

# Peel Ports Group submission of 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**