

Ken Skates AC/AM
Gweinidog yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy and Transport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
Secretary of State for International Trade
3 Whitehall Place
Westminster
London
SW1A 2HP

18 September 2019

Dear Liz,

Following the UK Government's announcement on the 2 August regarding the establishment of a free port's advisory panel, I would like to take this opportunity to set out Welsh Government's position in respect of the proposal for up to 10 free ports in the UK.

We remain open to exploring the concept of establishing free ports in Wales further and it is crucial for Welsh Government to be involved in the conversation at an early stage. This is particularly important as establishing successful free ports in Wales could only be feasible using policy levers which are devolved, including infrastructure investment, clarified planning and consents systems and spatial policies, to name just a few examples.

As one of your priority areas, it is clear that your department is moving forward on this work at pace. To date there has been little engagement from UK Government with us on this matter, and going forward I would like your assurance we are included in this work as a key partner in order to establish an effective policy framework for Welsh ports. Welsh Government has to date been a very constructive partner with your Department in relation to your other priorities around trade policy and trade delivery. We can only continue with in this if you do not roll back on the trust and working relationship which was established with your predecessor.

My Ministerial colleague, Eluned Morgan AM, made clear in her welcome letter that it is vital that the UK's emerging trade policies, and any detailed negotiations on new trade agreements, should reflect the interests of Wales and the whole of the United Kingdom. In your recent speech at the International Trade Dinner I was particularly encouraged by your acknowledgement that trade policy has to work for the whole of the UK. I am seeking your assurance that, for the reasons I have stated above, the concept of free ports is also developed in a way that reflects the whole of the UK.

There is a significant amount of work to do in order to fully assesses the true impact of free ports in the UK, and it is essential that the Welsh Government's role as the devolved Government in Wales be appropriately recognised. My officials stand ready to engage with your officials. I am particularly keen for discussions to take place around the potential impacts on employment rights, environmental standards, as well as the potential for the unintended displacement of economic activity.

I am copying this letter to the Minister for International Relations and Welsh Language, Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Wales.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke above the letters.

Ken Skates AC/AM

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