

Brexit trade deal must not damage Welsh ports – Ken Skates

The latest figures show Welsh port share of overall UK freight traffic was 53.6 million tonnes, around 11% of the UK total.

524,000 lorries and trailers travelling to and from the Republic of Ireland passed through Welsh ports in 2016, with the vast majority passing through the Port of Holyhead.

This activity plays a crucial role in the Welsh economy, with the Welsh Ports Group estimating around 11,000 direct and indirect jobs were connected to Welsh ports.

The Welsh Government wants any Brexit deal between the UK and the EU not to disrupt this trade and include full access to the European Single Market and membership of a customs union to protect the Welsh economy.

Ken Skates said:

“Welsh ports play a significant role in the commercial life of Wales and the wider UK economy, acting as a gateway to economic hubs in the Republic of Ireland, the UK, the rest of Europe and the wider world.

“They support thousands of jobs and this must not be threatened by a Brexit. Any deal between the UK and the EU must preserve the efficient movement of goods and people that are, as a minimum, no more burdensome than the current Customs Union regime.

“Any changes to customs rules which add to costs, time, inconvenience and regulation could have an impact on the economy of Wales. 80% of goods carried in Irish registered HGVs between the Republic and Europe pass through Welsh ports. The UK Government must be transparent on how it plans to maintain a frictionless ‘soft border’ between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The Welsh Government will not accept any outcome which has the potential to stimulate traffic away from the ports of Holyhead, Fishguard and Pembroke Dock in favour of another part of the UK.”

The Welsh Government’s Brexit trade paper outlines how the Welsh economy is best protected by retaining full access to the European Single Market and membership of a customs union. The EU is Wales’ biggest market, with 60% of identifiable Welsh goods exports going to the EU in 2017, worth £16.4 billion.