

Enhancing Trade Efficiency:

Revolutionising the CDS MIDVA Service

Introduction:

Redefining UK Trade with a Smarter, More Effective Customs System.

The UK's departure from the EU marked a new era of global trade opportunities. To support businesses navigating these changes, a large central government department turned to Mercator for a modern, scalable, and resilient solution that could streamline customs processes and enhance efficiency.

We partnered with our client to deliver Customs Declaration Service (CDS) Managing Instances of Doubtful VAT Assessments (MIDVA) - a cutting-edge digital platform designed to empower businesses with self-service tools, real-time VAT reconciliation, and seamless customs management.

The impact was immediate and transformative:

Significant reduction in support queries, as users seamlessly navigate self-service tools.

Noticeable decrease in transaction errors, thanks to optimised workflows and automation.

Improved user satisfaction, reflecting a smoother experience for businesses.

Full digital adoption successfully modernising the customs process.

Major improvements in query resolution led to significantly reducing C79 and PVAT queries.

This next-generation customs platform demonstrates how intelligent design and automation can revolutionise even the most complex regulatory services.

The Challenge:

Overcoming Legacy Barriers

For decades, the CHIEF (Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight) processing system served as a trusted foundation for the UK's customs infrastructure. As trade evolved in a post-Brexit world, our client had the opportunity to modernise and create a more efficient, scalable, and user-friendly system - to support businesses and trade flows.

Key areas for enhancement included:

- **Scalability & Efficiency:** A growing volume of customs declarations required a high-performance, digital-first system to streamline processes.
- **Automation & Productivity:** Digitising workflows to eliminate manual processes, reducing administrative burdens for businesses.
- **Enhanced Visibility & Insights:** A modern tracking and reconciliation system to empower traders with real-time financial clarity.
- **Inclusive & Accessible Design:** A new system built for all users, ensuring seamless navigation and accessibility.

With trade efficiency, tax compliance, and business confidence at the forefront, our client embraced the opportunity to create a digital-first solution, one that is faster, smarter, and built for the future of global trade.



Our Approach

Collaborating with our client and their network of partners, we redefined how customs transactions are managed in the UK.

User-Driven Innovation & Research

- We engaged 150+ customs brokers, traders, and financial professionals to fully understand user pain points.
- Focused on inclusive design, our team tested both users with visual impairments and non-native English speakers.
- We conducted in-depth usability testing, task-based scenario mapping, and accessibility assessments.

Result: A system built around real user needs, making customs management easier, faster, and more transparent.

Digital Transformation of VAT & Import Duties

- We developed a self-service platform for payments, transaction retrieval, VAT reconciliation, and account management.
- Enabling businesses to easily download and reconcile over 1,000 cash account transactions per month.
- We integrated real-time transaction tracking, reducing reconciliation time from weeks to minutes.
- Leveraging API-powered automation, we eliminated the need for manual intervention in critical processes.

Result: Simplified VAT processing and immediate access to financial data, a game changer for traders.

Cutting-Edge Technology for Scalability & Security

- Built on our client's platform using a cloud-native architecture for maximum scalability.
- Leveraged Scala, Play Framework, MongoDB, AWS, and DevOps automation for a fast, resilient system.
- Ensured GDPR compliance, full WCAG 2.2 accessibility, and enterprise-grade security with annual penetration tests.

Result: A secure, high-performance service capable of handling future trade complexities.

What This Means for the Future

- **Scalable for future customs innovations:** The system is ready for new integrations, AI-driven insights, and automation enhancements.
- **A model for digital public services:** Demonstrates how government digital transformation can be agile, user-focused, and high-impact.
- **A new era for UK trade:** Businesses now have greater financial visibility, faster transaction processing, and confidence in customs compliance.



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