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Finlay Carson MSP
Convener
Rural Affairs and Islands Committee
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

6 June 2025

Dear Finlay,

Clarification on Scottish Government's role in supporting the needs of port infrastructure in response to questions raised during the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee evidence session on the Town and Country Planning (Marine Fish Farming) (Scotland) Order 2025, 28 May 2025

I am writing to follow up on a question from Evelyn Tweed MSP, made during the Committee's evidence session on the Town and Country Planning (Marine Fish Farming) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2025, which took place on Wednesday 28 May 2025.

During the session Ms Tweed asked, "how will the government consider the strategic needs of port infrastructure to support 'offshore' salmon farms?". As my official and I were unable to provide a full response at the time, I committed to provide a written response to the question, which I have set out below.

Scottish Ministers recognise the crucial contribution the port sector plays in the Scottish Economy, however Ministers cannot get involved in the day to day running or commercial decisions made by a port on business matters, such as infrastructure investment, as ports are deemed as independent commercial bodies with each port having its own local legislation to govern their day to day business operations.

Ports in Scotland vary in size from large commercial operations to small slips and piers. They include privately owned ports, local authority ports and harbours, and trust ports¹.

Ports are run on a commercial basis by their operators and are expected to be self-funding. However, grant funding may be available for certain projects subject to the compliance rules of particular funds. This includes the Marine Fund Scotland, which Since 2021, has awarded

¹ A trust port is an independent statutory body governed by its own local legislation and run by independent boards. Unlike private company ports, they have no shareholders so all the surpluses from port operations are put back into the port.



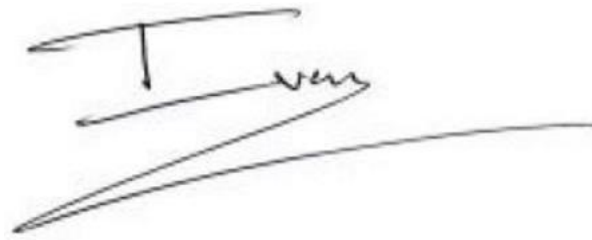
£5.6m to 33 harbour projects across Scotland, this has enabled £8.3m investment, supporting jobs and communities right around our coastline and throughout our islands.

In addition, the Vessels and Ports Plan², published by Transport Scotland on 2 May 2025, provides a long-term plan for the vessel and port investment considered necessary to address the key challenges of reliability and resilience.

The vessel and ports plan supports The Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP), which sets out the Scottish Government's long-term objectives and policies for ensuring necessary and sustainable transport links for our islands.

The sustainable development of aquaculture in Scotland, alongside our other marine sectors, has the potential to stimulate investment in our ports and harbours and support economic growth in our coastal and island communities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ivan McKee', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

IVAN MCKEE

² <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/the-vessels-and-ports-plan-for-the-clyde-and-hebrides-and-northern-isles-networks-2025-2045-islands-connectivity-plan/>

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