

Petitioner submission of 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.