

Sajid Javid - the fantasist

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According to [The Evening Standard](#), London' evening paper:

In a letter to Sir Jon [Thompson, Hmrc's boss] Mr Javid said: "HMRC must make no deal preparation their absolute top priority as the UK prepares to exit the European Union on 31st October 2019, with or without a deal."

He said HMRC must deliver "critical internal systems and staffing" to function on October 31, including the 5,000-plus additional staff required to support and handle the increase in businesses making customs declarations.

Mr Javid also said HMRC should work across Whitehall to set up an "ambitious" central helpline to support firms with concerns about Brexit.

He said customs officials must work with counterparts from the Treasury, Home Office, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Border Force to deliver the "necessary changes to customs, tax and welfare arrangements in order to ensure a smooth exit and transition".

In his instructions to Sir Jon, Mr Javid said he expected to receive "weekly delivery-focused updates from HMRC to ensure progress remains on track" in the run-up to October 31.

I could apologise for quoting at length but this is obviously reproduced press release, so I won't.

What I do say are four things. First, there is no organisation on earth that could do this. Expanding by about 10% in staff terms, and making those additional personnel fully functional in that time period, which includes summer holidays, is impossible.

Second, it is a well known fact that HMRC has never delivered a critical system on time. It won't be different now.

Third, the changes required to customs, welfare and tax arrangements will on occasion

require legislation, and Javid must know he has no chance of delivering such changes by 31 October.

So, fourthly, what this proves is that Sajid Javid is a fantasist, living in his Brexit bunker, thinking that writing a letter will solve a problem. It won't. Just a moment's thought on his part would make that obvious.

So why has he done this?

Because he's stupid?

In a pre-emptive attempt to pass the buck?

Because a moment's thought challenges his ability to concentrate too much?

Or simply because he really is a fantasist?

I suspect it is all four.

I wish all the staff at HMRC well in the impossible time that they are facing.