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By Fred Searle

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UK applies for border control posts in Northern Ireland



Belfast Harbour handles two-thirds of Northern Ireland's maritime trade Photo: William Murphy/Flickr

Defra makes formal request for EU to establish border checkpoints at Northern Irish ports as UK prepares for end of Brexit transition period

The UK government has applied to the EU to create Border Control Posts (BCPs) at ports in Northern Ireland.

The facilities are used to check food and livestock entering the EU single market. Since Northern Ireland will stay in the EU single market for goods at the end of the Brexit transition period on 1 January, but the rest of the UK will not, products such as fruit and vegetables will need to be checked at the border.

A UK government spokesperson said: "We have always been clear that, following the Northern Ireland Protocol, there would be a limited expansion of facilities at some existing entry points, where certain controls for animal and plant health already take place.

"We have submitted applications for

these entry points on time and there will be no new customs infrastructure in Northern Ireland."

There has been resistance to the move in Stormont, with Northern Ireland's agriculture minister Edwin Poots writing to Defra secretary George Eustice to say he would not cooperate with a full application for the creation of BCPs until it was made clear how they would be used.

Poots agreed there was a legal responsibility to create the checkpoints, called for certain supermarkets and traders to be exempt from them. He also asked whether checking just one per cent of non-trusted trader goods would be acceptable.

"I am currently unable to present a full application due to the lack of certainty

around a number of key areas including the level of checks required," he wrote.

Despite these requests, the UK government has proceeded with the application, arguing that Brexit trade talks are a matter for Westminster and not the devolved governments.