

Press Release

The Port of Dover was the subject of the presentation at the Dover District Chamber of Commerce breakfast meeting last Friday. Business leaders from across East Kent were treated to a detailed account of the past, present and future of northern Europe's busiest passenger port.

Drawing on more than 30 years of experience from junior deck cadet to Non-Executive Director of Dover Harbour Board (DHB), Neil Wiggins outlined a brief history of the Port of Dover since the establishment of DHB in 1606. Now handling £122bn of the UK's annual trade in goods, the port is open every day of the year except Christmas Day, welcoming 5 million vehicles and 11.5 million passengers.

The traffic data for 2017 showed another record year, the fourth in succession, marking Dover as the fastest growing UK shipping port. With another 40% increase forecast for 2030, the Port of Dover is currently planning for a significant expansion of its facilities to meet the expected demand.

Part of the Traffic Management Improvement initiative is a 4km buffer zone in the Eastern Docks. The Western Docks revival scheme includes a dedicated ferry terminal and transformation of the waterfront, together with specific plans to develop local cultural assets and promote connectivity with the town. At a time when the UK is deciding the terms of its withdrawal from the European Union, it is interesting to note that a major contributor to the funding of all these improvements is the EU, to which, of course, the UK is a net contributor.

Neil Wiggins was keen to emphasize the advantages to the local area, not just in terms of job creation and opportunities for local companies, but in making Dover a genuine destination of choice.

He listed some of the challenges Brexit poses; the day after the UK officially leaves the EU, the current 1% of non-EU trade passing through the port will become 100%. He was equally positive that by modernising the port and upgrading to the best IT systems available, there is a realistic chance of getting close to the 'frictionless trade' desired by our industry and government.

A question from the floor about Manston Airport produced the response that ties to a successful passenger and freight air terminal in close proximity are very often important factors for successful port operations. On the issue of extracting building materials from the Goodwin Sands, Neil Wiggins stated that being obliged to pay a private contractor to supply sand from further away could reduce the budget available for improving Dover by around £8 million. After finishing his talk to warm applause from all those present, Neil Wiggins made himself available to individual Chamber members to hear their views.

Chamber Chief Executive David Foley said: "With around half the freight vehicles passing through Dover serving destinations north of London, it is clearer than ever that what is good for Dover is good for UK plc. We are most grateful to Neil for his first-class presentation and professional insights into one of the key gateways supporting this country's trade."

Neil Wiggins said: "It is important for the Port of Dover to liaise with local businesses in all sectors of the economy. I look forward to increasingly close links with the Dover District Chamber of Commerce and its members who play a vital role in the regeneration of our East Kent coastal community."

[560 words]

Information

Dover District Chamber of Commerce was established in 1850 and provides professional business support to the private and voluntary sector. In liaison with its sister body, Thanet & East Kent Chamber, the Dover District Chamber of Commerce provides commercial advice and guidance to companies of all sizes trading in East Kent.

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External Websites

Port of Dover: www.doverport.co.uk
Dover Western Docks Revival May 2018: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ngknb5YjWhw
DFDS Seaways: www.dfdsseaways.co.uk

Images



David Foley (left) thanks Neil Wiggins
Image provided by Rosie Anton Photography

PORT OF DOVER – DRIVING TRADE AND PROSPERITY

Dover District Chamber of Commerce Business Breakfast

MAY 18th 2018

