

Larne Port – Written evidence (NIP0003)

The UK Government published its proposals for implementing the Northern Ireland Protocol on 21st May 2020. During that time our business has been and continues to be focussed on dealing with the impact of COVID-19 on commercial operations.

P&O Ferries and Larne Harbour Ltd welcome the proportionate approach being advocated by Protocol. In particular, we welcome proposals that existing facilities for agri-food goods in Larne will be adapted. Larne Port is already designated for livestock movements and the current process and facilities work well. We do not foresee any traffic flow issues if there are no significant changes to current practices.

On 29th May 2020, Leigh Bura and I met the NI Civil Service team charged by the Assembly to deliver Protocol compliance and unfettered access for goods to Northern Ireland without impact on port operations.

The meeting was cordial, productive and builds on the excellent co-operation we have enjoyed with the UK Government in London whilst working to reach a solution to deliver free flowing trade following the vote to leave the European Union. The work we discussed is timetabled to complete a detailed definition of requirements by the end of June.

On 4th June, a meeting took place on site at Larne Port between me and the Civil Service team during which a full tour took place on foot taking in the space and facilities available both in and outside the port boundary.

To provide unfettered access for goods between Northern Ireland and the other countries in the United Kingdom, we urgently need to see the proposals for new administrative customs processes for traders, notably new electronic import declaration requirements and safety and security information, for goods entering Northern Ireland from Great Britain.

As a result of our experience in other ports where P&O Ferries operate, these processes cannot be developed in isolation to the new arrangements on agri-foods especially where IT solutions are required. In particular, we need to understand the treatment and process of goods in transit across land-bridges and the role of ferry operators as well as clarity where the burden of proof will lay for administering the checks.

There is a significant amount of work required in all the jurisdictions that we operate from to ensure we are ready to continue to efficiently serve our customers when the transition period with the EU comes to an end.

We do have significantly more clarity on border operating models with EU jurisdictions but unfortunately, we do not have the same clarity on the UK's requirements, specifically for domestic trade to and from Northern Ireland.

We were promised sight of the border operating model by the end of March 2020 and are concerned that we have not yet seen any detail.

The road to continued unfettered access post transition between Northern Ireland and its biggest trading partner, by a significant margin, has presented a challenging timetable but Larne Harbour Ltd and P&O Ferries will work diligently with the NI Civil Service team to deliver its agreed objectives.

Yours Sincerely

Roger Armson.

General Manager Larne Port and P&O Ferries Larne – Cairnryan Service.