



Department for Business & Trade

The Rt Hon Jonathan Reynolds MP
Secretary of State for Business & Trade
President of the Board of Trade
Department for Business and Trade
Old Admiralty Building
Admiralty Place
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2DY

Ruth Jones MP
Chair, Welsh Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

T: +44 (0) 020 4551 0011

E: Reynolds.Correspondence@businessandtrade.gov.uk

W: www.gov.uk/dbt

8 January 2025

Dear Ruth,

Closure of the Port of Holyhead

Thank you for your letter of 18 December concerning the Port of Holyhead and its closure as a result of the damage inflicted by Storm Darragh at the beginning of last month. I know this has been a challenging time for people and businesses across north Wales and I assure you this Government has been working with our friends in the Welsh and Irish Government's to limit the impact as much as possible. Although this is rightly a matter for the Welsh Government, with whom the UK Government is in constant contact, this concerns all of us across the Irish Sea. Ireland is our sixth largest trading partner with over 60% of bilateral goods going through the port and there have been effects felt in both countries. This is particularly the case for some in the hospitality and logistics sectors on Ynys Môn island. Therefore the statement in the Senedd on 7 January by the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales is welcome, as is the portal allowing businesses to register their concerns on the Ynys Môn council website.

I am pleased that so far there has been a widespread and effective response to this event by the Welsh Government, Department for Transport, ports, shipping lines, and the Irish Government. This has involved multiple actors taking steps such as acceding to Irish requests to modify drivers' hours and to establish alternative port routes. For example, Port operators, Stena and Irish Ferries put in place contingencies to divert freight to Fishguard in Pembrokeshire and Birkenhead Merseyside with additional freight routes to Heysham which ensured that 350,000 parcels arrived in the Republic in time for Christmas. Furthermore evidence suggests that for the period until 27 December there was sufficient freight capacity on crossings to the UK.

The main focus now is on ensuring that the port, on which so many rely for transportation, trade and employment can be quickly, and safely, brought back on line. It appears that due to the effective work of the agencies, both Governments, the freight businesses and ports the level of backlog of freight is relatively limited. It also appears that the port operators expect it will likely partly reopen in mid January which will limit as far as possible the impact of closure. Welsh Government officials met with port operator Stena on 6 January to discuss updates for reopening and I understand that they expect that they can accommodate both operators being able to provide a full service of four ferries per day on one berth.

I recognise that this will have been a challenging time for the people of Ynys Môn, and that they have been impacted adversely over a difficult few weeks by the storm and resulting damage. My Department and this Government will continue to assess the effect on businesses and livelihoods in the area. I believe though that there is room for optimism and that services on the Holyhead routes will resume soon. The Government will remain engaged with all parties and monitor developments until the port is fully restored to operations.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jonathan Reynolds". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and 'R'.

THE RT HON JONATHAN REYNOLDS MP

Secretary of State for Business & Trade and President of the Board of Trade