PRESS RELEASE

Port Boulogne Calais remains strong despite a hectic 2019

Calais - 20 January 2020: Port Boulogne Calais showed its resilience in a 2019 marked by a "Brexit" that brought uncertainty and sluggish economic traffic across the Channel. The port of Calais is once again establishing itself, within this turbulent context, as the undisputed leader in cross-Channel freight traffic, while the port of Boulogne-sur-Mer retains its first place in the French fishing port rankings.

The port of Boulogne-sur-Mer: leading French fishing port in terms of value and tonnage

Despite a slight decline of 1.9% in volumes recorded with 31 538 tonnes - which follows the downward trend of French auctions in 2019 - Boulogne-sur-Mer retains its first place in the fishing port rankings. It also maintains its first place in terms of value, despite a fall in the average price per kilo of 1.2% (2.54 euros). The total value of sales recorded in 2019 amounted to 80.3 million euros (down 2.8%).

After a rather favourable start to the year, buoyed by a good herring, whiting and mackerel season, the following months were more complicated due in part to the erratic spring weather. Sole catches, the main resource for small boats, are still in sharp decline (down 24%) while the scallop harvest was very good in 2019, up 11%. Squid remains the flagship species for Boulogne and alone accounts for almost 28% of the total value of transactions of all species combined.

The share of remote selling, introduced in 2017, continues to grow and accounted for almost 13% of the volume of auction sales, with a steady increase over the year (up 17.5%). The number of remote buyers increased in 2019 by 26%, including new foreign buyers such as Spanish, Belgian and Dutch.

At the port of Calais, cross-Channel freight and tourism traffic had an unsettled year

Resilient HGV traffic, notwithstanding a complex situation

2019 has been a hectic year for freight traffic to and from Britain, mainly due to "Brexit" news and related uncertainties, which caused concern among market stakeholders and a decline in economic traffic across the Channel. The port of Calais was also affected by social action by customs officers, who disrupted traffic for nearly a month during the spring.

However, despite such disruption and although the Channel experienced a decline in freight traffic overall of 5%, the port of Calais held up rather well, registering the passage of 1 813 067 units (down 4.6%), representing nearly 90 000 fewer HGVs than 2018 and retaining 46% of the market share.

Tourism traffic was disappointing...

While 2018 saw continued recovery in tourism traffic that began two years ago, 2019 did not keep pace with this trend. The all-pervasive "Brexit" news in Britain, combined with an unfavourable sterling exchange rate, will undoubtedly have impacted British people's travel plans. The port handled less than nine million passengers (8 477 908), down 7% compared to 2018. The number of passenger vehicles also declined by 8.7%, with a total of 1 490 633 units (all types combined). The port of Calais remains the leader in the coach segment, despite falling by 6%.

A highly promising, positive performance for the intermodal terminal

The intermodal terminal at the port of Calais confirmed the expected increase in its traffic in 2019.

Unaccompanied trailer traffic (without driver or tractor) continued to increase, reaching 42 483 units, an increase of 11.2% over the year. In October, a new record was set, with 4962 transshipped trailers.

This growth was supported by the ramp-up of the rolling motorways operator VIIA, which further improved its services by providing daily services (30 weekly trains) to and from Le Boulou and Orbassano from the end of 2018, and Mâcon from last March. In addition, the opening of the new Ro-ro Calais - Tilbury (London) shipping line offered by P&O ferries since the end of September 2019 and the increase in the number of trailers shipped by DFDS on its vessels also produced a healthier result in this traffic segment.

The target of "50 000 trailers" would have been met or even exceeded without the interruption of the rolling motorway lines to Le Boulou and Orbassano due to bad weather in August and October, preventing the rail operator from operating at full capacity for several weeks and further compounded by the social action throughout December, which brought rail traffic to a standstill. Despite these events, the rail operator almost doubled (up 88%) the number of trailers transported.

A mixed year on the general cargo terminals of Boulogne-sur-Mer and Calais

Despite a lack of traffic at the sugar terminal, Calais saw a slight increase of 1% compared to its 2018 level, with a tonnage of 511 836 tonnes. Among the main commodities transported are materials destined for the port extension site, petroleum coke and cables.

The Boulogne terminal, on the other hand, had a difficult first half-year and then recovered well at the end of the year, notably due to the transporting of limestone. Although total tonnage was down 12.2% at 701 539 tonnes, the Boulogne general cargo terminal has seen a marked resurgence in traffic over the past two years.

18 million euros invested in the two ports

With the possibility of a no-agreement Brexit result threatening, Port Boulogne Calais invested six million euros to adapt and develop its infrastructure to meet new obligations and customs controls while providing the best possible service and maintaining fluid transit for two million HGVs and nine million passengers.

In Boulogne, modernisation of the fishing port, the general cargo terminal and the Capécure fishing area accelerated in 2019. The port site benefited from nearly eleven million euros of work, notably to repair part of the lanes on the main roads, renovation and compliance work to the tidal station and refurbishment of slipway No. 2.

In 2020, the port of Boulogne will receive six million euros, including three million euros for the construction of the new fish crate washing centre and the net repair yard, which will cost a total of six million euros and whose construction began at the end of the year. 2020 will also see the completion of road refurbishment work in the Capécure area and completion of work on slipway No. 2, which will be put back into service in February.

In Calais, the work needed to put the new port into operation will be a stand-out project in 2020, as well as maintenance to the current cross-Channel terminal, at a total cost of 11 million euros.

Jean-Marc Puissesseau, President and CEO of Port Boulogne Calais, comments: *"The commissioning of the new port in the first quarter of 2021 and arrival in 2022 of next-generation, larger-capacity vessels will strengthen our position as the cross-Channel leader. Moreover, the development of unaccompanied trailer traffic combined with the important maritime and rail services offered from the port of Calais now put us on the map of European intermodal hubs. We are continuing our "100 000 trailers" target transshipped from rail or road onto the Calais-Tilbury line."*

Key figures 2019

Total goods (Cross-Channel + General Cargo): 42 965 669 tonnes

Cross-Channel traffic:

- 41 752 294 tonnes of goods
- 1 813 067 freight units
- 8 477 908 passengers
- 1 490 633 passenger vehicles *(cars, coaches, caravans, motorcycles)*

General cargo traffic:

- Total commercial traffic: 1 213 375 tonnes (Boulogne: 701 539 t, Calais: 511 836 t)

Fishing:

- Tonnage: 31 538
- Total value: €80.3 million
- Average price per kilo: €2.54

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