

Report on volume of exports via UK is not due till 2018



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The Government is only now carrying out a study to establish the volume of Irish exports that use the UK landbridge - but the results won't be due until the early months of next year.

That's over 18 months after the referendum in the UK took place, even though most exporters here go through Britain to get their produce to mainland Europe, or further afield.

The Department of Transport, in conjunction with the Irish Maritime Development Office, has begun a study into the use of Britain for Irish hauliers and transporting goods from Ireland to mainland European markets.

The research is expected to establish the volume of traffic using the British landbridge, the likely consequences that Brexit will have on this, and the options to deal with any negative impact when the UK leaves.

But the research is not slated for completion until the first quarter of next year.

In August, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar revealed to Fianna Fáil's Kevin O'Keeffe that the Government does not know the level or amount of goods and services exported to Europe overland through the UK.

Mr Varadkar said the country of final destination is recorded as the country of export in the merchandise trade data and there is no data available on the route taken, or transit country of the goods.

But research carried out by the Irish Exporters Association suggests two-thirds of exporters go through Britain to get their produce to customers on mainland Europe and further afield.

Marie Armstrong, IEA vice-president, told TDs this year that the number of exporters relying on the UK as a landbridge to the continent was "hugely significant" ... "and those members are very concerned about continuing to use the UK in terms of customs, and being stopped at borders".

Responding to recent queries from Fianna Fáil's Brexit spokesman Stephen Donnelly, Transport Minister Shane Ross said a number of Brexit-related studies have been carried out on behalf of transport and tourism agencies and organisations in relation to Brexit.

"My department, in conjunction with the Irish Maritime Development Office, is commencing a study into the use of the UK landbridge by Irish importers and exporters," he said.

"I expect this piece of research to be completed in Q1 of 2018."

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