



BPA Briefing # 4

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Brexit

We are continuing discussions with various parts of Government on how Brexit may impact on UK ports and have held meetings both at ministerial and official level.

Recently we met the Minister of State at DExEU, David Jones MP and next month we are meeting Mike Russell MSP, the new Scottish Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe.

We have been highlighting the potential operational challenges some ports could face post Brexit with increased customs and border checks on freight and passengers. Efficient processing of cargo is a key component of a successful ports and logistics sector and this could be the ideal time for the Westminster and devolved governments to prioritise and develop new freight facilitation strategies. Similarly, we have been encouraging UK policy makers to prioritise major infrastructure developments and port connectivity schemes to help stimulate economic growth and facilitate trade.

There are also further opportunities to review existing EU regulations and red tape to help the UK ports industry improve its competitiveness and we look forward to working with the Government to ensure that ports and trade facilitation considerations are part of the post-Brexit settlement.

Marine designations and impact on ports

Around the UK there are a number of new proposed marine designations which can often have a number of unintended consequences for ports. While we welcome marine protection initiatives, we are aware that some of the current and future proposed Marine Conservation Zones, Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation can prevent ports from developing their business.

We have held constructive discussions with marine planners across the UK but still have a number of concerns. The designations often require developers in close proximity to undertake costly assessments and monitoring, adding delays and uncertainty to projects. Existing statutory port activities such as maintenance dredging can also be subject to such assessments. We feel strongly that such designations should not overlap statutory port limits and we are encouraging policy makers to ensure that existing and future sites take ports into account.

Recently we have raised concerns over the potential new requirements which could be placed on a number of ports around the UK by designating large marine areas as SPAs with stem from the EU Wild Birds Directive, particularly on the northern and east coasts of Scotland. In a recent consultation we highlighted the potential impacts and unrealistic assumptions made in the impact assessments and are seeking assurances that such sites will not disrupt existing and future port activity.

Annual port freight statistics

The Government have recently released their annual port freight statistics which showed an overall stabilisation of port tonnages last year. 95% of UK imports and exports are handled by our ports and last year UK ports collectively handled just under 500m tonnes of freight, with 63% of this cargo imported into the country.

Levels of unitised cargo such as containers and roll-on roll-off units handled at UK ports increased by 4 per cent, with 23.6 million units coming into and out of UK. Overall dry bulk traffic was down slightly, largely as a result of reduced demand for coal and ores, changes in steel production, and lower dependency on food imports. More details are [available here](#).
