

IRISH PORTS FACING ‘LOT OF PAIN’ AS THEY’RE ‘UNPREPARED’ FOR NO-DEAL BREXIT

Ireland’s ports are unprepared for a no-deal Brexit with backlogs set to come ‘crashing down on them’, hauliers warned. Although solutions will come eventually, we could be in for ‘a lot of pain’ in the short term, according to the Irish International Freight Association.

At yesterday’s manufacturing and supply chain conference in Dublin, the IIFA’s Tom Thornton praised Government efforts so far, but said these were based on a transition period, not a no-deal Brexit. He said the Government was trying to ‘get ready... they’ve really been planning for 2020. Now it could happen that it’s going to be March 29 and they’re not going to be ready with the infrastructure at the ports.

A no-deal Brexit will come ‘crashing down’ on our ports warns the Irish International Freight Association.

‘They have an issue that’s going to come crashing down on them. How much more they can do to sort that out is difficult [to know]. It’s difficult to ask them to do much more than what they have been doing. I think their longer-term plan will see a solution, as best as it can be. But in the short term we might suffer a lot of pain.’

Irish Exporters Association boss Simon McKeever yesterday said of a no-deal Brexit: ‘If it happens we’re screwed.’ He said many firms are unprepared for a no-deal Brexit, saying: ‘Some are looking at what is going on in the UK, and are still not quite sure what this is going to be.

‘At the other end of the scale, we have companies who are only beginning to look at this. I spent an hour on the phone to a couple of companies on Monday, and they are only beginning to get their head around the implications of all of this. My heart is telling me this is too awful, that it can’t happen, but my head is saying right now there is a massive increased risk of a crash-out Brexit and we really need to make sure that we are ready for that.’

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar with British Prime Minister Theresa May, whose Brexit deal has been rejected by the House of Commons. Pic: Sam Boal/Rollingnews.ie

Mr Thornton of the hauliers’ association called on the EU to establish a fund to help protect the freight industry. He pointed to a fund established in the 1990s, when customs posts began to come down that compensated companies all over the continent against the redundancies payments for staff who had to be let go. He said a similar project, to help businesses afford the new staff required, is now needed. ‘What we’re being asked to do is have staff ready to go on March 29. But between now and March 29 we have no income against them. We don’t have the spare capacity in the industry.’

He added: ‘There’s probably about 1,500 to 1,800 needed in the industry to perform the declarations that will be needed. ‘But we cannot afford as an industry to recruit those people and have them sitting idle three months in advance. So we need the EU to step up and provide a decent fund to help us in Ireland, and help the guys in France and Holland and Germany.’

Recent events in the UK have brought the threat of a no-deal Brexit closer than ever before, but there are fears that the unpredictability of the process has left many businesses completely unprepared.