



Ports policy issues highlighted

The importance of local and national transport and planning policies safeguarding land adjacent to ports for transport-related uses to ensure they can meet the demands of economic growth has been stressed by Aberdeen Harbour Board in a submission to the Scottish Executive's Review of Ports Policy.

The submission also states: *"It is critical that policy makers continue to recognise the strategic importance of ports and ensure that the industry is engaged in the formulation of local and national transport strategies."*

"Such strategies should also recognise the economic and environmental benefits offered by coastal Ro/Ro and short-sea shipping connections and promote these as an alternative and complementary to road and rail transportation."

Other points from the submission include:

- While there is an opportunity to develop a ports policy addressing Scottish issues, a singular ports strategy for the UK would create a level playing field within the ports industry.
- For ports to operate effectively, they require good and efficient landside connections to the national road and rail network. Ongoing Government investment is therefore crucial.
- There is serious concern among maritime interests over the detrimental impact current proposals for a windfarm in Aberdeen Bay may have on navigational safety at the port.
- The Harbour Board look forward to having a close working relationship with the recently formed North East of Scotland Regional Transport Partnership and hope the new Partnership will continue the very good work previously undertaken and achieved by the Nestrans group.

The full submission can be viewed at www.aberdeen-harbour.co.uk

Marine operations' centre of activity

The development of Aberdeen Harbour's new £4.5 million Marine Operations Centre reached its final stages this month in preparation for taking over the role of monitoring and directing shipping from the nearby Navigation Control Centre - the familiar "Roundhouse".

Installation and commissioning of the latest Vessel Traffic Services equipment was underway, bringing improvements in the handling of around 25,000 vessel movements annually.

Training on the new equipment and familiarisation with the Centre's facilities was also underway.

The port's ship's bridge simulator, a training tool which has already proved its worth, has been relocated from Blaikies Quay and enhanced. (See Simulator upgraded)

Harbour Board Engineering Director, Ken Reilly, commented: *"With the final stages taking a few weeks, the state-of-the-art Centre is set to bring important benefits to the efficient operation of the port."*

The Board's meeting this month was held at the Centre and port's users were also given an insight into the facility.

*An oil painting of the Centre by Aberdeen artist, Eric Auld, now hangs in the Board's offices. Copies of the painting, signed by Eric, are being used by the Board in promotion of the port.

****THE CENTRE IS TO RECEIVE A DESIGN AWARD IN EARLY OCTOBER...**

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Simulator upgraded

To coincide with its transfer to the Marine Operations Centre, the Harbour Board's ship's bridge simulator has been upgraded at a cost of £150,000 to reflect industry trends and to meet requirements for future training.

Used extensively in the training of Board pilots and other marine staff in port operations and emergency scenarios, it is also being employed increasingly on a commercial basis for training and assessing pilots from other ports and crews of offshore oil industry safety standby vessels.

The Board's Operations Director & Harbour Master, Captain Ray Shaw, said: *"The enhanced equipment will make an increased contribution to operations and safety at the port, and also to marine activities undertaken by others."*

Improved graphics give a far more realistic appearance to the display on a curved screen, and new, reversible vessel controls allow ship models to be operated from both ends of the wheelhouse, reflecting equipment installed on modern oil support vessels and tugs.

An additional smaller ship's bridge allows training to include the interaction between a large vessel and a tug or a standby vessel and her daughter craft.

Record half-year activity

The port's busy start to the second half of the year includes record monthly shipping in July, with the volume reaching 2,120,599 gross tonnes.

Activity is building on the best yet January - June performance, with imports and exports reaching a new high at 2.49 million tonnes, compared with 2.29 million tonnes in the first half of 2005.

The tonnage of vessels was also a new record, at 11.38 million gross tonnes, up from 9.99 million gross tonnes. The figure reflects a rise in the number of vessels to 4,120 (3,850) and the larger ships using the port.

"The higher price of oil has seen increased activity by many of our users, both in the North Sea and in exports to West Africa and the Caspian Region. It has not been all oil-related, however, and other sectors have also generated significant traffic through the port," said Harbour Board Chief Executive, Colin Parker.

"The figures are another clear demonstration of the port's ability to attract and accommodate additional traffic."

The capacity will be further strengthened by a current project creating 20,000 square metres of surfaced back-up area at Point Law Peninsula, and by other developments in the future.

