
British Ports comments on the UK's EU exit proposal

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The British Ports Association has warned that it could be some time before we know for sure what the final arrangements will mean for ports.

Highlighting the ongoing uncertainty in relation to potential future cross-border processes the British Ports Association Chief Executive, Richard Ballantyne said: “We welcome the indications coming from the negotiators and look forward to reviewing the detail of the draft text. We are hopeful that the agreement will include some kind of lasting solution which would rule out the need to introduce new customs and border checks for UK-EU trade.

However, despite the apparent progress, there could be some way to go before ports and freight operators will know exactly what trading environment will be. The political situation being as such means that there are still several stages that the proposals will need to pass through. This means hauliers and freight operators using the UK's network of ‘Roll-on Roll-off’ ports such as Dover, Holyhead, Immingham and Portsmouth will continue to be unsure what the post-Brexit border processes will look like.”

Notwithstanding the impact on the economy, the prospect of leaving the EU could be relatively non eventful for ports handling bulk loads or containers, where exiting processes and systems should be easier to adapt. However accommodating new customs and regulatory controls at both UK and EU Roll-on Roll-off ports could be much more challenging. Such ports collectively handle tens of thousands of both driver accompanied and unaccompanied HGV vehicles and trailers travelling between the UK and the EU each day.

This is more than half of the UK's trade with Europe and has been estimated to be 40% of the value UK's total maritime trade. The potential for new time consuming and costly processes for freight operators using this sector and remains a daunting prospect.

Regarding other regulatory issues the UK ports industry is looking at how Brexit may enable some flexibility and benefits. Mr Ballantyne added: “Aside from the implications on new border and frontier processes, we are also keen to establish what

the agreement will mean in terms of the regulatory environment under which ports operate. Depending upon what a final deal might look like there could be opportunities for the Government to review certain rules stemming from the EU such as the Ports Services Regulation and create a planning and consenting regime which is more conducive to port development, activities and trade”.