

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee  
Wednesday 11 September 2024  
13th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

## PE2029: Nationalise Clydeport to bring the ports and harbours on the river Clyde into public ownership

### Introduction

**Petitioner** Robert Buirds on behalf of the Campaign to Save Inchgreen Dry Dock

**Petition summary** Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to:

- use powers under the Harbours Act 1964 and the Marine Navigation Act 2013 to revoke the Peel Ports Group, (Clydeport Operations Limited)'s, status as the Harbour Authority for the river Clyde and its estuary;
- establish a municipal port authority in Clydeport's place and bring the strategic network of ports and harbours along the river Clyde into public ownership;
- and compulsorily purchase Inchgreen Dry Dock for the benefit of the Inverclyde community.

**Webpage** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2029>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 20 September 2023](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government, BAE Systems, the Malin Group, Ferguson Marine, Maritime UK, Peel Ports Group Ltd, British Ports Association, UK Chamber of Shipping, Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL), CalMac Ferries Ltd, Glasgow City Council, Inverclyde Council and North Ayrshire Council.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new written submissions from BAE Systems, Inverclyde Council, North Ayrshire Council, the Peel Ports Group, Ferguson Marine, the British Ports Association, Ferguson Marine Trade Union Representatives, CalMac Ferries Ltd, the Malin Group, the Scottish Government, Professor Alfred Baird, and the Petitioner, which are set out in **Annexe C**. Glasgow City Council and Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) declined to provide a formal response.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage](#).

5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial position on this petition on 28 June 2023.](#)
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 1,587 signatures have been received on this petition.

## **Action**

8. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

**Clerks to the Committee**  
**September 2024**

## Annexe A: Summary of petition

### PE2029: Nationalise Clydeport to bring the ports and harbours on the river Clyde into public ownership

#### Petitioner

Robert Buirds on behalf of the Campaign to Save Inchgreen Dry Dock

#### Date Lodged

5 June 2023

#### Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to:

- use powers under the Harbours Act 1964 and the Marine Navigation Act 2013 revoke the Peel Ports Group, (Clydeport Operations Limited)'s, status as the Harbour Authority for the river Clyde and its estuary;
- establish a municipal port authority in Clydeport's place and bring the strategic network of ports and harbours along the river Clyde into public ownership; and
- compulsorily purchase Inchgreen Dry Dock for the benefit of the Inverclyde community.

#### Previous action

I have raised the issue with Katy Clark MSP, [who has called on the Scottish Government to progress the Ardrossan Harbour](#) upgrade delayed by Peel Ports intransigence. She has also lodged a motion calling for [Ardrossan Harbour to be taken into public ownership](#), and [called for a ministerial task force to look at the Hunterston Port development](#).

As Inchgreen Campaign secretary, I have written to Scottish Ministers regarding Peel Ports ownership of the dry dock and its impact on Inverclyde.

#### Background information

The Peel Ports Group owns Clydeport, which operates as the harbour authority for 450 square miles along the River Clyde. They have anchorages near residential areas and continually fail to engage with communities.

Clydeport admitted to safety breaches taking place between 2000 and 2007, for which they were [fined £650,000 in 2014](#). Further safety concerns were raised when two ships broke away from their moorings in 2021.

In 2021, Peel Ports leased the UK's largest dry dock, Inchgreen, to Atlas Decommissioning, and promised the creation of 100 jobs that have failed to materialise. The dry dock has lain empty for 20 years with many broken promises to maintain and return it to a fully operational marine facility.

**CPPP/S6/24/13/7**

Peel Ports receive hundreds of millions in grants; their parent companies are registered in the Cayman Islands tax haven. Inverclyde needs jobs and the dry dock could provide them, but Peel Ports have a stranglehold on our industrial development!

## **Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2029 on 20 September 2023**

**The Convener:** The next petition, PE2029, on nationalising Clydeport, to bring the ports and harbours on the River Clyde into public ownership, was lodged by Robert Buirds on behalf of the campaign to save Inchgreen dry dock. The petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to use powers under the Harbours Act 1964 and the Marine Navigation Act 2013 to revoke the status of Peel Ports Group's Clydeport Operations Limited as the harbour authority for the River Clyde and its estuary; to establish a municipal port authority in Clydeport's place and bring the strategic network of ports and harbours along the River Clyde into public ownership; and to compulsorily purchase Inchgreen dry dock for the benefit of the Inverclyde community.

As background to the petition, the petitioner has raised concerns about ships breaking away from their moorings at Clydeport-managed ports and the future of Inchgreen dry dock in Greenock. The SPICe briefing notes that the Harbours Act 1964 allows the Scottish ministers to make an order that relieves a harbour authority of its statutory powers, but only if the harbour authority applies for the order or consents to its being made, or if ministers have consulted with the authority and are satisfied that it is unlikely to object.

In responding to the petition, the Scottish Government has noted that

“Scottish ports operate in a commercial environment usually with no direct public funding”.

The response goes on to argue:

“The activities Clydeport facilitates, the employment which it provides for, and the investment made in recent years, are of significant importance to the Scottish economy.”

The Scottish Government has stated that it

“has no plans to explore compulsorily purchasing, revoking the powers of, or nationalising Clydeport.”

The petitioner has also provided a submission with further details about the campaign's concerns surrounding the regeneration of Inchgreen dry dock as well as concerns about the delays to the Adrossan harbour project.

Our MSP colleague Katy Clark had hoped to join us for the consideration of the petition but, unfortunately, she has been unable to do so. However, she has provided a written submission that details various concerns that her constituents have raised about Clydeport's management of ports and harbours along the Ayrshire coast.

Paul Sweeney MSP, who has an interest in the petition, is staying with us following our consideration of the concessionary petition that we have just heard about. Before we as a committee have a think about the petition and consider comments or options, I invite Mr Sweeney to contribute.

**Paul Sweeney:** Thank you, convener.

I have a personal interest in the petition. I have a background in the shipbuilding industry on the Clyde, working for BAE Systems, and I have maintained a long-standing interest in the development of the Clyde corridor as an industrial asset for the wider city region.

I have had long-standing concerns about the port's general long-term decline as a major port. That stems from ambitious plans that were launched around 20 years ago to develop Hunterston and Greenock as one of the major transatlantic trans-shipment terminals for containers coming across the Atlantic. At that time, huge investment was planned. Clydeport plc then merged with, or was purchased by, Peel Ports Group, which also owns the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company and has a major interest in the Mersey. That is another competing port on the west coast of Britain. Subsequently, huge investment—in the order of billions of pounds—has gone into developing the Liverpool 1 container terminal, and the focus of Peel Ports Group's operations as a port authority has very much been on the Mersey at the expense of the Clyde.

There is a general, long-standing concern that the Clyde has been in a pattern of managed decline and disinvestment over many years and that the focus has been very much on Merseyside, to the extent that, if people want pilotage on the River Clyde, they call a call centre on the Mersey to get access to it. The situation seems to me to be unacceptable on a number of fronts.

Perhaps there are some parallels with previous inquiries into the management of airports in Scotland. There was an issue with one company managing both Glasgow airport and Edinburgh airport, and having a conflict of interest in that regard. There has not been any serious inquiry into, or study of, the potential long-term economic effects on the west of Scotland and the greater Glasgow city regions.

There is, of course, a container terminal in Greenock, but it does not even feature in the top 10 British ports any more. It has been in decline for a long time. At one time, it was the fifth-biggest container port in the UK, but it no longer appears in the top 100 ports in Europe, for example. There is a major long-term concern.

There is a high correlation between the level of freight traffic that comes through ports and levels of economic growth, so there is a yoke on the west of Scotland's potential. We have recently seen the publication of population statistics and that the west of Scotland is in long-term decline. There is a broader issue that the Government really needs to pay more attention to. We need to have a serious ports policy and a policy for growing freight traffic through Scotland, ship movements and associated industries, such as the ship repair industry. To that end, the petitioner has made some serious and valid points.

We should be guided by measurable outputs. What is the goal to grow the Clyde? What is the goal to develop and invest in the Clyde and its operations? That is not clear at this point in time. There have been stop-start projects associated with Inchgreen dry dock, which is the biggest mainland dry dock in Great Britain. We should contrast that with what has happened in Belfast, where there has been

massive investment in the former Harland & Wolff shipyard site. Nothing corresponding is happening on the Clyde. I have concerns on a number of fronts.

In a more parochial sense, the upper Clyde is, in effect, not dredged any more beyond the Govan shipyard site and at Braehead, where the King George V dock sits. That is a major concern, because there is a real dearth of recreational traffic on the upper Clyde. Anyone who is familiar with Clydeside around Glasgow will know that not many boats go there. That is in contrast with Merseyside, for example, which teems with marinas, wharfage and lots of recreational craft. If Glasgow had a marina at Pacific Quay, that would be a huge boon for the city. It would generate millions of pounds of revenue. No attention is being applied to that.

It is quite extraordinary that, in the early 1990s, a private bill was passed that effectively gave quasi-legislative control to a private enterprise, to manage 450 square miles of riverine land in the west of Scotland, with huge legal privileges and byelaws, including the management of the riverbed itself. The obligations that that enterprise has in legislation to maintain a navigable channel as far as the tidal wharf at Glasgow Green have not been adhered to for many years. That has starved, damaged and stymied the Clyde's potential from central Glasgow all the way down to the estuary. That merits a broader inquiry. Frankly, I am not impressed by the Government's blasé brush-off in its response to the committee and the petition.

**The Convener:** Thank you very much, Mr Sweeney.

I hesitate to invite colleagues to consider matters at all, because Mr Sweeney's knowledge is fairly comprehensive. Do you have any suggestions about what the committee might consider doing, Mr Sweeney?

**Paul Sweeney:** The issue has been raised in the House of Commons and the Scottish Parliament over the years, but it has not had any serious focus. That has been most frustrating, and a number of parliamentarians across parties have expressed concern about that.

The creation of a space to look at the issue in greater depth would be fantastic, and this committee has a good opportunity to free that space for wider consideration. Stakeholders up and down the Clyde could be considered. I know that colleagues have suggested some stakeholder groups in the estuary and the Firth of Clyde area. Perhaps it would be helpful to consider submissions from the greater Glasgow city region councils and major industrial companies on the Clyde, such as BAE Systems and the Malin Group, which are looking to develop infrastructure on the Clyde, as well as Ferguson Marine and other parties that have industrial operations on the Clyde.

It might also be worth speaking to Maritime UK and other trade bodies that look at port development, to get some analysis of the longer-term growth of the Clyde as a port relative to competitor ports in the UK, and to start to establish a base of evidence on what is going on.

It would also be good if Peel Ports Group responded. It is important that it justifies its position and sets out its plans for investment on the Clyde. No one is against the group per se; what we are concerned about is the lack of clear operational ambition for the Clyde as an asset. I think that, if the group were to rise to that challenge, people would be more relaxed about its stewardship of the river.

**The Convener:** I am very grateful for your experience, passion and comprehensive range of suggestions, Mr Sweeney. Colleagues, I am very happy to embrace all of Mr Sweeney's suggestions. Are there any others that you might wish to add?

**Maurice Golden:** The committee needs to be clear that we are conflating two separate asks here. One ask is in relation to what we have heard this morning about the future of the Clyde. The other—which is what I believe the petition focuses on—is about a change of ownership with regard to the future of the Clyde. I think that we just need to be clear that one does not necessarily link to the other—but it could. Our focus needs to be on the latter point, although it would be useful to have a fully informed opinion on the future of the Clyde from interested parties.

With that in mind, it might be useful to write to the Scottish Government regarding both aspects: the future of the Clyde and the ownership issue. In particular, I refer to Katy Clark's submission, which says that the former transport minister Jenny Gilruth

“acknowledged that the private ownership of harbours ‘can substantially slow progress in relation to improvements and it also comes at a cost to the public purse.’”

If that is, indeed, Scottish Government policy, it strikes me that that would lead one to a conclusion that the petition should be warmly welcomed. However, it is important to clarify that with the Scottish Government.

In addition, it is worth while writing to the British Ports Association, the UK Chamber of Shipping, Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd, CalMac Ferries, Inverclyde Council, North Ayrshire Council and Glasgow City Council.

**The Convener:** Those were some of the suggestions, along with others, that Mr Sweeney made.

Yes, I do think that the petition opens up issues about which I knew very little, I have to say. Despite being born, raised and someone who has lived in and around the city of Glasgow—through which the Clyde is the dominant feature—all my life, I have not really given any recent thought to the issues that are raised in the petition or, indeed, to the issues that Paul Sweeney has discussed in some detail.

From time to time over the decades, I have wondered about the lack of any transformation. I used to come home from school when there were still wharf buildings all the way into the city centre along the Clyde and things were happening in them. They were all done away with, and then we had river taxis for all of five minutes, which did not amount to very much. After that, I seem to remember a seaplane would fly to Oban from somewhere along the river.



Compared to other major cities that you visit where the river is still a teeming lifeline through the city, the Clyde sits rather dormant and apart from city life. Some of the issues that the petitioner and Mr Sweeney raise might underpin some of the lethargy that is associated with all that.

I am very happy to take forward all those issues at this stage. Obviously, we will consider the petition further and decide what we might want to do when we get the various responses.

Are members content with that approach?

**Members indicated agreement.**

## **Annexe C: Written submissions**

### **BAE Systems submission, 18 October 2023**

#### **PE2029/D: Nationalise Clydeport to bring the ports and harbours on the river Clyde into public ownership.**

Due to BAE Systems commercial relationship with Peel Ports, it would be inappropriate to provide specific comment on this petition.

BAE Systems is committed to being part of a thriving Maritime community on the River Clyde, and would welcome involvement in any future formal discussions on this or any matters relating to the maritime industrial base on the River Clyde.

### **Inverclyde Council submission, 20 October 2023**

#### **PE2029/E: Nationalise Clydeport to bring the ports and harbours on the river Clyde into public ownership**

I refer to your letter of 22 September 2023 in connection with the petition PE2029: Nationalise Clydeport to bring the ports and harbours on the river Clyde into public ownership calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to:

1. use powers under the Harbours Act 1964 and the Marine Navigation Act 2013 to revoke the Peel Ports Group, (Clydeport Operations Limited)'s, status as the Harbour Authority for the river Clyde and its estuary;
2. establish a municipal port authority in Clydeport's place and bring the strategic network of ports and harbours along the river Clyde into public ownership; and
3. compulsorily purchase Inchgreen Dry Dock for the benefit of the Inverclyde community.

Due to the particularly tight timescales associated with your request, Officers have not had the opportunity to present the petition to Members in a formal setting however we believe that individually the twenty-two Members of the Council were asked by the petitioner to support their petition and we understand that only one Member of the Council did so.

Turning to the three points of the petition:

1. Inverclyde Council has worked with Peel Ports Limited (Clydeport Operations Ltd) on a number of projects in recent years and have developed a firm partnership in delivering the Greenock Ocean Terminal and the Inchgreen City Deal projects. Both of these projects have attracted/are attracting significant private sector investment. The projects were developed by Inverclyde Council and approved by the full City Region Cabinet with the support of the Scottish and UK Governments. Indeed, we have formed a Joint Venture Partnership to deliver the Inchgreen project over the economic lifetime of the project (75 years). Furthermore, Inverclyde Council and Peel Ports led in the Metropolitan City Region Green Freeport Bid.

2. In our recent experience Peel have displayed an appropriate level of expertise in managing the Ports and Harbours on the Clyde.
3. Over a number of years, the petitioner has attempted to have the Inchgreen Dry Dock asset acquired from Peel either for the ownership to be transferred to Inverclyde Council or to Scottish Ministers through compulsory purchase and there has neither been any appetite nor funds to facilitate this desire. Having been closely involved in the preparation of the City Deal project whilst the drydock is identified as an asset for West Central Scotland it also carries liabilities. The Council did not feel it appropriate to include the drydock facility in the City Deal bid.

We trust that this sets out our position.

### **North Ayrshire Council submission, 20 October 2023**

#### **PE2029/F: Nationalise Clydeport to bring the ports and harbours on the river Clyde into public ownership**

Thank you for your letter of the 22 September in respect of the above-mentioned petition.

Clydeport Operations Ltd/Peel Ports operate marine facilities at Ardrossan and Hunterston within North Ayrshire. The Council has no formal position as to the ownership and operation of these assets as a whole, however at the meeting of Full Council of the 13 September a motion regarding the continued provision of Ardrossan as the ferry port to Arran was considered. The motion was wide ranging and subject to a number of amendments including the nationalisation/bringing Ardrossan Harbour into public ownership. However, the final motion agreed did not include an ask of Scottish Government to nationalise/bring the asset into public ownership. I have attached an extract of the Council minute for your information<sup>1</sup>.

In respect of the second part of the petition and notwithstanding the above, any ownership model should provide effective, reliable, and efficient services to the benefit of the local economy and its communities in line with the principles of Community Wealth Building.

The final part of the petition relates to an asset out with North Ayrshire and I have no comment to make in this respect.

I trust this information is helpful in the consideration of the petition.

---

<sup>1</sup> Note from clerk – [the extract has not been included here but is available on North Ayrshire Council's website \(see item 14 on pages 5-10\).](#)

## Peel Ports Group submission, 20 October 2023

### **PE2029/G: Nationalise Clydeport to bring the ports and harbours on the river Clyde into public ownership**

Thank you for your letter dated 22 September 2023 in relation to petition PE2029, originated by Mr Robert Buirds, which calls for the nationalisation of Clydeport and the revocation of our Harbour Authority status.

I would firstly like to make clear Clydeport's enduring and long-term commitment to its many employees and landmark facilities across Scotland, as well as to continuing to create quality jobs and support growth and prosperity for the local, regional and national economies of the country.

Clydeport has been an integral and successful part of the wider Peel Ports Group (Peel Ports) for more than 20 years and during this period, we have invested many millions of pounds into our operations on the west coast, providing hundreds of direct and indirect jobs for Scotland over many years.

As a clear sign of our ongoing efforts and material commitment to Scotland, in the last three years alone, £80 million has been invested in infrastructure and projects designed to enhance opportunities for growth across our facilities on the Clyde, certainly one of the largest investments made by any organisation in the region.

These investments include £25m on two new state-of-the-art cranes for freight at Greenock Ocean Terminal in what is the largest single investment at the container terminal since it opened in 1969. This is just one of the initiatives we are undertaking at the site which will future-proof its operations, safeguard jobs and underpin the local and Scottish economy.

Investments such as this enable the efficient export of Scottish products to the world, supporting both major brands and SMEs, and attracting significant opportunities for inward investment.

In addition, I am very pleased to report that we have welcomed a record number of cruise calls and passenger numbers to Greenock, with 89 liners visiting our new dedicated pontoon thus far in 2023, a rise of over 25 per cent on last year.

This increase in tourism benefits visitor attractions and businesses across Inverclyde, central Scotland and beyond, with around 150,000 passengers passing through the port over the course of this year.

A new £20 million cruise visitor centre opened at the port in recent months as part of a wider investment project involving Clydeport, the Scottish and UK Governments and other partners, and we are confident that this year's performance will further improve in the years ahead.

Further south on the Clyde estuary, one of the country's most valuable assets for attracting inward investment, the transformation of Hunterston PARC in Ayrshire, is set to deliver thousands of highly skilled jobs over the coming years.

Our plans to grow the blue, green and circular economies at the site are fully aligned with Scotland's national economic strategy and 2045 net zero ambitions. This was evidenced by the site being designated as a strategic location under the Scottish Government's National Planning Framework 4 earlier this year.

Plans for the former ore and coal terminal include a major manufacturing facility for offshore wind projects, an onshore salmon and aquaculture facility, as well as a testing site for retrofitting electric wind sails to bulk cargo vessels based there. Over half of the available land at Hunterston is now under option, and we are committed to continuing to build on the significant achievements at this landmark site.

Clydeport's major investments also continue at our King George V Dock site in Glasgow, with a £6 million new facility for the Scottish highways maintenance market completed in recent months, which will underpin a crucial need for safer roads in winter as well as creating jobs at the port.

Additionally, we continue to make sustainable investments in line with Peel Ports' ESG strategy. Peel Ports has made strong progress in developing this agenda and is committed to becoming a net zero operator across all its sites by 2040, five years ahead of the Scottish Government's own national decarbonisation targets.

Peel Ports is one of the first UK port operators to make such a commitment, and recently announced that it has reduced greenhouse gas emissions across its port operations by one third in the last three years.

Our company-wide initiatives to decarbonise our operations in Scotland were recently recognised through the Green Champion Award at the Glasgow Business Awards, with those efforts subsequently endorsed by a motion in the Scottish Parliament presented by MSP Stuart MacMillan which was supported by a number of MSPs.

In addition, as the Harbour Authority for the Clyde, Clydeport is responsible for the safe and efficient navigation of vessels, enforcing safety regulations to prevent accidents and environmental incidents in the area. The Clyde has benefitted from the significant investments Peel Ports has made locally and nationally in leading marine technology and dredging capability.

Beyond capital infrastructure, Clydeport continues to invest heavily in people. This includes the training and development of pilots, which has increased by over 25% in the last three years, and a commitment to the next generation of local workers, with a programme to ensure at least 5% of all Clydeport employees are apprentices within the next five years.

As a business, Clydeport works closely with different local authorities and partners including Inverclyde Council, North Ayrshire Council, Renfrewshire Council, Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce and Transport Scotland, amongst many others, ensuring we address potential challenges with a true partnership approach.

In the preamble to the petition, a number of additional points were raised and we respectfully respond as follows:

- **Ardrossan Harbour:** we are disappointed at the continued delays in this important project, which is awaiting the outcome of Transport for Scotland's review of the business case. All of the partners involved in the project including CalMac Ferries Limited, Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited, Transport Scotland, North Ayrshire Council, Isle of Arran Ferry Committee, and the Ardrossan Harbour Company Limited have been working together and striving to progress the works. The Ardrossan Harbour Company has confirmed a significant financial commitment to the cost of marine works and towards the local authority's funding shortfall for the terminal facilities.
- **Inchgreen Marine Park:** We remain fully committed to bringing Inchgreen Marine Park back to full industrial use. The global economic slowdown has meant that the original plan for the site simply was not viable. However, we have continued to invest millions of pounds into the facility in partnership with Inverclyde Council as part of an ongoing redevelopment that will attract new tenants and create new jobs in the coming years, including upcoming new ferry sea trials with Ferguson Marine.

In a broader context, Peel Ports is the UK's second-largest port operator and its programme of investment into Clydeport will continue in the months and years ahead. Our ambitions and facilities are creating opportunities for investment, jobs and skills that will continue to benefit the people and businesses of Scotland.

While only a snapshot, I hope that the points I have raised clearly outline our firm and long-term commitment to Clydeport and to Scotland. We see great potential for the prosperity of the west coast and the positive impact we can have on creating employment, developing trade and local business opportunities for many decades to come.

Yours sincerely,

**Claudio Veritiero**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

## **Scottish Government submission, 28 November 2023**

### **PE2029/H: Nationalise Clydeport to bring the ports and harbours on the river Clyde into public ownership**

Thank you for your letter of 22 September on behalf of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee regarding the above petition which calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to:

- Use powers under the Harbours Act 1964 and the Marine Navigation Act 2013 to revoke the Peel Ports Group, (Clydeport Operations Limited)'s, status as the Harbour Authority for the river Clyde and its estuary;

- Establish a municipal port authority in Clydeport's place and bring the strategic network of ports and harbours along the river Clyde into public ownership; and
- Compulsorily purchase Inchgreen Dry Dock for the benefit of the Inverclyde community.

The Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee considered this petition at its meeting on Wednesday 20 September 2023.

At that meeting, the Committee noted the comments of previous Minister for Transport, Jenny Gilruth MSP, in a reply to an oral question by Katy Clark MSP on 22 September 2022, that private ownership of harbours "can substantially slow progress in relation to improvements".

The Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government seeking clarity on its view on whether bringing the ports and harbours of the river Clyde into public ownership might resolve this concern.

The Scottish Government does not believe that nationalising Clydeport is appropriate and has no plans to do so.

Clydeport, part of the Peel Ports Group, is the harbour authority for the River Clyde and its estuary, managing a jurisdiction of 450 square miles and operating from a number of sites. Clydeport's main terminals are King George V Dock in Glasgow, Greenock Ocean Terminal, Hunterston PARC and Ardrossan. Clydeport's operations facilitate the movement of more than 15 million tonnes of cargo per year and thousands of passengers annually. These activities, the employment which they provide for, and the investment made by the Company in recent years, continue to be of significant importance to the Scottish economy.

Whilst Scottish Ministers have powers to compulsorily acquire land, that is only where the acquisition is "necessary for the public service" or for planning or development purposes. For such powers to be invoked, a clear development plan for the site would be required rather than an assertion or belief that Ministers could operate the site more effectively than the current owners.

Ports in Scotland represent a successful mix of large privately owned ports such as Clydeport and Forth Ports, independent trust ports such as the Port of Aberdeen and the Port of Cromarty Firth, local authority and Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) owned ports.

Whilst investment in privately owned ports and trust ports are commercial matters for the relevant port operators, the operator is required to balance any decision to forego or delay investment with the potential for business to transfer to another facility. In her response of 22 September 2022, Ms Gilruth also noted that another privately operated port at Troon was now in a position to facilitate the service to Brodick.

The Scottish Government's aim is to bring more ports and harbours into the ownership of CMAL where the primary function is the provision of lifeline ferry

services. CMAL is wholly owned by the Scottish Government. However, this requires the willingness of third-party owners to enter into change of ownership discussions and, if agreed, a Harbour Revision Order would then be required. This could be anticipated to be a lengthy and complex process.

## **Transport Scotland**

### **Petitioner submission, 8 January 2024**

#### **PE2029/I: Nationalise Clydeport to bring the ports and harbours on the river Clyde into public ownership**

Please find below our comments in response to the submissions received on our petition.

#### **Scottish Government and Transport Scotland submissions (PE2029/A and PE2029/H)**

These submissions lack information relating to the steady decline in tonnage handled at the Greenock Container Terminal under Peel Ports, whilst their businesses on the Mersey have grown considerably. Commercial river traffic to Glasgow is virtually non-existent. Statistics published by Statista Research Department in October 2023 show freight volume reduced from 13.2 million metric tons in 2000 to 5.1 million in 2020, resulting in redundancies at the terminal in 2021.

Our once thriving heavy engineering, shipbuilding and marine engineering have been decimated since the 1980s, whilst prime industrial land along the Clyde lies fallow. There is no Industrial Strategy to reverse this decline, or a Strategic Agency to stimulate regeneration of our industrial base, instead agencies such as Clyde Mission apply sticking plasters and excuse this dereliction.

Clyde cruises and sailings are rare, apart from occasional summer cruises by the Paddle Steamer Waverley. We have a beautiful river, sea lochs, towns and harbours along the Clyde and the only way to reach many of them is by car. There appears to be no strategy to develop a sustainable tourist plan, other than slow ferries and cruise ships emitting tons of carbon. Similarly, there is no vision or strategy for fast river commuting with modern environmentally friendly catamarans and hydrofoils to reduce car use and congestion. Campbeltown is up to 5 hours from Glasgow by car, more until the choke point at the Rest and Be Thankful is permanently fixed. Transport Scotland would like all ports and harbours to be publicly owned and managed by CMAL but have no plan to achieve this aspiration, furthermore, with a questionable record 'managing' our ferries, would CMAL be the right agency?

Scotland lacks a maritime policy that would focus attention on our river's demise and stimulate port development and trade facilitation more generally.

#### **Peel Ports Group submission**

Peel has created minimal sustainable employment along the Clyde; we estimate they only employ around 100 direct employees in Scotland. This is a tragedy for what was



once Scotland's premier international seaport. There is also a contradiction on the cost of the new cranes at the terminal, they claim £25m and the SG state £17m, which is correct? The cranes had to be renewed for safety reasons as they were beyond economic repair due to a lack of preventive maintenance. In the overall scheme of things such investment pales into insignificance compared with the £500+ million invested by Peel and the UK Government into port infrastructure on the river Mersey over the past 20 years, that created and protected thousands of jobs.

History shows that the Peel Group only invests in developments on the Clyde when public funds are available. Their investment claims should be investigated to determine the cost to the public purse per permanent job created.

They have wilfully destroyed Inchgreen dry dock's facilities by blowing up the cranes in 2017 and allowing the pump room to flood – both major facilities for a dry dock – made no repairs to the sea walls and conducted no general maintenance of dock facilities.

They have deprived the dry dock of work and then state that anyone with a costed plan to operate the facility would receive their attention. However, they have deterred viable companies from leasing the dry dock, including previous interest from Ferguson Marine and Dales Marine Engineering. It's Peel's responsibility to either operate the facility, source a company to use what is the largest dry dock in Britain, or transfer ownership to a community development trust. However, they have never been interested in creating competition to their shipbuilding and marine facilities on the Mersey, Tyne, Tees, and at Falmouth. The Peel Group has now brought together Cammell Lairds and the AP Group to form APCL Group Ltd, and this will make it extremely difficult to source any company wishing to lease or purchase Inchgreen dry dock because of this anti-competitive barrier.

### **Inverclyde Council submission**

They have formed a joint venture (JV) with Peel Ports, Inchgreen Marine Park Ltd (IMPL), and sourced public funding of £10.6m to repair the damage Peel Ports inflicted on its own Inchgreen facility and now trust Peel to miraculously change their ways and allow competition of their assets elsewhere. The companies they put forward to receive the funding have either disappeared or have gone elsewhere. The JV does not include the dry dock, only the land surrounding the facility, and there is no strategy to operate the dry dock. The JV gives the Peel Group 75 years control of an extended Inchgreen and the ability to purchase additional land. The former McKechnie Jess factory site has been purchased and registered under Clydeport, thus adding value to the growing Peel land portfolio. All JV investments and purchases will be inherited by the Peel Group at the end of the term, none returned to the community despite their investment.

The Council previously endorsed the lease of East India Harbour to Peel for 125 years at £1 per year but no industrial investment plan has been developed. Unfortunately, Inverclyde Council's strategy has given the Peel Group total control over our waterfront industrial and marine facilities whilst delivering no substantial industrial benefit in work and jobs for the Inverclyde community.

### **BAE Systems submission**

Refers to the commercial relationship with Peel Ports as they Lease Govan Shipyard from them and comment would be commercially inadvisable.

### **North Ayrshire Council submission**

North Ayrshire Council is in support of publicly owned ports and harbours.

### **Katy Clark MSP Submission**

Katy Clark supports our campaign petition and provides her reasoning and observations.

We offer a side letter that lists parties who continually use the Clyde for their businesses and the trade unions whose members depend on the Clyde for their livelihoods. We suggest the Committee requests additional views and opinions from those parties having an interest in our petition.

### **Ferguson Marine submission, 10 January 2024**

#### **PE2029/J: Nationalise Clydeport to bring the ports and harbours on the river Clyde into public ownership**

I refer to your letter by email of 22nd September and confirm that the operational management of Ferguson Marine has no comment.

5 October 2023<sup>2</sup>

### **British Ports Association submission, 11 January 2024**

#### **PE2029/K: Nationalise Clydeport to bring the ports and harbours on the river Clyde into public ownership**

With our apologies for a delayed submission but we are pleased to assist the Committee and would be delighted to give further evidence if that was of interest.

The British Ports Association is the national trade body for ports and represents the overwhelming majority of operations in the UK. We also represent operators that own and manage over 200 ports, harbours and marine facilities in Scotland and we provide the only forum for Scottish ports. The UK ports sector handles around 95% of the UK's seaborne trade as well as being the foundation of the wider marine economy.

Whilst Clydeport is a long-serving and active member of the BPA it is typically not our role to intervene in localised issues but we do comment on principles and national issues. The Peel Ports Group is a successful port operator with a strong track record of investing in infrastructure such as in the recently opened cruise

---

<sup>2</sup> Originally submitted in October 2023 but only received by Committee in January 2024

terminal on the Clyde. It should be for Clydeport and its owners to determine its own strategy and ownership type.

However, we thought the Committee might find the follow briefing of interest.

### **Background to port ownership**

There are a mix of port ownership models in the UK and Scotland but with the exception of a collection of ports engaged in lifeline ferry activities, all are strategically and financially independent of either the Scottish Government or Westminster. The sector is market-led and competitive, particularly the larger port localities and operations. The mix of private, trust and local authority-owned ports have evolved over many decades and the sector works well for users, regional economies and the people of Scotland.

If a port is a statutory entity, as many are, it will have its own powers and legislation, set out in its harbour order, which also specifies its ownership type. This means that the government has previously agreed what form and structure a port should take.

### **Local authority ports and stakeholders**

There are of course a wide number of ports and harbours managed by local authorities in Scotland and whilst some are sizable international operations like the ports managed by Orkney and Shetland Islands Councils, many are modest and require subsidy by their parent council.

Local authorities that own ports of course have to balance local stakeholder interests with commercial and business priorities on which jobs and local economic activities depend so any change in ownership of Clydeport's operations would need to quell any business risks and concerns. A variety of stakeholders across Scotland have expressed interest in ports and whilst this is often welcome and to be celebrated, it is important to strike a balance and remember that a port authority has been established and empowered to run a port or harbour safely and sensibly.

### **Acquisitions, compulsory purchases and port independence**

Ports cannot be political footballs, kicked in different directions by stakeholders. Any moves by central government or stakeholders to forcibly change ports and compulsorily seize assets would give Scotland a bad reputation, scare off potential investors and tar the ports industry in uncertainty.

We would argue that as is characterised by the industry's independence, all our various port owners in Scotland have a choice in regards to which type of corporate model and structure they take. There are of course mechanisms through the legislation such as under the Port Act 1991 and through Harbour Revision Orders which allow for ports to be transferred into a different type of port and these remain an option for the owners of Clydeport in the future.

However, as we have mentioned previously, mechanisms such as the forcible transfer or compulsory purchase of port assets would completely undermine confidence in our sector and would be viewed with much negatively across Scotland, the UK and even internationally. Voluntary transfers is of course a different matter.

It is also worth bearing in mind the economic and financial context that the Scottish public sector finds itself in presently and whilst some local authorities might be able to justify additional activities and financial commitments, many would not want to take on new responsibilities. Indeed as we have seen both [Scottish councils and the Scottish Government have in recent years had to scale back planned capital investment \(details here\)](#).

We feel strongly that ports should be able to decide what strategies and structures they have and we need to maintain the current ports policy regime. The sector and the market have an excellent record of attracting business and investment and creating jobs.

### **In summary**

As we highlight, the mix of port ownership works well but it must be for each port to determine its own future and structure. We would strongly defend our sector's independence and warn against any direction from central government. This independence has enabled ports to act swiftly and responsively to opportunities and should be celebrated. Forcibly seizing ports or assets risks damaging confidence in our sector and would threaten or undermine investment across Scotland especially if the country is not seen as a stable place to invest in long term infrastructure.

As mentioned from an external point of view we see little need to revisit this at Clydeport, although that is essentially down to the port and its owners.

Should it be helpful we would be delighted to appear before the Committee to provide oral evidence and answer any questions the Members might have.

## **Ferguson Marine Trade Union Representatives submission, 30 January 2024**

### **PE2029/L: Nationalise Clydeport to bring the ports and harbours on the river Clyde into public ownership**

The Ferguson Marine Ship Stewards are writing in support of the petition submitted by the Campaign to Save Inchgreen Dry Dock.

Having been involved for many years in the fight to retain commercial shipbuilding on the lower Clyde, we feel there is a stranglehold on our national asset, Inchgreen Dry Dock, that is detrimental and hindering our fight to retain shipbuilding and the employment benefits it brings to our Inverclyde community. We believe that Clydeport/Peel Ports are protecting their industrial assets on Merseyside, Tyneside, Teesside and Falmouth at the expense of developing their marine facilities on the Clyde, particularly Inchgreen Dry Dock. This anti-competitive practice has prevented the retention and any prospect of future development of Inverclyde's marine industry were Inchgreen Dry Dock to become fully operational. It also constrains future opportunities to develop Ferguson Marine as we have no dry dock facilities, and we are at the mercy of the busy timetable of Dales Marine Ltd.'s Greenock dry dock. We agree with the campaign vision that Ferguson Marine should link up with Inchgreen as that would open opportunities to enter other markets for ship repair and servicing.

Currently Ferguson Marine is constrained by the length of our slipways with no land to expand, which prevents any bidding for larger ships and projects, such as offshore windfarm manufacturing etc.

Having attended open meetings with Clydeport/Peel Port and the Inchgreen Campaign, it's evident that the much publicised, but ultimately non-existent, Atlas de-commissioning contract exposes Peel Port's delaying tactics and their apparent intention of never exposing their southern assets to any serious competition from here in Inverclyde. Future opportunities for our shipyard to develop, expand and prosper by entering new markets will be severely restricted by Inchgreen remaining derelict and not properly maintained.

We see the only prospect of thriving shipbuilding and marine engineering industries returning to provide high quality jobs to the people of Inverclyde is to remove the stranglehold Clydeport/Peel Ports has on our community and derelict industrial land.

We look forward to the committee's consideration of our submission.

## **CalMac Ferries Ltd. written submission, 9 April 2024**

### **PE2029/M: Nationalise Clydeport to bring the ports and harbours on the river Clyde into public ownership**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above petition regarding the operation of ports and harbours on the river Clyde.

There is a wide variety of ownership of ports and harbours up and down the west of Scotland, which CalMac must contend with when operating the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services contract. While this results in added complexity across the network, CalMac does not hold a view on ownership patterns of ports and harbours. Our overriding priority is that the onshore infrastructure is kept in a fully working and operational state and that these assets are properly maintained to ensure that poor infrastructure is not responsible for reducing services for our customers, negatively impacting on the economies of west coast communities.

The facilities at Ardrossan have not been maintained to an acceptable standard. There has been a continuing deterioration in the condition of both berths (Arran and Irish berths) over many years, brought about by a lack of investment in the maintenance of this piece of critical infrastructure.

The berths at Ardrossan have had numerous issues over recent years, ranging from a fendering system that is very susceptible to damage, defects with the fendering system that have not been rectified in a timely manner, numerous failures of the linkspan and now the complete closure of the Irish berth. This is a result of a lack of investment from Peel Ports, with the general condition of the whole port being sub-standard. Not only does this create greater levels of risk for the safe operation of the service, but it also gives a very poor image to customers from around the world who are visiting Arran.

The service operates at Ardrossan to the Arran berth, but also includes use of the Irish berth, which provides resilience on the route when short term impacts hit one of

the berths, but it also provides CalMac with the flexibility to operate in differing wind conditions. In addition, when we have to provide short-term cover to the Arran route using vessels from elsewhere on the network, having two berths allows us a choice of a wider variety of vessels as some of them can only berth at one or other of the berths.

A current example of the impact caused by the closure of the Irish berth is that MV Alfred, which could only operate to the Irish berth, has been unable to operate additional sailings to/from Arran. Instead, it now has to operate from Troon to Brodick, which due to the longer passage time results in a reduction in the number of return sailings per day. It also means Ardrossan isn't available to CalMac in certain wind conditions, as the vessels cannot berth safely in the Arran berth when the wind is from the East and anything above moderate in strength.

The state of the Arran berth, and in particular the fenders, mean that Masters have concerns about berthing their vessel alongside in weather conditions from the West and Southwest because of fears that exposed bolts will damage the side of the vessel.

The state of the fenders also impacts on our ability to berth overnight on the Arran berth, owing to the risk of vessel damage, meaning the first sailing from the mainland is cancelled. This is a key sailing for the island, with deliveries, mail, workers in health and social care and tradesmen, all using this service to get to the island.

The condition of Ardrossan Harbour is all the more unacceptable as over the last 10 years, CalMac have paid Ardrossan Harbour company (Peel Ports) a total of £15,480,000 in fees for the use of the berths at Ardrossan. This is split into two fee categories, £3,265,000 in berthing dues (fee for loading and unloading at the port) and £12,215,000 in traffic dues (fee based on the total number of passengers and vehicles).

If the current situation at Ardrossan is not resolved there is a risk that CalMac will have to operate the Arran service from Troon to ensure we can provide a reliable timetabled service for the residents of Arran and the many visitors who wish to travel there. However, operating to Troon will result in a reduced frequency of service when compared with the service that should be operating from Ardrossan.

Whatever ownership arrangement is in place for harbours and ports on the Clyde and across the entire Clyde and Hebrides network, CalMac requests that the owners are required to maintain these vital pieces of infrastructure to a high standard and fit for purpose.

Kind Regards

**Duncan Mackison**  
**Interim Chief Executive**

**Malin Group written submission, 13 May 2024**

**PE2029/N: Nationalise Clydeport to bring the ports and harbours on the river Clyde into public ownership**

Thank you for the letter requesting our detailed views on the aforementioned petition.

We are currently looking to bring to fruition an innovative marine park on the banks of the river Clyde that will provide equitable access to the deep-water channel as well as industrial units sorely needed by our marine industry on the West coast.

In our 125 years operating in and around the Clyde we have always enjoyed a productive and collaborative relationship with the local harbour authority.

That being said, we have bought this site at great cost to us as an SME simply because at that time, we had no other suitable options for us on the banks of the Clyde to set up a marine manufacturing business. We now have more land than we need and looking to use it to solve the issue for others as well.

We have experience working with other Trust ports that operate on an altruistic model whereby the port and harbour is used to maximise the benefits and social impact to the community it serves. The success of the Port of Blythe over the last decade is an interesting case study and may be worthy of review.

We would wholeheartedly support any action that reinvigorates the fortunes of the Clyde and the communities it serves. Without this change, we are highly likely to miss the opportunities in the marine sector that are maturing as we debate our river's future.

However, we feel that this should be done in conjunction with Peel as the owner and look for a way forward that advances the future of the Clyde as quickly and efficiently as possible without conflict and the delay this would entail.

## **Professor Alfred J Baird written submission, 26 August 2024**

### **PE2029/O: Nationalise Clydeport to bring the ports and harbours on the river Clyde into public ownership**

Since the early 1980s successive British Governments have sold off most major ports in the UK. In most other countries the state has retained ownership of port land and merely rents/concessions (i.e. 'privatises' with a small 'p') cargo handling operations and port services (towage etc.)<sup>3</sup>. This enables other countries to continue to plan and invest in new port capacity in line with the growing trade needs of the national economy. In other countries the state has also retained the public port 'authority' in its statutory regulatory role; however, this is not the case in the UK where new private owners were 'given' these important port regulatory functions. UK privatised ports have since been allowed (by statute) to more or less regulate themselves, inevitably in their own interest.

Most privatised major UK ports (usually grouped by estuary) initially found their shares trading on the London Stock Exchange, quickly creating multi-millionaires out of former MBO (Management Buy Out) public port officials, reflecting the fact the City

---

<sup>3</sup> Baird, A. J. (2002) 'Privatization trends at the world's top-100 container ports' *Maritime Policy & Management*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 271-284.

was able to more accurately value a port's real worth better than Government<sup>4</sup>. Major UK ports have since been acquired by offshore private equity firms, and the latter now own virtually all major ports on Scotland's three main central belt rivers and firths – Clyde, Forth and Tay – serving the international trading needs of most of the Scottish economy<sup>5</sup>.

In comparison with other nations, Scotland's port-trade position appears poor and under-developed. Holyrood's Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee previously noted that investment has simply not occurred in Scotland's major ports for at least the past 30 years<sup>6</sup>, i.e. since privatisation.

Because Scotland's major privatised ports are inadequate, outdated, and expensive<sup>7</sup>, Scotland therefore attracts relatively few international shipping services. This also means what remains of our international trade is 'leaked' via ports in England, from where more frequent shipping connections can be accessed. This costly dependence on access via remote ports in England not only ensures Scotland's lack of competitiveness, it acts as a constraint to further development of new Scottish trade.

A key objective of any port regulator (i.e. port authority and/or national ports agency) is to prevent the interception of economic rents by particular interest groups<sup>8</sup>. Major ports tend to comprise natural local/regional monopolies, so the interests of users and the wider economy (i.e. producers and consumers) must be protected accordingly. However, the irregular UK port privatisation 'experiment' has had the opposite effect in that successive port owners, and today offshore private equity firms, have enjoyed an unhindered veritable feast insofar as the interception of economic rents is concerned<sup>9</sup>. The price paid for this regulatory 'negligence' is what we see today, i.e. the absence of port investment, constrained trade development, and weak (if any) economic growth.

The higher port charges are, and research has shown charges to be higher in Scottish ports than other European ports<sup>10</sup>, then the more likely it is that trade will fall, or that trade will simply not move at all. Industrial production is mobile and today easily shifts location, as Scotland knows only too well, whilst new trade is simply not facilitated.

By disposing of major seaports the Scottish economy now depends on the 'market' (i.e. offshore private equity firms) to provide new port capacity as and when required. This presumption fails on a number of counts, not least the very long-term nature of

---

<sup>4</sup> Baird, A. J. (1995) 'Privatisation of trust ports in the United Kingdom: Review and analysis of the first sales' *Transport Policy*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 135-143.

<sup>5</sup> Baird, A. J. (2013) 'Acquisition of UK ports by private equity funds' *Research in Transportation Business and Management*, Vol. 8, 158-165.

<sup>6</sup> [Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee Report | Inquiry into freight transport in Scotland](#)

<sup>7</sup> Baird, A. J. (1997) 'An investigation into the suitability of an enclosed seaport for cruise ships: the case of Leith' *Maritime Policy & Management*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 31-43.

<sup>8</sup> Baird, A. J. (2004) 'Public goods and the public financing of major European seaports' *Maritime Policy & Management*, Vol. 31, No. 4, 375-391.

<sup>9</sup> Fleming, D. F. and Baird, A. J. (1999) 'Some reflections on port competition in the United States and western Europe' *Maritime Policy & Management*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 383-394.

<sup>10</sup> Baird, A. J. (1997) 'An investigation into the suitability of an enclosed seaport for cruise ships: the case of Leith' *Maritime Policy & Management*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 31-43.



port investment relative to the short-term nature of ‘the market’; private equity funds have a maximum timescale typically between 4-8 years, whereas a port’s economic life has a much longer time horizon of beyond 50 years<sup>11</sup>.

If cargo volumes are growing at an (international) average of between 6%-8% per annum at a given port (reflecting GDP growth just under half this level), the port in question will need to double its handling capacity every ten years<sup>12</sup>. However, when port capacity is constrained, trade and economic growth is also constrained.

The irregular port privatisation model adopted in the UK (and nowhere else<sup>13</sup>) has therefore resulted in very limited investment in the creation of new international port capacity in Scotland over the past 30 years<sup>14</sup>. On this basis I would urge the Committee to support this petition to return the Clyde port authority into public ownership. I would also urge the same in respect of the Forth and Tay ports authorities and a review of major trust ports.

[Note from the clerk – Alfred Baird is a former Professor of Maritime Business and was Director of the Maritime Research Group at Edinburgh Napier University.]

## **Petitioner written submission, 27 August 2024**

### **PE2029/P: Nationalise Clydeport to bring the ports and harbours on the river Clyde into public ownership**

During the past year our Campaign has been compiling information on the operations of Peel Ports (PP), The City Deal (CD), Transport Scotland (TS), Inverclyde Council (IC), Inverclyde Taskforce (IT) and Inchgreen Marine Park Ltd (IMPL) – a Joint Venture between IC and Clydeport/Peel Ports. We believe there has been insufficient scrutiny of applications for funding and inadequate measuring of the benefits in the use of public funds by the Scottish Government, its agencies, and their offshoots. We have created several FOI requests to build a picture of how companies, particularly the offshore conglomerate of companies - The Peel Group - have attracted millions in public funds without creating any sustainable jobs or benefits for our community. We have written to the Auditor General Stephen Boyle and Deputy First Minister Kate Forbes with our observations and views and will continue our oversight.

The CD funding process seems to lack adequate scrutiny when funding is awarded based on regenerating a critical national asset (Inchgreen Dry Dock), which was omitted from the IMPL Joint Venture. Whether the applications fulfil their objectives, or the proposed companies actually move onto the park to provide jobs and generate private investment, seem to be overlooked. The £10.6m of public funds awarded through Inverclyde Council to fund IMPL was spent on refurbishing Inchgreen **but not the dry dock**, which Peel Ports omitted from the JV. IC’s application mentioned

---

<sup>11</sup> Baird, A. J. (2000) ‘Port Privatisation: Objectives, Extent, Process and the UK Experience’ *International Journal of Maritime Economics*, Vol. II, No. 3, 177-194.

<sup>12</sup> Baird, A. J. (1999) ‘Analysis of private seaport development: the port of Felixstowe’ *Transport Policy*, Vol. 6, 109-122.

<sup>13</sup> Baird, A. J. (2002) ‘Privatization trends at the world’s top-100 container ports’ *Maritime Policy & Management*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 271-284.

<sup>14</sup> [Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee Report | Inquiry into freight transport in Scotland](#)

5 companies who would be setting up businesses on Inchgreen, none of which have done so. Was adequate due diligence carried out by IC or IMPL and should their claims be investigated? Will funds allocated based on proposals that remain unfulfilled be clawed back? It seems public money was used to refurbish parts of the harbour that PP was responsible for as the harbour authority, but they'd made no investment in 22 years of their ownership. They also received an early bonus of £48,000 from IC on top of £252,000 from CD fund allocation, receiving the Deeds of the former McKechnie Jess plot. Our FOI requests also uncovered the incompetence of the IC negotiating team, which failed to secure Inchgreen dry dock's future by allowing PP to omit the dry dock from the JV and failing to protect it from any future hostile IMPL lease holder blocking the operation of our strategic national asset.

**The British Ports Authority** submission states that Peel Ports has "a strong track record of investing in infrastructure". In reality, during its 21-year ownership of Clydeport there has been minimal investment in 'infrastructure'. The only significant investment over this period has been in 'superstructure' such as a couple of new container cranes. The cruise terminal building was funded by IC. Zero private investment has been made in Inchgreen dry dock. PP's failure to invest in Ardrossan has led to ferry services there moving to Troon.

There is no evidence that privatised ports such as Clydeport "works well for users, regional economies and the people of Scotland". Indeed, the opposite is evident, with fewer users of the port and declining shipping activity, largely due to high port charges and obsolete infrastructure. Scottish trade has consequently fallen over recent decades, and economic growth is virtually zero. As trade is dependent on modern efficient seaports and competitive charges, it's clear that PP has done nothing to benefit the regional and national economy or the people of Scotland.

BPA's submission reeks of 'never bite the hand that feeds you!'

**CalMac Ferries Ltd** are critical of PP lack of investment over 22 years that has led to the disruption of services from Ardrossan Harbour. Former Transport Minister Jenny Gilruth criticised the lack of investment and the lack of progress. PP appear to be waiting for further public funding before committing any investment of their own as has been typical since their arrival on the Clyde.

**The Malin Group** support and highlight the Trust Port model in preference to the private model, which has merely led to declining trade year on year.

**Ferguson Marine Trade Union Representatives** see Ferguson's future lies by linking Inchgreen dry dock with their yard, which currently has no dry dock facilities. This would enable their yard to build larger ships and diversify into ship repair and servicing.

The yard has been successfully building ships and ferries for over 100 years but currently its reputation is in tatters because of the Glens Sannox and Rosa debacle. The fault clearly lies with CMAL, whose ferry design was not fit for purpose as evidenced by the 4 ferries now being built in Turkey, which will be powered by diesel engines. CMAL's choice of LNG propulsion for the Glens Sannox and Rosa has been the major cause of numerous delays and rising costs of the contract.

Our Campaign supports linking Ferguson's yard and Inchgreen dry dock and has proposed a 20-year plan to build the new Scottish Ferry Fleet at Fergusons, Inchgreen and Govan dock. We discussed the plan with Kate Forbes when she was Cabinet Secretary for Finance and it's currently with Transport Minister Fiona Hyslop. The plan was developed by The Clyde Catamaran Group led by the Chairman of the Sea Transport Corporation and comprised of others including myself as Secretary. The catamaran MV Alfred currently supporting the Arran route is based on a Sea Transport Group design.

In conclusion, we believe there should be a parliamentary investigation into Peel Ports perceived economic benefit on the Clyde as trade tonnage has dramatically reduced. A forensic check should be made on their investment claims in their submission stripping out the public funds, such as their claim regarding the cruise terminal visitors centre, which was built with public funds from CD & IC. Other than replacing the two Container Terminal cranes, there has been no other industrial investment, and no sustainable jobs created. Their performance as the harbour authority has been abysmal with our river traffic now being controlled from Merseyside.