

Freeports should be abolished

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I have [long campaigned against freeports](#).

When they were first announced, and the opportunity to meet with the government was offered to those who objected to them was made available I was one of just two people from civil society who took part in these meetings, the other being from Transparency International, as I recall.

I have always thought them to be both a massive folly, and a deeply misguided and even dangerous attempt to recreate offshore tax environments within the UK.

In that case, [an article in the FT is interesting](#). As it has reported this morning:

Just six businesses are using customs sites at “freeports” across the UK, more than three years after the tax-free import scheme was announced as a way to bolster Britain’s economy after leaving the EU.

What this means is that neither of the freeports in Scotland have the customs of this sort, and nor do some in England either, including Felixstowe, which was always potentially the largest.

Business obviously knows what Rishi Sunak, who was always the driving force behind these things, did not, which is that they simply do not provide any real benefit to business for the hassle involved.

Despite that. Labour remains committed to the idea, as we would now expect. After all, any mad neoliberal idea appears worthy of its continuing support. And what is more, the article implies that the government is still trying to drum up support for this crazy idea.

Freeports should be cancelled now to save more money being wasted on them and to end what was always meant to be an abusive tax regime that could only favour a very few large companies.

But, will Labour have the courage to do that? I doubt it.