important changes to how the border is managed, but making such changes is not easy. It requires significant effort and the coordination of large numbers of organisations, many parts of government and millions of border users.*

It's a pity no one told the Leave campaign.

*If the government reaches a withdrawal agreement with the EU, industry and government will have until December 2020 to design and implement any new arrangements.*

That's mighty wishful thinking.

*This could involve significant work, such as the implementation of new customs arrangements, and the time available to meet these challenges is not long compared to many complex government programmes.*

In other words, the NAO think it's nigh on impossible.

*However, the scale of this change will be nowhere near that required if the UK and the EU cannot reach an agreement.*

Someone smiled when they wrote that. And then went outside and did the honourable thing.

*If there is no withdrawal agreement, the government has recognised that the border will be 'less than optimal'.*

No, they didn't: they came back and added that as a footnote.

*We agree with this assessment, and it may take some time for a fully functioning border to be put in place.*

In other words, we'll be a nation-state without a functioning border. Which reduces us to something less than a functioning nation state when you think about it, because one of the identifying characteristics of a nation-state is that it has an identifiable border and we won't have that.

*Individuals and businesses will feel the impact of a sub-optimal border to varying degrees.*

The master of understatement strikes again.

*The government is putting in place coping responses where it can.*

For that read 'but we can't find where'.

*How effective they will be remains to be seen.*

Which in civil service speak is as close to saying that this is going to be a disaster and there is no way around it as anyone dares go.

I should add, I agree with this assessment, barring its optimism, which is significantly over-stated.