

Transforming UK Trade:

The Digital Evolution of the Goods Vehicle Movement Service (GVMS)

Introduction:

A Smarter, Faster, and More Efficient Customs Process

The UK's new trading landscape presented a fresh opportunity to reimagine customs processes. To support smooth trade flows and compliance with new regulations, a central government agency turned to Mercator to develop a modern, seamless, and scalable customs solution that would facilitate efficient goods movement at ports.

We partnered with our client to deliver the Goods Vehicle Movement Service (GVMS) a high-performance digital system that simplifies customs declarations, ensures regulatory compliance, and maintains uninterrupted goods flow.

The impact has been significant:

Extremely large volume of Goods Movement References (GMRs) created weekly, streamlining logistics.

Widespread adoption among hauliers and carriers across multiple ports.

Excellent GMR completion rate, making customs clearance faster and more efficient.

Strong user satisfaction score, exceeding industry benchmarks.

Huge value of imports and exports supported, reinforcing economic growth.

GVMS has transformed border trade, creating a smoother, more efficient, and digitally empowered customs experience.

The Opportunity:

Creating a Future-Ready Border System

The UK's evolving trade landscape presented an opportunity to enhance customs processes with a smart, adaptable, and technology-driven system that would:

- **Streamline trade flows** by ensuring the seamless movement of goods while maintaining full compliance.
- **Enhance efficiency** at high-traffic ports with a **digitally optimised customs process**.
- **Empower hauliers** with a **simplified, user-friendly approach** to customs declarations.
- **Provide real-time visibility and tracking**, reducing administrative effort and improving decision-making.

Through digital innovation and automation, GVMS has transformed customs management, enabling businesses to trade faster, smarter, and with greater confidence.



Our Approach

We focused on user needs, automation, and seamless integration to create a powerful, intuitive, and scalable customs service.

User-Centric Innovation & Research

- Our team conducted 198 user interviews, site visits and usability testing with hauliers, port operators, and border force officials.
- We identified key pain points and optimisation opportunities to improve trade efficiency.
- Our design of a frictionless customs experience reduced manual processes and increased compliance.

Result: A system built for real-world trade, ensuring ease of use and high adoption rates.

A Digital-First Approach to Customs Management

- Developed a streamlined system that consolidates multiple declarations into a single Goods Movement Reference, reducing processing times.
- Integrated GVMS with our client's existing platforms (CDS, CHIEF, NCTS) for real-time data synchronisation.
- Implemented automated compliance checks, making trade faster and more predictable.

Result: A more efficient border process that keeps goods moving without delays or unnecessary paperwork.

Scalable, Secure and High-Performance Technology

- Built on AWS and our client's platform, ensuring high availability and scalability.
- Leveraged Scala, Play Framework, Java, and API-driven architecture for real-time data processing.
- Adopted agile methodologies, ensuring rapid adaptation to regulatory updates.
- Maintained strict security and compliance standards, including external penetration testing and structured code reviews.

Result: A resilient, future-proof customs platform capable of handling increasing trade volumes.

What This Means for the Future

- **Expanding to more ports:** The system is designed for scalability, supporting potential integration with international customs frameworks.
- **Advanced data-driven customs processing:** Laying the groundwork for automated compliance checks, predictive analytics, and AI-driven customs optimisation.
- **A model for global trade facilitation:** Showcasing how technology, automation, and user-centric design can simplify complex customs procedures.



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