

Scotland-France ferry link moves closer with £3 million UK Government commitment

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Investment will upgrade vital Border Force and Customs infrastructure at the port.

A direct ferry route from Scotland to Dunkirk has today moved a step closer thanks to a £3 million UK Government commitment.

Funded through the UK Government's Growth Mission Fund, the investment will support the upgrade of vital Border Force and Customs infrastructure at the port. It was announced today [19 March] by the Scottish Secretary ahead of a visit to the Rosyth to meet senior figures from Forth Ports, international ferry operator DFDS, and the operators of the Port of Dunkirk.

The UK Government's £3 million funding is subject to the conclusion of a commercial agreement between Forth Ports (operator of the Port of Rosyth) and a ferry operator, as well as approval of their business case.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves said:

My plan to build a stronger and more secure economy is the right one - cutting the cost of living, cutting the national debt and creating the conditions for growth.

Backing Rosyth with this £3 million investment would be a major boost to Scotland's infrastructure and tourism, and would make the area a more attractive place to live, work and start a business in the years to come.

Scottish Secretary Douglas Alexander said:

With the UK Government delivering £3 million in investment, this new direct ferry service would connect Scotland to Europe's doorstep. The UK Government is backing Scottish businesses to grow, export and compete on the world stage.

It would boost tourism, open up new markets for Scottish businesses, create jobs, take freight off our roads and grow Scotland's economy. This is a big step forward and I hope we will soon see the first ferry set sail. This is a major vote of confidence in Scotland's, and the UK's, economic future.

Mathieu Girardin, Executive Vice President and Head of DFDS's Ferry Division, said:

We are pleased to see the UK Government's commitment to strengthening port infrastructure in Rosyth. This is an important step in bringing a new route between Scotland and mainland Europe closer to reality. While a few elements still need to be addressed, we see strong potential in the route and look forward to continuing our discussions with all partners involved to move the project forward.

Stuart Wallace, Chief Executive Officer, Forth Ports said:

Forth Ports welcomes this step from the UK Government to support the growth of the maritime freight and passenger sector in Scotland. A ferry service from Rosyth to mainland Europe is a key part of the Forth Green Freeport and this funding helps create the market conditions needed to see the ferry take a step closer to reality .

Daniel Deschodt, Executive Vice President of the Port of Dunkirk, said:

The establishment of a direct maritime link between the ports of Rosyth and Dunkirk is a significant strategic asset. This new freight and passenger ferry service will enhance connectivity between the two countries, facilitating smoother trade flows and serving as a powerful catalyst for economic growth. It will stimulate port activity, boost local employment, and strengthen the logistics, competitiveness, and tourism of both regions within Europe.

The new route - fifteen years after the last passenger service ended between Scotland and mainland Europe - would operate from Rosyth to Dunkirk with both freight and passengers, subject to a commercial agreement between Forth Ports and a ferry operator. It would link with Dunkirk's state-of-the-art rail terminal, which connects the port to major centres across the European Union, opening up significant new opportunities for Scottish exporters.

The EU is a key market for Scottish businesses, accounting for nearly half (45%) of exports. This new link would help drive economic growth in Scotland by strengthening logistical competitiveness, export capability and tourism opportunities. It would also create local jobs to support the ferry's operation. It comes at a time when the UK and EU are seeking to strengthen cross border trade cooperation through the new EU/UK trade agreement.

Over the last two weeks, the UK Government has been running a series of masterclasses to help Scottish businesses sell their goods and services overseas. Experts were joined by the UK Business Centre in Lille to discuss the opportunities available in the French market and more widely in Europe.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/scotland-france-ferry-link-moves-closer-with-3-million-uk-government-commitment>