



Brexit: ‘Sea border still affecting us’, protesters say

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Members of Northern Ireland's equine industry protested at Belfast docks on Thursday night over what they described as "a continuing Irish Sea border".

They claimed many aspects of trading between NI and Great Britain had not improved since the deal which led to the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) returning to Stormont.

The protesters were joined by a number of sheep and poultry farmers.

They called on the government to take immediate action.

Felim Crane, who has a horse and pony business in Irvinestown, County Fermanagh, said new regulations introduced under the Northern Ireland Protocol in January 2021 had been "decimating".

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJsGZL-zb54>

The Northern Ireland Protocol was the part of the UK's Brexit deal with the EU which introduced new checks on goods from Great Britain at Northern Ireland's ports.

It was later amended by the Windsor Framework.

"It's been a disaster," Mr Crane said.

"We would have bought a lot of animals in Great Britain and brought them home to Northern Ireland.

"We can no longer do that due to blood tests which are required for animals travelling from Great Britain to Northern Ireland."

The DUP walked out of devolved government at Stormont in February 2022 in protest against the post-Brexit trading rules.

The deal which saw it return to Stormont at the start of the year will reduce checks and paperwork on goods moving from the rest of the UK into Northern Ireland.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3syHHGzkF_s

However Mr Crane said that despite the deal, there had been "no change" to the situation.

"We need to do something about it and it needs to be done ASAP," he added.

Mr Crane said he had written to DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, who Mr Crane said was "unaware of the problems and will work at them going forward".

A poster reading “No Irish Sea border” displayed in the port of Larne, Northern Ireland, in June 2022

Philippa Auret, who runs a livery yard in Saintfield, County Down, also believes that “nothing has changed” since the deal.

“We travel backwards and forwards across the water, some of our customers in yard do the same,” she said.

“We want to be able to move freely with our animals.

“It’s nearly impossible for people to make a living bringing horses backwards and forwards across the water.”

She added there was also “a major welfare issue” with having animals standing in lorries at the ports for “hours and hours”.

Lesley Liggett, a sheep farmer from Omagh, also said importing from Great Britain had become “impossible”.

“If I take livestock across to the mainland and don’t get it sold, I have to leave it there for six months before I can bring it back home again which is ridiculous.”

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RR8YYeb4PMk>

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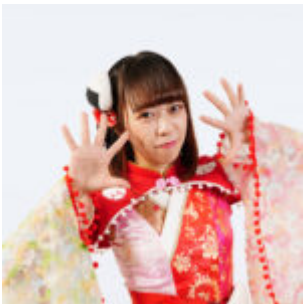
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