



T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Mr Ross Greer MSP
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

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Thank you for your letter of the 20th April, regarding the Decommissioning Challenge Fund (DCF) award to Peel Ports Group who own Hunterston Marine Park and Resource Centre (PARC). Your support for decommissioning activity taking place in Scotland is greatly appreciated. There is a clear opportunity for the Scottish supply chain and ports and harbours to continue to capitalise on the opportunities this market presents.

The Scottish Government are fully committed to environmental protection and decommissioning policy officials have embedded environmental considerations throughout their work. The application stage of the DCF includes a requirement to detail planning, licencing and consents that would be required and undertaken for the project, this captures the relevant environmental procedures projects must consider. When applications to the DCF are assessed, the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) are part of the DCF partners group, and give views on specific waste and pollution implications of project applications.

The specific grant award from the DCF to Peel Ports is simply contributing to funding feasibility studies, so alone would not have environmental implications to have precluded funding. This project is the first stage of plans to redevelop the marine construction dock and marine quay, and infrastructure to support waste management from decommissioning activity. The feasibility studies will inform the applicant on the constraints and options available to them to begin to develop a proposition for a decommissioning use of the site.

We were satisfied in advance of awarding a grant for the studies that statutory planning and environmental legislation would be in place to assess any plans for development activity informed by feasibility studies. We know the protection of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is a paramount consideration for Peel Ports Group and protection of the SSSI

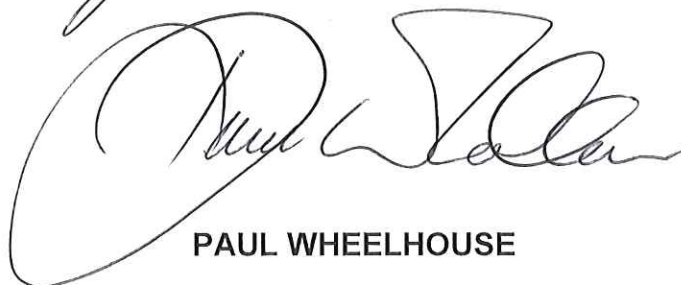
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has been included in the feasibility work. We are also aware that marine licensing pre-application public consultations have already been held. For information on what further engagement has taken place with conservation bodies on the matter, I would encourage your constituents to contact Peel Ports Group directly.

Should Peel Ports wish to pursue development projects to ready the site for decommissioning, and seek consent and licencing for this activity, these processes will be subject to robust planning and licencing regulatory frameworks, which include stringent environmental protection. When undertaking the applications for planning and licencing, public and stakeholder consultation and engagement is included within the relevant legislation. Future activity at the site will be subject to stringent waste and pollution legislation, with the requirement to be licenced by SEPA, and monitored.

I trust this is satisfactory to reassure your constituents that environmental protection is of paramount importance to the Scottish Government, and that DCF funding for studies does not in any way preclude further environmental considerations of any options proposed for future use of Hunterston Port.

Kindest regards



PAUL WHEELHOUSE

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St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

