

Business and Trade Committee

Oral evidence: UK trade with the US, India and EU, HC 996

Tuesday 13 January 2026

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Members present: Liam Byrne (Chair); Dan Aldridge; Antonia Bance; John Cooper; Sarah Edwards; Alison Griffiths; Sonia Kumar; Justin Madders; Charlie Maynard; Mr Joshua Reynolds.

Questions 157 - 195

Witnesses

- Alastair Gunn, Trade Policy Lead, Road Haulage Association;
- Toby Ovens, Managing Director, Broughton Transport;
- Julian Walker, Chief Commercial Officer and Regional Director, Associated British Ports.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Alastair Gunn, Toby Ovens and Julian Walker.

Q157 **Chair:** Welcome to today's session of the Business and Trade Committee as we commence our work on the EU reset and the publication a bit later on this year of our first stock-take report. Thank you very much indeed to our witnesses for coming in. Do you want to introduce yourselves? Give us one line of introduction, just for the record.

Alastair Gunn: I am Alastair Gunn. I am trade policy lead at the Road Haulage Association.

Julian Walker: I am Julian Walker, the chief commercial officer at Associated British Ports.

Toby Ovens: I am Toby Ovens. I am managing director of Broughton Transport.

Q158 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed for joining us. Alastair, let me start with you. Do you think that Brexit has actually delivered what people were promised? When we are looking at the numbers, we see an economy that looks like it is 8% smaller as a result. We have an investment rate that is a bit lower. We have a goods trade that is down 18% on five years ago, food and drink is down 24%, and 16,500 firms have stopped trading altogether with Europe. It looks like our traders are filling in about a million forms every nine days, and the paperwork costs appear to be costing traders about £8.5 billion a year. All of that sounds like it has made trade an awful lot harder, but what is the feedback from your members?

Alastair Gunn: Thank you for inviting us and inviting along one of our members, Toby, who will be able to speak to this as well. I would certainly agree with the point about the cost for hauliers and the difficulties in moving goods that we have experienced, certainly post the trade and co-operation agreement coming in. There are huge delays at borders, which cause significant costs not just for hauliers but for all those traders who are our customers, who we are there to serve. We move across the UK 82% of goods, so we serve pretty much every sector within the UK. Yes, certainly our members are now finding it extremely difficult to move goods into and out of the European Union. We serve the European economy too.

Q159 **Chair:** Toby, could you help us understand what this looks like in practice for your staff? Alastair says, in his language, that there are huge delays. It would be interesting to see whether you agree with that. What does it mean in practice? Describe a journey that goes smoothly and a journey that does not.

Toby Ovens: Before Brexit, there were no controls. It was literally a case of, "We board the channel tunnel, we get off the channel tunnel, and we go." Now, at the loading point there are frequent delays waiting for vets



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or for paperwork to be done, completed and stamped. This is then sent to the border for approval. The abattoirs—they are our main business—wait for approval to come back saying that the paperwork is in order. The vehicle is then released and we proceed to Eurotunnel or Dover.

When we get off the ferry or the channel tunnel, we have to go to a border control post called SIVEP in France. The delay could be two hours on a good day. Our worst experience was a matter of 27 days. That was the worst.

Q160 **Chair:** Twenty-seven days?

Toby Ovens: Yes. We left the trailer in the border post and were changing drivers and bringing drivers back.

Q161 **Chair:** Just describe that. You have a truck that is parked up in a customs post and you are literally having to ferry—

Toby Ovens: We had to ferry drivers to babysit the trailer, in essence, to make sure the trailer did not run out of fuel and the goods were kept chilled.

Q162 **Chair:** You did that for almost a month.

Toby Ovens: Yes.

Q163 **Chair:** What were they transporting?

Toby Ovens: That was a load of meat. Luckily, it was a load of frozen meat, not fresh meat, so obviously the dates were not too much of an issue. If it was fresh meat, it would have been an issue. All that was down to a paperwork error, which nobody goes out of their way to do. It was not a very good time. We are charging our customer for that driver and trailer to be sat there. The invoice totalled just over £16,000 to the customer for the vehicle to be sat there for the best part of a month.

Q164 **John Cooper:** I had an example of this in my constituency with a haulier that was taking lamb carcasses to France.

Toby Ovens: M&M Kerr.

Q165 **John Cooper:** Correct. They experienced difficulties. They were clear that their paperwork was in order, but they felt that it was bloody-mindedness on the other side of the EU. In your experience, does that go on?

Toby Ovens: Yes.

Q166 **John Cooper:** There was an issue with a patch of wool on one of the carcasses and the whole thing came to a halt. Again, there was a lengthy delay of the kind that you are talking about. Mistakes can happen in any walk of life. Some of it is on our side, but you think there is an issue on the other side as well.



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Toby Owens: Yes. We have had instances where customers, when they have questioned a decision from a border control post, have almost been told, "Back off or it could be worse." The majority of the issues—I would say probably 99%—are paperwork issues, not problems with the meat or whatever else it may be.

I would like to give you some idea of these paperwork issues. This was what we needed before Brexit. It is one piece of paper. This is what we needed for a trailer that is leaving the UK today. You can see the stamps. We only have to have a stamp in the wrong place or without a signature next to it, or a line not crossed through properly on one form, and that trailer will be rejected in Calais and returned to the UK.

Q167 **Chair:** How many stamps are on that pile of paper?

Toby Owens: There are 26 on that one. That is just one. There are three certificates for that trailer. You only need one mistake. I have had vets chasing lorries down the M4 because they have suddenly realised that they have not put a stamp in the right place on a piece of paper.

Chair: Good grief!

Toby Owens: If the vehicle makes it to Calais, once it is across the border, we then have to return it to the UK, which means applying to the APHA for permission to return the trailer to the UK, which can sometimes take up to two weeks. That was one of the issues for Mikey Kerr.

John Cooper: That was what M&M Kerr experienced. Its vehicle was in France and it had to come back. It had a delay on the British side.

Q168 **Chair:** How are you still in business?

Toby Owens: I have lost a lot of hair over the last few years. It is a real challenge. It is nothing like it used to be. I would go as far as describing December, which is our busiest month of the year, as pure hell, with problems with paperwork and trailers being delayed. We had the issue with Mikey Kerr, who I get on very well with. There are not many of us that do the job. Lots of people have pulled out of the international meat transport side of things. If I was a bit older, I would have to think about it seriously, given the challenges that we face.

Chair: We would forgive you for that decision.

Q169 **Alison Griffiths:** You have identified already some of the main costs and frustrations, but I wanted to go to Julian Walker at Associated British Ports to ask about that from a ports perspective. I also wanted to ask all of you about SPS. Does a lot of the frustration sit in that area, or does it cover everything?

Julian Walker: Just to give context, ABP runs 21 ports around the UK. The key entry point to and from the EU is through the Humber. Dover is not one of our ports, so I cannot comment on that.



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Initially, immediately post Brexit, there was a period of time when there was a lack of clarity as to what was going to be the operating model, and the need to have the infrastructure put in place was pretty disruptive.

Q170 **Chair:** Can you just elaborate on what that means?

Julian Walker: It was about understanding what infrastructure was required around the border control posts in particular. There was a period of time when the Government were running an exercise where they were providing some grant funding that we had to apply for. We did not know exactly what level of inspections were going to happen. It is still not entirely clear as we move forward.

Across ABP, we had to put in four new border control posts, including in Plymouth and up on the Humber. There was one in Southampton, which is operated by DP World, which does container terminals and most of the rest-of-world stuff. There was also one in Hull and one in Immingham. Investment-wise, we had to spend about £45 million building these very bespoke buildings. They need to be designed for food grade, for deep frozen, for chilled and so on, so they are not great for other uses. We were supported with Government funding just north of £30 million for that, but it was a competitive process. I think the overall request from ports was north of £300 million, with £200 million coming from Government. The ports have an interesting story to tell there.

The infrastructure was built. We had to go out and recruit all the people to operate these facilities. We are now in a pretty good place. It is pretty stable, but there is variability, whether it is APHA, Border Force or customs doing the inspections. We see peaks and troughs in that, but the big thing is that we have stability now.

From a port perspective, incoming traffic has an average turnaround time of about an hour when APHA do an inspection. That is doing a strip and then a reload. It is pretty stable. There will be cases where it takes longer due to a paperwork issue or poorly packed cargo, but we put a huge amount of effort into providing a service to the haulage industry, because they are our indirect customers.

Q171 **Chair:** Did you just absorb that £15 million net cost as charity to the nation, or did you have to put your prices up a bit?

Julian Walker: At the moment we charge for every piece of cargo that goes through. We apply £12.71 for every trailer going through, to recover both the opex and the capex costs.

Q172 **Chair:** Did you have to put it up by that, or is that the margin?

Julian Walker: We had to put that charge in place. It was not in place before.

Chair: An extra £12.

Julian Walker: Yes, exactly, for each unit.



Q173 **Alison Griffiths:** Over what time period are you looking to recover that? That is a relatively nominal cost. That looks like a pretty long-term recovery.

Julian Walker: It will continue, in part because there is the opex cost and the increase in labour costs that is associated with that. You also have the maintenance on the facilities, which goes up as they get older.

There was a big debate among the port industry about how you manage this in terms of splitting trailers out. If they are going through an APHA inspection, they could be stripped entirely. If you were trying to recover all the costs associated with both the capex and the opex for just those trailers that were stripped out, it just would not work, because it would be thousands of pounds per trailer. As ABP, we elected to put a standard and relatively nominal charge in across the industry.

At the moment, we are in a pretty good place. It is pretty stable—I spoke to the team yesterday—but the big question is what happens with SPS. If it comes in in 2027, it could create further challenges, because there would be a significant uptick in the number of inspections that would be required.

There is also the single trade window. I think everybody in both the haulage industry and the port industry would like to see minimal paperwork and a single platform for interfacing with the EU. The critical thing is that it needs to be consistent with what each of the countries within the EU wants, so that you are doing it once.

From a port perspective, we have not seen a significant downturn in volume, certainly through the Humber. What we have seen is a change from accompanied to unaccompanied. There has been a decline in the number of accompanied trailers going through the port, but that has been offset by an increase in unaccompanied.

Q174 **Alison Griffiths:** When you say “accompanied”, you are talking about different organisations that are now coming in to trade.

Julian Walker: They are accompanied. That means you literally have a driver with the unit, as opposed to just a trailer that is taken on to a ship using a tug and then taken off. It is a different model. If you look at the DfT stats for Dover, they have seen a significant decrease in the number of accompanied going through.

Q175 **Chair:** Where do these extra costs that you have had to charge end up? Do they basically end up on consumers?

Julian Walker: Ultimately, yes. We are charging the importer, so it will ultimately feed through to the consumer.

Q176 **Chair:** Mr Gunn, have you shared all the principal frustrations that now bedevil your members?



Alastair Gunn: The principal frustration in moving goods to mainland Europe would certainly be around delays and paperwork. We have a specific concern around the introduction of the Entry/Exit System and the capacity constraints that it will put on our sector.

You asked the question earlier to Toby, "How are you still in business?" The sad reality is that, in the last few years, a lot of haulage firms have gone out of business. We have seen insolvencies comparable to the levels of the 2008 financial crisis. In 2024, margins were down to about 1.5% or 1.6% from about 2%. We are a low-margin sector. We are competitive and seek to be competitive to keep costs down for our customers.

The challenge with SPS is that if it does do what it is supposed to do, which is to make it easier for goods to move, in theory, to the European market, you will need a road haulage sector in good health that is able to grow to meet that. We see additional restrictions, particularly on UK drivers being able to come in and do that work in the context of our sector getting smaller as a result of the economic pressures and burdens that we are discussing today.

Q177 **Dan Aldridge:** Thank you for coming. The British Chamber of Commerce found that, overall, about 54% of UK exporters were dissatisfied with the trade and co-operation agreement, and 73% felt that they had little or no support in managing ongoing changes in the UK's trade policy. To what extent has the reset helped address any of the issues that UK traders now face? Is there anything coming along that feels tangibly different?

Julian Walker: From a port perspective, no. We have not seen any material change.

Q178 **Dan Aldridge:** Do you expect to see any material change from what you have seen?

Julian Walker: No. This is probably for the second session, where you will be talking about the ETS and further opportunities to have consistency with the EU in terms of regulatory systems. That will be really important.

Alastair Gunn: My response to that, Mr Aldridge, is that we are not the traders; we are the logistics providers. We are the service that gets those goods to move. It may work for traders, but it also needs to work for us. There is not that much in the reset that is focused on the challenges for logistics.

Obviously, we welcome the reset aspiration. We welcome the progress on SPS. That could create more work for our members and make it a lot easier for Toby to run a competitive and profitable business, but we also need to see both the European Commission and the UK Government understand that there are frictions borne, particularly within the logistics sector, and costs, some of which we do, where we can, pass on to our customers and some of which are simply absorbed by lower margins.



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Q179 **Dan Aldridge:** Do you recognise the criticism of support? Seventy-three per cent of exporters feel that they do not have any support to manage these changes. Is that something that you would recognise from a logistics perspective as well?

Alastair Gunn: We would do. There are glimmers of light, specifically in the context of moving goods into Northern Ireland. There has been some good progress in terms of the Murphy review and the recommendations from that being agreed and accepted by the Government, such as the move to a one-stop shop and more funding for Intertrade UK. That is quite specific to moving goods from Great Britain into Northern Ireland. There is a head of steam up, hopefully, on revisiting some of that.

That does not speak to the difficulties in moving goods into mainland Europe. I do not know whether Toby would want to add to any of those points, since that is his business.

Toby Ovens: As a haulier, I have daily conversations with my customers, who are all exporting through the SPS channels. It was fantastic to hear an announcement. When we heard the announcement, it was like, "How long is this going to take?" For us, that will be the light at the end of the tunnel, if we get a date.

It is about simple things, like making health certificates. The French could accept an email with a stamp from a vet saying, "I have made a mistake. Here is a letter correcting the mistake. You can release the truck", rather than turning the truck around in Calais, bringing it back to the abattoir to get the new certification done and then sending the truck back. We are all trying to cut our emissions. Sending lorries all the way across the country for a stamp on a piece of paper just does not make sense. Any positive steps that we can take with the SPS agreement would be welcome.

Q180 **Chair:** We are eight months into this so-called reset, and it does not sound like you have been overwhelmed with progress.

Toby Ovens: As hauliers, we have seen no benefit from it.

Q181 **Mr Reynolds:** Alastair, do you believe that any of your members have received any Brexit benefits at all?

Alastair Gunn: That is a difficult question to answer—I have not asked them all. The evidence is clear that goods movements are down. Our sector thrives on moving goods, and we need to see a consistent uptick in goods. But I should have prefaced that by saying that, for roll-on, roll-off accompanied movements, the trend has been downward for about 25 years. There are deeper issues than the 2016 vote and the terms of the TCA. We would hope that the reset or other initiatives can turn that around, but there is a longer-term decline within our sector that we need to get to the bottom of. The answer to your question is probably no.

Q182 **Mr Reynolds:** You spoke about a long-term decline. Have Brexit and the



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issues around paperwork that have been caused as a result exacerbated that long-term decline or sped it up?

Alastair Gunn: It is quite clear that the volume of goods moving between the UK and Europe has fallen considerably since 2019, initially as a result of the Covid restrictions and then the trade and co-operation agreement. There has been no sustained increase in that subsequently. There have been years where things have got better, followed by difficult years.

It has become harder and harder for the sector. Whether you are doing international work, going into Europe, getting goods to the ports for container work or doing domestic haulage, it is a tough time for the sector. It would be wonderful to be able to turn around and say that there was an upward turn ahead of us. At the moment, it is not clear what that is. We would hope that the reset can deliver that.

Q183 **Chair:** I am slightly concerned about the joint statement that came out of the May 2025 summit, because it talked about “mutual commitment to free, sustainable, fair and open trade”. There was not any specific reference to customs easements, even though that is allowed for in the TCA. Given that these reforms are perfectly possible, and given the costs that you have just described, why is the Government not going hell for leather to try to get these customs easements in place?

Alastair Gunn: That is a question that you would have to put to the Government. I cannot answer that question.

Q184 **Chair:** Presumably you are knocking on their door all the time saying, “Come on. Where are the customs easements, people?”

Alastair Gunn: We are knocking on the door any way that we can, including through your Committee, for which we are grateful. We are getting fantastic support on some of these issues from the Department for Transport. I should say that we are now getting good engagement on the Northern Ireland piece through the Cabinet Office and HMRC. I am not entirely sure that we have had much progress in terms of some other Departments being able to get this to the top of the ministerial in-tray.

Q185 **Chair:** I am sorry to do this to you, but which of the Departments have put this in the slow lane and which in the less slow lane? You have highlighted DfT as a Department that is helping you.

Alastair Gunn: We have a superb relationship with DfT, but we perhaps sometimes get seen as a DfT stakeholder, when we are also representing a critical arm of not just the logistics sector but all parts of UK plc. Our engagement into the Home Office and the Cabinet Office is improving. I would be interested to know the last time that someone from the RHA sat down with someone from DBT. I cannot answer that question. If they wanted to invite us in, I am sure we would accept the invitation.

Q186 **Chair:** Mr Walker, is your diary full of meetings with Ministers asking for



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your help in getting customs easements in place?

Julian Walker: It is, and the engagement is in many areas. Obviously, the port industry is more than just trade with the EU. Proportionally, significantly more trade comes from the rest of the world than through the EU. It is about consistency. Frictionless trade is what we want to see. That is very much the message we give in respect of the interface into the EU.

Q187 **John Cooper:** Mr Gunn, you mentioned Northern Ireland. There are huge complexities there because of that land border with the EU. The Committee actually went over to Belfast. We had a look at some of the physical infrastructure on the ground and got a sense of how difficult it is. I just wonder about your take on the situation in Northern Ireland. What areas have been particularly problematic? Cairnryan, the ferry port, is in my constituency of Dumfries and Galloway. I hear a lot about difficulties with the just-in-time supply chain, particularly around fresh food.

Alastair Gunn: I will give you a case study. We were very kindly hosted in Parliament by Lord Murphy last month. We brought along a British business, which I think is based in the south-east. At that very moment, they had had to make the decision that one of their lorries in Cairnryan would have to be turned back because of an issue with the country-of-origin status of a steel product that they were not able to resolve. That is a business sending a product all the way from southern England up to your constituency to get into Northern Ireland, finding a border friction that was nothing to do with customs and having to make the decision to send that all the way back to sort out the problem. One can only imagine the cost to that haulier and to the business that they were seeking to serve.

I have visited hauliers in Northern Ireland. One of them estimated—we did a bit of a back-of-an-envelope calculation—that they had £75,000-worth of costs just on driver time from the delays that they get with goods being pulled. These are goods that are not going into the Republic of Ireland. These are goods that should not be at risk; they should be green-laned within the UK internal market system.

On top of that, they have also had to hire two people to deal with the customs paperwork and so forth. For that modestly sized haulier, the costs of doing business have gone up into six figures. That is in the context of the Windsor framework being in place. Import Control System 2 became mandatory earlier this month, reversing some of the progress that they saw from the Windsor framework on easing some of the data requirements. It is very complicated, very costly and going in the wrong direction.

Q188 **John Cooper:** Mr Walker, would you recognise that picture?

Julian Walker: I am afraid I am going to say that I cannot really comment. We do not have any ports that interface into Northern Ireland per se.



Q189 **John Cooper:** Mr Ovens, do you export to Northern Ireland?

Toby Ovens: We do not export a huge amount to Northern Ireland but, paperwork-wise, we find it easier to route the vehicles through Dublin and then cross the border than to use the Northern Irish ports.

Q190 **John Cooper:** So you are literally driving around the problem.

Back to you, Mr Gunn. You mentioned Lord Murphy. His recommendations about what we can do about the Windsor framework have been accepted in full by the Government. That was only in September. How are things moving? You said that things were going in the wrong direction. Are you not impressed by what is changing?

Alastair Gunn: The Government accepted the Murphy report on 22 December. I know that because it coincided with our team Christmas lunch, but I was distracted from it. That was quite recent. As ever with these things, you judge what is delivered.

We wanted to see more from the Government on some of the specifics. We have been putting forward ideas, such as having a trusted haulier scheme to match the trusted trader scheme that you have for retail, but we have not seen any acknowledgement that that would be a possible solution. If it is not, we welcome the engagement to get into the detail and see whether it is viable.

As an organisation, we want to see the determination of risk move to the point of sale, rather than dealing with all these things at the border. We also need to see some of these complexities dealt with. Toby is not the only haulier who will tell you that it is easier to move goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland via Dublin. It is not a universal view, but the people who are doing that find it easier. It is strange—whatever one's position is on the constitutional question—that to go from the UK to the UK, it is best to go through an EU country. In the context of how difficult it is to move goods into the European Union, that is still easier. That suggests that quite a radical solution is required.

John Cooper: That is quite remarkable, isn't it?

Sarah Edwards: With your permission, Chair, I would like to revisit something that was just mentioned.

Chair: Yes, though time is slightly against us.

Q191 **Sarah Edwards:** Alastair, I just wanted to come back to a point that you made. You represent road haulage firms across the whole of the United Kingdom, and they are responsible for moving goods across this country—import and export. You are saying that you have never had a conversation, in your memory, with the Department for Business and Trade, which has regional teams that operate advice and support. Have you not been invited to meet them? I am just a bit concerned that they are not engaging with you on this quite serious issue.



Chair: “Trade” is in its name. We are just a bit concerned about that.

Alastair Gunn: I should probably clarify that my role is new. It is to reflect the complexities that the haulage sector is facing in trade. I have been in post for a small number of months. There is a need for us to up our game and our engagement, but we have found some doors more open than others.

Let me go back and give credit to where we have seen that. The Cabinet Office has ownership of the reset and have ownership, to some extent, of the Windsor framework. For example, we are now in the Northern Ireland Business Stakeholders Group, which we were not in previously. There is a growing understanding across Government of the importance of logistics, and of road haulage in particular. I am sure someone from the RHA has met with the Department. It has not happened in my time yet, and I hope it happens soon.

Q192 **Sarah Edwards:** Thank you for clarifying. We are all quite interested in how we can move this situation into something that might hopefully work, because it is not sounding like it works. Toby, you have just described 26 red stamps all over your paperwork. That seems distinctly analogue. We should be moving, I would have hoped, to a digital world. Are there some things that we could be moving towards that you would welcome or that you have heard about? What is that timeframe looking like? Alastair, I will start with you because you might have some thoughts, and then I will go to Julian and Toby for your thoughts as well.

Alastair Gunn: Digitisation is potentially transformative, but only in potential terms. Sometimes the costs of digitisation can get in the way as well. I know we have concerns from some of our membership in Northern Ireland—who are not hugely concerned about the Windsor framework per se—who use the trader support service. That has now moved from Fujitsu to a new consortium of providers. They have some pretty exciting aspirations in this space, which is great, but our members are worried about what the costs of transferring over all their APIs are going to be. There is great potential, but it does need to work throughout the system.

I will defer to Toby. In theory, the export health certificate has gone digital, hasn't it? Are you now doing trade in a more digital fashion as a result?

Toby Owens: No. To be fair, there is more paper than ever. There just seems to be no real consistency. For instance, the BSE regulations in the UK were changed just before Christmas, so vets in the UK were told to raise certificates in a certain way moving forward, which they did. Vehicles then started arriving in Calais and the French announced that they had been instructed to look at it in a different way, which made every health certificate in every vehicle that was heading for Calais null and void. We very quickly built up a large number of vehicles parked in Calais and not achieving a huge amount. We stopped a lorry in Chippenham, and a vet went and met the vehicle with a wad of health



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certificates. We took those to all the lorries in Calais, and then they then were released.

Q193 **Chair:** Forgive me for asking this. Is this just the French being difficult?

Toby Ovens: One of my major criticisms is that we cannot import meat directly into Spain. There are ferry services from the UK direct to Spain, but all the meat that we export to the EU has to go via France for the checks.

Just before Christmas, we sent 20 lorryloads of lamb to Portugal. All of those had to go through Caen or St Malo, the ports in the north of France, and then drive all the way down. Before Brexit came along, we would have driven to Portsmouth, jumped on a ferry and jumped off in Santander, with the driver having a nice cruise along the way. There is now so much red tape and legislation involved that it is just not realistic to send the lorries into Spain, because we cannot clear the borders.

There is no consistency across the EU with regard to the checks. We would sail lorries into Holland. For instance, we load beef out of an abattoir in Aberdeen two or three times a week. To go into Holland, the logical step would be to go to Killingholme and sail into Rotterdam, but we have to go via Calais because there are not the checking facilities in Rotterdam to be able to do it. The road miles, the driver fatigue and the emissions are all through the roof. It is just one massive step backwards.

Q194 **Sarah Edwards:** Julian, are there any solutions in other countries? Switzerland has a slightly different method. That is something that we could look at adopting, with some tweaks. What is your experience? Is there light at the end of the tunnel? Is there something that you would like to copy?

Julian Walker: From an ABP perspective, the key thing for us is making sure that we have a consistent process going forward and that we do not have changes coming through too often. When things are implemented—whether it is the single trade window or the SPS coming through—they need to work. Otherwise, you get blockages and the inefficiencies kick in.

I am not an expert on other interfaces, but I lived in Switzerland for a period of time. It was very efficient going through the border at Geneva. There were checks happening, but the vast majority of trucks were driving straight through. A small number of vehicles were checked; it was probably 1%, 2% or 3%.

Q195 **Sarah Edwards:** It was targeted, rather than a blanket approach of checking everything.

Julian Walker: Exactly.

Sarah Edwards: That is very helpful.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed for painting that alarming picture, and for your views on how we might improve the situation. That has set



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the stage very nicely for the next couple of panels.