

David Rees AM  
Chair, External Affairs Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

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29<sup>th</sup> August 2017

*Dear Mr Rees,*

**Report by the National Assembly for Wales's External Affairs Committee on its inquiry into the implications of Brexit for Welsh ports**

Thank you for providing me with a copy of your Committee's report on the impact on Welsh ports of the UK's exit from the European Union.

The importance of ports such as Milford Haven and Holyhead to the economy of Wales, and the UK more widely, should never be underestimated. I recognise this, and earlier this year I visited the Port of Holyhead to discuss the challenges and opportunities for the port arising from the vote to leave the EU, and Guto Bebb MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Wales, also recently met with representatives of Irish Ferries to have similar discussions.

You will be aware that the UK Government recently published the first in a series of papers on the Government's approach to the future partnership we want with the EU, covering the Government's goals for the UK's future customs arrangements. Given the role of our ports this will of course be of great importance to Wales.

As the UK leaves the EU and its customs union, we will be guided by what delivers the greatest economic advantage to the UK. We want our new customs arrangements to meet three objectives:

- To keep trade with the EU as frictionless as possible;
- To avoid a 'hard border' between Ireland and Northern Ireland;
- To establish an independent international trade policy.

And of course we must avoid any arrangement that creates customs barriers within the UK.

The Government is actively engaging with the devolved administrations, including the Welsh Government, and will continue to do so as we seek a deal that secures the specific interests of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, as well as those of all parts of Wales.

Handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alun Cairns'.

**Rt Hon Alun Cairns MP**  
Secretary of State for Wales  
Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru