

**AMBITION
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UK-Japan trade corridor

Evidence from Trade Digitalisation Pilots



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1. Executive summary

This report provides a summary of the UK–Japan Trade Digitalisation Pilot delivered by the Teesside University Digital Trade Testbed (DTT) with iC4DTI and ICC United Kingdom, in partnership with the British Embassy Tokyo/FCDO and stakeholders in Japan. It summarises what was tested, what has been demonstrated to date, and what actions are most likely to increase practical uptake of trade digitalisation between the UK and Japan.

In line with core United Nations paperless trade principles¹, this report emphasises that sustainable scale comes from making reliable information available to businesses, strengthening institutional capability, and providing targeted training and onboarding support to the organisations that operate trade in practice (ports, logistics intermediaries, border agencies, and SMEs), rather than treating digitalisation as primarily a technology problem.

Across the pilot portfolio, the emerging learning is consistent: the building blocks for secure cross-platform interoperability are now sufficiently mature to support practical demonstrations, including cross-jurisdiction sharing of structured trade data and electronic original documents under controlled conditions. Where progress slows, it is typically due to low levels of awareness, confidence and operational readiness rather than fundamental technical infeasibility. The most valuable government role is therefore to reduce adoption friction by setting clear expectations for digital evidence, supporting common profiles and implementation guidance, and investing in repeatable training pathways for the stakeholders who need to use these tools routinely.

Three case study strands illustrate this portfolio learning. First, the TradeWaltz–Enigio data-transfer demonstration shows that different platforms can securely share structured trade data and evidence document integrity and provenance without requiring a single platform monopoly. Second, the Boex-facilitated SME export workflow (London Sock Company) demonstrates how simplified digital workflows can reduce barriers to entry

for SMEs seeking to reach customers in Japan, supporting export growth and market access outcomes. Third, the finance interoperability strand (Enigio with Lloyds and Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG)) indicates that cross-jurisdiction bank participation is feasible in controlled settings using dummy or minimised data, and that the remaining constraints are mainly process assurance, stakeholder confidence and adoption playbooks rather than platform capability.

Based on the evidence captured, the report recommends that the next phase of UK–Japan trade digitalisation activity prioritises practical adoption measures: targeted awareness-raising, structured onboarding, and training programmes tailored to specific roles (SMEs, ports/logistics operators, customs officials, and trade finance teams).



‘Teesside is a place to prove corridor-ready digital trade in the real world: interoperability, trust and implementability, with evidence that accelerates adoption.’

¹ www.untfsurvey.org. UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation. [online] Available at: <https://www.untfsurvey.org/>.

2. Purpose, scope and what was tested

Scope and objectives

The work in scope covers:

- > UK-Japan and Japan-UK trade flows, focusing on practical adoption of end-to-end digital trade documentation and Electronic Transferable Records (ETRs), including electronic bills of lading where feasible
- > a vendor-neutral, interoperability-led approach aligned to recognised standards and models (including ICC DSI2, UN/CEFACT3 and WCO4), focused on what is reusable beyond any single solution.

The pilot and this report do not cover implementation of national infrastructure, or any commitment to changes in Japanese or UK law.

The pilots are intended to show, through practical shipment demonstrations, how digital trade can make trade cheaper, faster and more transparent, while generating clear evidence on what works, what remains constrained, and what is needed to support wider adoption across the UK-Japan corridor.



3. Corridor context and why this matters

Corridor context

The UK–Japan trade corridor is an efficient, modern and relatively “low-friction” corridor because both countries have mature border management capabilities and signed a bilateral comprehensive economic partnership agreement (UK–Japan CEPA). The UK–Japan CEPA reduces or eliminates tariffs across most goods lines and includes cooperation mechanisms intended to reduce non-tariff friction (for example SPS/TBT cooperation) and support for SMEs. It also includes digital trade provisions supportive of cross-border digital activity and data flows.

In practice, however, the corridor still experiences material operational friction that sits behind the border with regard to documentation volume, repeated data entry, paper-dependent steps, and fragmented systems across the many parties involved in a single shipment.

What is already strong

The corridor has several genuine strengths that make it a good candidate for a practical digitalisation pilot:

- > **Strong policy framework:** the UK-Japan CEPA provides a modern baseline for goods and services trade and includes digital trade provisions; it also creates mechanisms for cooperation and transparency.
- > **High trade facilitation maturity:** both countries apply risk-based trade facilitation practices such as pre-arrival processing and risk management, with relatively efficient customs operations for low-risk shipments.
- > **Advanced domestic digital systems:** Japan operates the Nippon Automated Cargo and Port Consolidated System (NACCS) for customs processing; the UK has implemented legal recognition for electronic trade documents under the Electronic Trade Documents Act, strengthening the legal foundation for the exchange of ETRs on the UK side.
- > **Existing trust and facilitation concepts:** trusted trader and risk-based approaches exist, but the corridor still has scope to convert these concepts into practical, reusable “trusted digital workflow” patterns that work end-to-end across parties.

These enablers mean the corridor is well-positioned for a pilot that focuses on adoption, interoperability and operational learning.

Where friction persists (why digitalisation is still not “done”)

Even with advanced domestic systems, friction persists because end-to-end trade is a multi-party, multi-system workflow. Common constraints include:

- > **Documentation burden and duplication:** shipments still require multiple document types and repeated data entry across parties, with knock-on impacts on cost, delay and error rates.
- > **Fragmented systems and limited cross-border interoperability:** UK and Japan systems are each advanced but not connected end-to-end, so data often must be re-entered at each handoff (including between logistics, customs, finance and compliance steps).
- > **Paper-dependent steps and uneven adoption:** while legal and policy foundations for electronic trade documents are advancing, corridor outcomes can remain hybrid where operational acceptance, risk controls, trade finance practices, or multi-party interoperability are not yet aligned.
- > **SME-disproportionate fixed costs and “first shipment” barriers:** set-up effort (brokerage, certification, onboarding) does not scale down for smaller firms, which can deter new entrants and concentrate trade among larger organisations.
- > **Trade finance and compliance friction:** KYC/AML, sanctions screening and documentary checking can introduce delays and reduce finance access for smaller transactions, reinforcing paper-heavy and intermediary-heavy workflows.
- > **Market acceptance and assurance dependencies:** even where legal pathways exist, adoption is influenced by carrier/insurer/bank acceptance; for example, recent “deemed approval” approaches for compliant eBL systems under recognised governing law reduce friction, but do not remove the need for stakeholder readiness and onboarding.

This combination is why two highly digitalised economies can still experience “analogue” outcomes at corridor level: digitisation is often local to each organisation or national system, rather than interoperable across the transaction chain.

Why this matters strategically (what this pilot can unlock)

A UK–Japan pilot is valuable precisely because it tests digitalisation in a corridor that is already relatively mature. The opportunity is to demonstrate how corridor-level outcomes improve when:

- > **digital documentation is treated as an end-to-end, multi-party workflow rather than a set of isolated digital tools**
- > **interoperability patterns reduce re-keying, discrepancies and exceptions, which are persistent drivers of delay and rework**
- > **legal and operational approaches to ETRs (including eBL where feasible) align sufficiently for businesses and intermediaries to rely on digital records without reverting to paper “for safety”**
- > **trade finance and compliance steps are integrated into the evidence trail, so that digitisation supports practical risk management rather than creating parallel processes.**

For government stakeholders, the value of the pilot is that it produces grounded, shipment-led evidence of what changes deliver measurable benefit now (through adoption and commercial practice), and what requires enabling action to scale (for example guidance, convening, and alignment on acceptance and interoperability).



4. Corridor profile

This section provides a practical “Japan corridor profile” as a reusable artefact. It translates pilot learning into a repeatable corridor pattern that can be adopted by a range of businesses and service providers.

The profile is deliberately vendor-neutral: it defines the minimum digital trade documents pack, roles and hand-offs required to achieve measurable reductions in friction, and it highlights readiness constraints and dependencies that must be addressed through onboarding, training and assurance. This aligns with UN paperless trade principles that prioritise repeatability, availability of reliable information to traders, and institutional capability-building over one-off technical demonstrations.

The profile is structured around a small number of priority lanes selected for:

- > economic relevance to UK–Japan trade
- > practical feasibility within the pilot window
- > high repeatability for SMEs and intermediaries.

The lanes are designed to cover both export and import flows, and to be compatible with multiple technology solutions. A publishable version of the profile is provided in this section; named participants and sensitive operational details are held separately for internal use.

Priority lanes and sectors

The pilot corridor profile focuses on two representative lanes that together cover common UK–Japan trade patterns and demonstrate both SME market-entry and established supply chain flows. A consumer-goods lane (e.g., apparel/accessories) reflects frequent SME shipments and highlights the “first shipment” barriers that trade digitalisation tools can reduce. A manufactured goods lane (e.g., industrial components) reflects repeatable supply chain traffic with a clear need for reliable document/data exchange, assurance, and coordination across logistics and compliance stakeholders. These lanes were selected because they are high frequency, operationally feasible within the project timeframe, and provide strong learning value on adoption and stakeholder readiness.

Stakeholders and minimum viable digital pack

The minimum viable corridor pattern involves exporters/importers, a freight forwarder or express carrier, customs brokers where used, and (optionally) trade finance stakeholders. The minimum viable digital trade document pack is designed so that:

- > the shipment can proceed end-to-end with fewer manual hand-offs and less re-keying
- > the evidence produced is sufficient for risk management, auditability and, where relevant, finance triggers.

The pack is intentionally defined by document type and acceptance status, not by platform.

Readiness constraints and dependencies

The main constraints are not the existence of technology but the readiness of stakeholders to use it consistently. Key dependencies include operational acceptance of digital trade documents by intermediaries, clear evidence expectations (what constitutes a reliable digital document set), and the ability to extract auditable logs and timestamps for measurement. For SMEs, the critical dependency is simplified onboarding and availability of reliable, practical guidance. For finance stakeholders, dependencies centre on assurance, data minimisation and agreed acceptance criteria.

Table 1: Readiness traffic light

Corridor component	Readiness (Green/Amber/Red)	Constraint	Mitigation approach
SME onboarding and guidance	Amber	Lack of practical know-how	Training, onboarding packs, templates
Intermediary operational acceptance	Amber	Process habit / liability points	Evidence expectations; assurance guidance
Cross-platform data-transfer	Green	Mapping effort	Reusable profiles; common identifiers
Finance participation	Amber	Assurance and acceptance criteria	Dummy-data PoCs; bank checklists
Authority-facing acceptance	Amber	Varies by document type	Engage early; focus on minimum datasets

Scale plan

At small scale (around 10 shipments), delivery can rely on hands-on support, manual coordination between participants, and bespoke mapping for the lane. At scale (>100 shipments), the corridor requires repeatable profiles, standard onboarding packs, clear conformance expectations for providers, and institutional training for intermediaries so that digital workflows become routine rather than exceptional. This is the point at which government support is most valuable: establishing shared corridor guidance and capability-building so adoption is not limited to a few well-supported pilots.

Table 2: Minimum viable digital pack

Document / data element	Purpose in corridor	Digital readiness today		Acceptance status (pilot learning)	Notes
Commercial invoice (structured)	Core commercial record	Green	Amber	Typically acceptable; varies by counterparty	Encourage structured data capture
Packing list	Goods detail	Green		Generally acceptable	Often easy digitalisation win
Transport record (e.g., AWB / carrier consignment record)	Movement evidence and status	Green	Amber	Generally workable; depends on operator and lane	AWB and carrier shipment status data are widely used
Electronic Transferable Records (ETRs) (e.g., eBL / electronic title documents)	Transfer of control/title and enhanced assurance	Amber		Emerging; acceptance depends on governing law, insurer/bank comfort, and counterparty readiness	Expand as Japan's eBL framework and market acceptance mature
Certificate of origin (where needed)	Preference / compliance	Amber		Often hybrid	Digitalisation depends on issuer practice
SPS documents (where relevant)	Food/agri compliance	Amber	Red	Often hybrid	Requires issuer/authority alignment
Customs declaration dataset (not the full declaration)	Pre-advice / risk readiness	Amber		Depends on intermediary	Focus on minimum dataset for pre-checks
Trade finance presentation dataset (optional)	Finance trigger / assurance	Amber		Case-dependent	Use data minimisation + evidence pack

5. Case Study

UK–Japan corridor: Cross-platform data and document transfer pilot (TradeWaltz–Enigio)

What has the pilot tested?

This pilot tested whether an export workflow could be reproduced digitally across two different trade technology environments, without redesigning the underlying commercial roles or document formats. Using a reconstructed Japan to UK transaction, the pilot demonstrated the controlled transfer of structured trade data from a Japanese trade platform into an electronic original document environment in the UK, where the data was used to generate verifiable electronic originals and transfer them with controlled acceptance.

What is “cross-platform data and document transfer”?

In paper trade, parties rely on physical documents, courier movement and manual reconciliation to establish “what is true” about a shipment. In digital trade, the equivalent outcome requires more than emailing PDFs. Cross-platform data and document transfer means that:

- > structured data created in one system can be reused in another
- > the resulting documents remain verifiable and reliable when received elsewhere
- > control of the electronic original can be transferred without duplication
- > integrity and provenance can be proven independently through evidence (for example cryptographic hashing and lifecycle records).

This pilot tested that, using a minimum dataset export rather than direct system-to-system API integration.

Business-as-usual transaction

In a conventional workflow, the exporter prepares an invoice and supporting transport documentation and shares them with downstream parties through email, scanned copies or courier packs. Importers, forwarders, brokers and banks frequently re-key or re-verify the same information in their own systems. The “truth” of the transaction is established through trust in the paper original, the courier chain and repeated manual checking. This approach is workable but creates delay, duplication and avoidable error risk, particularly when multiple organisations and systems must coordinate across borders.

Digital transaction in the pilot

The pilot preserved the exporter’s existing commercial invoice template and replicated a representative automotive supply chain flow from Japan to the UK. TradeWaltz (as the originating trade platform) provided structured trade data in JSON format. Because the platforms were not directly API-integrated for this demonstration, the data and document transfer step was implemented as a controlled transfer of a minimum dataset, which was then ingested into the Enigio environment.

Within Enigio, the structured data was mapped to the retained invoice template and used to generate electronic original versions of the invoice and supporting transport documentation. The documents were sealed with cryptographic integrity controls (SHA-256 hashing) and transferred within a controlled digital envelope. Receipt and acceptance were explicitly recorded through authenticated acceptance steps, with lifecycle events captured so the state of the document could be verified and audited independently. The result was a trusted, cross-platform package comprising both human-readable documents and machine-readable data, with evidence of integrity, provenance and transfer control.

Key benefits

- > **Efficiency:** reduces duplication and repeated re-keying by enabling structured data created in one environment to be reused to populate documents and records in another. This decreases manual effort and limits downstream reconciliation.
- > **Risk saving:** Increases trust in the accuracy and integrity of the documents by providing a verifiable evidence trail (hash-based integrity, controlled acceptance, timestamped lifecycle records). This reduces error risk and strengthens auditability without requiring all parties to rely on a single platform as the trust anchor.
- > **Time saving:** Shortens the path from “documents created” to “documents accepted and usable” by removing reliance on physical movement and by enabling faster verification and reuse of the same record across systems. Even where human-in-the-loop steps remain necessary, they are reduced to clear governance points rather than repetitive manual checking across multiple parties.

From pilot to routine practice

This pilot shows cross-platform data and document transfer is technically achievable. The main remaining barriers are practical adoption: agreeing a minimum dataset and reusable profiles, reducing one-off mapping effort through templates, and improving stakeholder readiness at key acceptance points. In line with UN paperless trade principles, the priority now is implementation support; clear guidance on minimum digital packs, onboarding playbooks, assurance checklists, and targeted training for the organisations that operate trade day to day.

Table 3: Summary table

Category	Summary
Corridor	Japan to United Kingdom
Transaction type	Cross-platform data and document transfer (reconstructed representative transaction)
Sector	Automotive components (can be generalised to “manufactured goods” if preferred)
Mode	Maritime
Originating platform	TradeWaltz (structured trade data source)
Receiving / electronic original platform	Enigio trace:original (electronic original creation and controlled transfer)
Core electronic originals	Commercial invoice; supporting transport documentation
Structured data utilised	Minimum dataset provided in JSON; mapped to retained invoice template
Workflow tested	Data provided → ingestion/mapping → electronic original creation → sealing → controlled envelope transfer → acceptance and verification
Trust mechanisms	SHA-256 hashing; controlled transfer of possession/control; key-pair control; authenticated acceptance (e.g., OTP); timestamped lifecycle events
Human interaction points	Template validation/mapping; envelope creation; acceptance step; key handling; evidence capture
Key policy themes addressed	Cross-platform data and document transfer; data sharing and identifiers; trust and assurance evidence; adoption readiness and repeatability

6. Case Study

UK–Japan corridor: SME export workflow pilot (London Sock Company with Boex)

What has the pilot tested?

This pilot tested how a simplified digital trade workflow can support a UK SME seeking to reach customers in Japan by reducing documentary friction, uncertainty and “first shipment” risk. The focus was not deep integration into every downstream logistics system, but the SME user experience: how a smaller exporter can initiate a transaction, agree a shared set of documents with the buyer, maintain version control and visibility, and retain a reusable digital record that supports repeat shipments and export growth.

What is the Boex workflow?

Boex provides a shared digital workspace for buyer and seller to coordinate a trade transaction. In practical terms, it helps an SME replace fragmented email chains and scattered PDFs with a single place to open the trade, invite counterparties, create or upload documents, track status and approvals, and archive an agreed “transaction record” that can be reused. This aligns with the adoption challenge identified where SMEs often have the least capacity for complex onboarding, but the greatest potential benefit if practical barriers to market entry are reduced.

Business-as-usual transaction

In a conventional SME workflow, the exporter typically creates or collates documents (invoice, packing list and other supporting records), shares them through email, and relies on informal version control. The “truth” of the transaction is established through repeated manual checking and ad hoc confirmations between parties. Logistics steps may be handled through a separate e-commerce or fulfilment system, with carriers and forwarders operating in parallel to the commercial document exchange. For SMEs, the risk is that uncertainty, small mistakes, and unclear hand-offs lead to delays, unexpected costs, and loss of buyer confidence, particularly when shipping into a new market.

Digital transaction in the pilot

The pilot demonstrated a Boex-enabled SME workflow for a UK exporter engaging with the Japan corridor. The workflow supported the buyer and seller side of the journey: opening the trade, inviting the buyer into a shared environment, creating and uploading key documents, agreeing a shared version of the transaction, and retaining an auditable record for reuse. A key operational point is that this workflow sits alongside existing fulfilment habits rather than requiring a full redesign. The Boex layer should therefore be understood as a document coordination, version control and market-entry confidence layer, rather than a replacement for carrier systems. SME adoption succeeds when digital tools integrate with existing working practices and reduce uncertainty at the commercial documentation layer.

Key benefits

- > **Cost saving:** Reduces duplicated effort and rework by bringing document creation, sharing and version control into one shared workspace, reducing the time spent chasing emails and reissuing “final” versions.
- > **Risk saving:** Lowers “first shipment” risk by improving clarity over what documents are required, which version is agreed, and what has been approved by the counterparty, with a more auditable record of actions than informal email exchanges.
- > **Time saving:** Speeds market-entry execution by reducing coordination delays between buyer and seller and by creating a reusable transaction pattern for repeat shipments, even where shipping execution remains handled through existing fulfilment tools.

From pilot to routine practice

This pilot indicates that SME-focused digital trade tools can materially reduce the practical barriers to entering a new market. The remaining constraints are primarily adoption infrastructure: clear guidance on minimum document packs, simple onboarding pathways through chambers and intermediaries, and role-based training so SMEs and their service providers can use these workflows routinely rather than as one-off demonstrations.

Table 4: Summary table

Category	Summary
Corridor	United Kingdom to Japan
Transaction type	SME export workflow (buyer–seller coordination and document management)
Exporter	London Sock Company (UK SME)
Buyer / counterparty	Japan-based buyer
Platform utilised	Boex (shared trade workspace)
Operational model	Boex trade record sits alongside existing fulfilment and carrier processes
Core documents in scope	Commercial invoice and supporting trade documents (final confirmed set to be inserted)
Workflow tested	Open trade, invite counterparty, create/upload documents, shared agreement/version control, archive and reuse trade rec-ord.
Human interaction points	Document creation/upload; buyer/seller confirmation steps; hand-off into fulfilment/shipping process
Key policy themes addressed	SME market-entry and export growth; onboarding and first-shipment friction; practical adoption patterns

7. Case Study

UK-Japan corridor: Trade finance digitalisation pilot

What has the pilot tested?

This pilot tested how a paper-based documentary credit transaction between the UK and Japan could be replicated digitally using a reliable system's technology, while preserving the same underlying commercial roles, document transfer logic and bank workflow.

What is a documentary credit?

A documentary credit (DC) is a written undertaking given by a bank to the seller (beneficiary) on the instruction of the buyer (applicant) to pay at sight or at a determinable future date, up to a stated amount. Such undertakings are conditional upon the beneficiary's compliance and are satisfied by a 'complying presentation' of documents. Businesses use DCs when they want greater security in cross-border trade, particularly when the buyer and seller do not know each other well, operate under different legal systems, or trade higher-value goods. In practice, DCs enable businesses to trade with new overseas customers, reduce counterparty risk, support bank financing, and create a clearer framework for managing shipment, payment and compliance across borders.

Business-as-usual transaction

In a conventional workflow, the exporter prepares the presentation set as a physical pack, typically including relevant transport and supporting documents, and sends the pack to the nominated bank, which then scans and uploads the documents into its internal workflow systems. If no discrepancy is found, the bank prepares the forwarding pack and a cover letter to be sent by international courier to the issuing bank.

Digital transaction in the pilot

The reliable system selected for the pilot (Enigio) recreates the transport document as a trace:original document (capable of possession) and securely transfers possession to the exporter's representative. Authentication is completed via a secure link, a one-time passcode, and a stored private key. Once the transfer is accepted, the sender can no longer alter the document.

The exporter's representative verifies the document state in the reliable system's environment and creates a digital envelope containing the original transport document, the beneficiary certificate, the delivery note, and the cover letter. This envelope is sent through the platform to the nominated bank (Lloyds), which accepts it, completes the transfer handshake, and transfers the documents to the proprietary digital system to conduct documentary credit workflow.

Once the request is approved, the nominated bank prepares a digital forwarding pack, including the courier receipt, invoice, delivery note, beneficiary certificate and its own cover letter, and passes the documents to the issuing bank (MUFG) digitally. The documents are then verified using the issuing bank's standard documentary credit checking approach and executed.

Key benefits

- > **Cost saving:** There is no need to ship documents physically.
- > **Risk saving:** Delivery risk is limited. The use of high-quality digital documents and structured data increases data accuracy. The data is securely stored through cryptographic hashing and verification.
- > **Time saving:** The full presentation, forwarding and receipt process took only one hour in the demonstration, compared with the delays, costs and failure points associated with physical courier movements.

From pilot to routine practice

The partners identified the need for a corridor-level approach that combines bank engagement, model clauses, client awareness and practical onboarding.

Table 5: Summary table

Category	Summary
Corridor	United Kingdom → Japan
Transaction type	Digital documentary credit presentation
DC type	Sight documentary credit
Exporter / beneficiary	Textile Manufacturer
Nominated bank	Lloyds
Issuing bank	MUFG
Core electronic original	Courier receipt
Supporting documents	Invoice, delivery note, beneficiary certificate, cover letters
Platform utilised	Enigio trace:original
Workflow tested	Digital presentation by beneficiary, receipt and checking by nominated bank, bank-to-bank forwarding, receipt by is-suing bank
Trust mechanisms	Controlled transfer of possession, key-pair control, OTP authentication, cryptographic notarisation, time-stamped lifecycle events
Human interaction points	Envelope creation, transfer acceptance, key download and storage, bank checking and forwarding
Key policy themes addressed	Trade finance interoperability, digital possession/control, bank workflow compatibility

8. Portfolio results and thematic findings

The portfolio evidence indicates that the key constraints to scale are increasingly capability and implementation, rather than the availability of technology. Where interoperability and secure data exchange were demonstrated, the remaining barriers were typically operational: onboarding effort, uneven familiarity with digital processes across intermediaries, and the lack of shared “how-to” guidance that SMEs and frontline operators can follow. The central policy implication is therefore that future UK–Japan work should prioritise adoption enablers; reliable information availability to traders, repeatable corridor profiles, and targeted training and onboarding for the stakeholders that make trade function in practice (ports/logistics intermediaries, border agencies, and trade finance teams), alongside continued work on standards alignment.

8.1 Portfolio KPI and operational outcomes

Across the portfolio, the most consistent benefits arise from reducing duplication, re-keying and uncertainty at hand-offs. Where data and documents were made available in structured form and could be verified across platforms, as illustrated in the Enigio - TradeWaltz pilot, the process shifted from manual reconciliation toward a more predictable “data-complete” workflow. This reduces the number of interventions required to prepare an import-ready pack, lowers exception rates, and improves visibility for traders and service providers. These effects are most significant for SMEs because fixed costs and “first shipment” effort do not scale down with shipment size; simplifying onboarding and reducing documentary friction therefore has a disproportionate benefit for new market entry and export growth.

8.2 Thematic findings

The themes below synthesise what was observed across pilots into practical target states and recommendations. Each theme is structured to separate evidence (“what we observed”) from implications (“so what”), and to articulate what “good” looks like in a way that governments and industry can act on. These themes are designed to be reusable for future UK–Japan corridor work and to support scalability beyond the specific pilot participants.



Theme 1 — Information availability is the primary constraint

Observed:	Tools exist, but outcomes depend on whether traders and intermediaries know what’s possible, what evidence is required, and how to onboard.
So what:	In UN paperless trade terms, the corridor needs an “information availability” layer that turns policy into usable guidance.
Good looks like:	A corridor onboarding pack (minimum digital document pack, what remains hybrid, evidence required) plus role-based training.
Next test:	Targeted onboarding and training delivered through chambers, ports/forwarders and SME networks using the corridor profile assets.

Theme 2 — Data-transfer works when profiles and identifiers are agreed

Observed:	Cross-platform data-transfer is achievable when a minimum dataset, consistent identifiers and an auditable evidence trail are defined; the friction is onboarding and repeatability.
So what:	Adoption will stall if data-transfer remains bespoke; governments can accelerate uptake by promoting reusable profiles and conformance expectations rather than selecting vendors.
Good looks like:	A Japan corridor profile (minimum viable dataset + document pack + evidence requirements) implementable across multiple solutions.
Next test:	Publish the corridor profile and minimum evidence pack (internal or external) and run an adoption sprint with new firms to prove repeatability.

Theme 3 — Trust and assurance is operational, not abstract

Observed:	Where parties can verify integrity/provenance and understand liability points, they adopt; where assurance is unclear, workflows revert to manual or hybrid steps.
So what:	Trust is built through practical assurance artefacts (audit trails, acceptance steps, evidence packs), not technology claims alone.
Good looks like:	A shared assurance checklist for traders, intermediaries, banks and authorities: what must be logged, what is acceptable evidence, and how exceptions are handled.
Next test:	Agree a corridor-level assurance pack and trial it with forwarders/ports and border stakeholders as a training artefact.

Theme 4 — Trade finance is feasible cross-jurisdiction

Observed:	Cross-jurisdiction bank participation is feasible where presentation method, evidence and assurance expectations are agreed in advance. The remaining barriers are operational adoption and uneven incentives across the parties.
So what:	Finance adoption scales when customers create clear demand for digital presentation and banks can support it through agreed operating models, rather than being asked to onboard multiple platforms and presentation methods.
Good looks like:	A lightweight bank participation model: minimum evidence, clear rules basis, defined operational benefits, and repeatable onboarding for participating banks and clients.
Next test:	A repeatable bank participation profile with minimum evidence requirements, standard operating assumptions and a small set of measurable finance KPIs.

Theme 5 — SMEs benefit most when onboarding and “first shipment” friction is reduced

Observed:	SMEs face disproportionate set-up costs; when tools reduce paperwork and uncertainty, SMEs gain a realistic path to new customers and export growth.
So what:	Economic growth comes from SME market access; the lever is repeatable onboarding pathways and intermediary enablement, not more isolated tech pilots.
Good looks like:	SME-first onboarding (clear “what you do differently”), supported first shipment pathway via forwarders/brokers, and simple templates.
Next test:	Chamber-led recruitment + onboarding sprint using the corridor profile and simple workflow templates.

9. Recommendations and staged roadmap

The pilot evidence indicates that the main opportunity is to accelerate adoption by reducing onboarding friction and improving capability across key stakeholder groups. These recommendations are designed to be feasible within the current corridor environment while remaining consistent with longer-term legal and system

Table 6: Recommendation matrix

Ref	Recommendation (action)	Owner	Dependency	Timeframe
R1	Run role-based training for ports/forwarders/brokers, customs-facing teams, and SMEs.	Govts + industry bodies	Training delivery partner	0–6 months
R2	Establish a UK–Japan corridor working group to steward profiles, evidence packs and onboarding pathways gathering stakeholders from across the value-chain.	Govts + ICC	Convening + secretariat	6–18 months
R3	Revisit significance of connectivity to customs declaration systems	Govts + customs authorities + intermediaries	data requirements + agreed minimum dataset	6–18 months
R4	Develop and test a “bank participation profile” (minimum data set + assurance checklist + importer benefit case)	Banks + Govts	Bank willingness; confidentiality controls	6–18 months
R5	Work towards formal recognition/acceptance pathways for remaining hybrid documents (where appropriate).	Govts	Legal review; stakeholder acceptance	18+ months
R6	Scale pilots from “supported” to “repeatable” by running >100 shipments.	Govts + intermediaries	Onboarding + conformance	18+ months

10. Lessons learned and implications for future interventions

This pilot portfolio reinforces a consistent lesson: the core technical feasibility of secure digital documentation and cross-platform interoperability is increasingly demonstrable, but corridor-scale outcomes depend on adoption infrastructure.

The most valuable investments are therefore those that convert pilots into repeatable patterns: availability of reliable information for traders, structured onboarding, role-specific training, and corridor governance artefacts (profiles, evidence packs, conformance checks). These are the practical “capability multipliers” that allow many firms to benefit without bespoke support. Partner feedback also indicated that delivery was materially strengthened by visible UK and Japan government involvement throughout, creating a shared unity of purpose that increased industry confidence and engagement and helped align policy intent with practical commercial and technical implementation.

What worked well in this programme was the vendor-neutral portfolio approach: it enabled practical demonstrations across different stakeholder configurations and made it possible to distinguish between platform capability and corridor readiness constraints. What did not work as efficiently were activities that required high coordination without pre-agreed profiles (for example, bespoke mapping and evidence capture requirements), which reinforces the case for corridor-wide templates and standard onboarding packs. The finance strand underlined that bank participation is feasible under privacy-preserving constraints, but it needs a clear value narrative for importers and banks and a lightweight participation model.

Table 7: Opportunities for future work

Opportunity	Why it matters	Estimated impact	Key dependency
UK–Japan corridor onboarding and training programme (ports, brokers, SMEs)	Directly addresses adoption constraints	High adoption uplift; SME participation growth	Delivery partner + comms channels
Conformance harness + minimum evidence pack standard	Makes interoperability repeatable and auditable	Faster onboarding; lower exception rates	Agreement on minimum data-set/log set
Bank participation profile (import + export finance)	Unlocks finance-linked adoption	Improved access to working capital; faster checks	Bank alignment + confidentiality model
<10 to >100 shipment flows	Proves scalability beyond pilots	Strong evidence base; repeatability	Intermediary readiness and support
Corridor working group (UK–Japan)	Maintains assets and coordination	Sustained adoption + policy continuity	Secretariat and stakeholder commitment

Delivery partners



ICC United Kingdom

ICC is the world's largest business organisation, representing 45 million companies with 1 billion employees in over 170 countries. It is the only business organisation with UN Observer Status and acts as a leading voice for business at the UN, G7, G20, World Trade Organization and other major international institutions. ICC United Kingdom provides a mechanism for UK industry to engage effectively in shaping international policy, standards and rules. We are a leading voice on digital trade ecosystems, Co-Founder of the International Centre for Digital Trade and Innovation, supporter of the Digital Trade Test Bed and Co-Chair the B2B Cluster for the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda.

iccwbo.uk



International Centre for Digital Trade and Innovation

The International Centre for Digital Trade and Innovation (iC4DTI) is an independent, not-for-profit Community Interest Company established to drive the digital transformation of trade on a global scale. It is a partnership that brings together government, industry, academia to accelerate the pace and scale of trade digitalisation, supporting the ICC Digital Standards Initiative. iC4DTI is co-founded by ICC United Kingdom, HM Revenue and Customs, Tees Valley Combined Authority and Teesside University.

ic4dti.org



Digital Trade Test Bed

The Digital Trade Testbed (DTT) is a world-class, £3.5 million research and development facility based at Teesside International Airport in the north east of England. Established in 2025, the facility is part of the largest port regeneration site in Europe and fifth largest port in the UK. It is a public-private partnership led by Teesside University and supported by Tees Valley Combined Authority, ICC United Kingdom and the iC4DTI. DTT promotes open, interoperable data ecosystems that make MSME trade cheaper, faster, simpler and more sustainable. It offers a real-world test environment for innovation, validation and scaling solutions across road, rail, air, sea using IoT, robotics, automation, 5G, AI and immersive technology. The facility is capable of simulating trade corridors, supply chains and ports worldwide.

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