

The Development of Ports and the Interaction with Logistics Operators – Peter V James

Interaction with Logistics Operators is a difficult subject to discuss at 17H after an excellent lunch.

Let me introduce myself, I am a Member of London's Baltic Exchange which was founded in 1744. The 600 members buy and sell half the merchant ships in the world in any one year. They also arrange the charters of about half the merchant ships in the world annually.

I am not English, I have Celtic, Irish and Welsh origins. To my knowledge I am at least the fourth generation of professional sailors from the Bristol Channel and Celtic Sea, and am very proud to be the Consultant for the Port of Milford Haven.

I do not live in the United Kingdom, I have lived in the middle of the Atlantic Arc, in France for over 30 years, where I am also Vice-President of the Port of Nantes – St Nazaire Shipping Club.

Now you will understand why every year as a Chartered Shipbroker, I give the Franco-Iberian Prize to the top student in our annual examinations. I have had two Spanish prize-winners amazingly both from Vigo. One is Maria ALONSO and the other is Roberto QUELLE. Last year's prize-winner was a French girl from Nantes University.

I have been the Consultant to the Port of Milford Haven for about 15 years. Milford Haven is almost unknown here in continental Europe, however it was a traditionally a port of call for Spanish fishermen. When the petrol tanker the "Sea Empress" was stuck on the rocks outside the port and leaking oil, I was speaking to the "Pescanova" regularly.

Today, it is about to become the largest petroleum and gas port of the United Kingdom. It also has a ferry port with daily sailings to Ireland. We handle about 500,000 passengers and 100,000 vehicles every year who sail from our Port at Pembroke to Rosslare in Ireland.

Interaction is a key word, it means dialogue, anticipation, reaction, and working together.

Only by interaction can one get the feedback necessary to start to build a management concept, which can lead to port development.

Almost 20 years ago, prior to creating my consultancy practice I worked with the French Ministry for Economic Development at Nantes. This was about the time when the Organisation covering the Atlantic Arc Peripheral Maritime Regions was created. Today they are represented by Mr Patrick ANVOIN who spoke this morning.

Even in those days we were looking at the Atlantic Coast of Europe to try and find development possibilities. Some ideas became fashionable and other were dismissed.

Some ideas were looked at and we said "Not yet, but perhaps one day" or "Perhaps we need to have a new road build so that it might work".

Europe was smaller then and Spain and Portugal were a long way from Northern Europe. Other ideas developed because of road transport problems between Bordeaux and Bilbao.

Today, we have road congestion, which seems worse than it was then, in spite of, or because of motorways.

However all these individual items and problems were used to form the basis of European Sea Motorways project which is gathering momentum.

As you know Brussels is concerned about the volume of traffic travelling by road from Bilbao to Bordeaux and onwards to Paris and the north.

Equally, London is concerned about the volume of traffic driving around London to the Channel Tunnel. The M25 motorway frequently comes to a halt simply because of the volume of traffic.

Today Europe is now much larger and Iberia is now closer in people's minds to northern Europe.

As an old Celtic seaman, today I would like to invite the Iberian Road Transport Industry to return think again about the original Atlantic Arc idea.

I would like to know how many of you are now exporting to Ireland and to the Midlands and the north of England? Do your trucks go to Bilbao and Bordeaux and then travel to GB?

What route do you use for your return freight?

I ask these questions to open a dialogue with the Iberian Road Transport Industry.

The Port of Milford Haven is about 3 hours to the west of Birmingham, with Wexford the south east corner of Ireland just across the sea.

The idea of setting up a triangular Ro-Ro shipping service from Milford to Ireland and then directly down to Vigo, seems today very attractive.

If your trucks could travel from Milford Haven or Ireland straight back to Vigo without crossing the Channel and travelling through France, Bordeaux and Bilbao, I feel that we have something to consider. Imagine a line running Milford - Cork-Vigo, it is almost directly North – South.

It would take about 35 hours. Just think of the petrol savings and the maintenance costs for your vehicles.

It is interesting to note that this would be the very first Ro-Ro Service Ireland- Spain.

To date I have spoken with many key players from the maritime world, but today we need to discuss matters with road transporters.

I have had great difficulty in obtaining statistics in Ireland and the UK, which is why I would like to open a dialogue with the Iberian Road Transport Industry.

I ask the Iberian Road Transport Industry to contact me. I ask you to take the initiative. Do not wait for me to contact you, as today I do not know you, please make yourselves known to me. I am very willing to come and visit you.

One of Milford Haven's major clients is the number one Irish Road Transport Company who sends all his trucks through Pembroke Dock. Could we help to set up joint ventures in the Irish-Iberian Road Transport Business?

We are all linked to the European transport industry, but if the people from Iberia continue to send traffic by road, then a solution will never be found.

If we can get a critical mass of traffic, especially south bound return traffic, then we feel that we would be very close to starting a regular Ro-Ro shipping line.

It is in operations like this, that a dialogue and interaction is so important between the Shippers, the Port Authority and the Iberian Road Transport Industry. The implications for the development of the ports of Milford Haven and Vigo are obvious.

If this is possible, then the Port of Milford Haven would be happy to work with its Irish partners and the Port of Vigo to develop the concept.

If we can develop this old Atlantic Arc dream, then the authorities in Brussels, in England, in Paris, in Bordeaux would be very happy to see their motorways being liberated.

Equally, I imagine most of us here today, coming from the Atlantic Arc and Celtic Regions of Europe, would finally see one of our dreams accomplished.

I look forward to hearing from you.

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