

Foyle Port submission to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement

December 2021

About Foyle Port

The Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners were established in 1854 as an independent statutory corporation, responsible in perpetuity to improve, maintain, regulate, and manage the development of the harbour undertaking. We are located strategically as the island's most peripheral westerly port providing an Atlantic gateway and maritime hub.

The Commissioners have statutory responsibility as the Competent Harbour Authority for 75 square miles of water over 20 miles covering the entirety of Lough Foyle, from the Craigavon Bridge in Derry / Londonderry to a line between Magilligan and Greencastle, in the Irish Republic.

We are recognised by both British and Irish governments as the sole Harbour and Pilotage Authority for the Lough and we operate daily across and within both jurisdictions. On the landward side, we own over 150 acres and are adjacent to c.1000 acres of industrially zoned land.

The Port's strong fundamentals; fixed assets, balance sheet, liquidity, and expert staff provides an existing platform for the delivery of the much-needed development of our cross border regional economy.

Significantly, the Port's potential is further reflected in already existing physical infrastructure which is primed for a step change in development and future investment including:

- ✓ Multi deep-water terminal locations within the harbour
- ✓ Renewable energy hub
- ✓ Adjacent 600 Mega Watts industrial power
- ✓ Fastest data transfer connectivity through Project Kelvin
- ✓ International IT services and Data Centre hub planning permission
- ✓ Extensive land bank development capacity

Foyle Port – In Numbers

Despite the unprecedented challenges that both the pandemic and the post-Brexit landscape posed to the Port, and the maritime sector more generally, Foyle Port continues to reinvest with the fixed assetbase currently sitting at £42.7 million.

The Port, which employs 108 people and generates £4.3 million in wages annually, also sources 80% of its electricity from low carbon fuel sources. Decarbonisation and diversification are key priorities for Foyle Port. Our substantial landbank at the Port, with a potential 500 acres expansion capacity and up to three million square feet of warehousing, gives the ability and the flexibility to diversify our operations, meet our green obligations, and attract new investment.

All-island economy and opportunities

Given our location straddling the two jurisdictions on this island, Foyle Port operates very much on a cross-border basis. A strong all-island economy is, therefore, crucial.

Initiatives like the Taoiseach's €500m Shared Island Fund are opportunities to bring significant levels of capital investment into the North West. For example, this fund could be used to support the Port's ambitions for a passenger cruise terminal at Greencastle. Prior to the pandemic, Foyle Port was actively exploring the potential of bringing the international cruise industry to the North West of the island.

Government funds and initiatives like these would help develop this sector which would bring benefits and investment to the all-island economy.

The €165bn renewed National Development Plan 2021-2030 commits unprecedented levels of funding to addressing key infrastructural challenges across the island of Ireland including in climate and transport. Foyle Port is keen to explore how funds and policies like the NDP can help businesses like ours meet these targets quicker and more efficiently.

Other initiatives like the ongoing All Ireland Strategic Rail Review and the upgrading of the A5 and A6 road networks are ensuring our part of the island remains connected to other important economic hubs across Ireland.

NI Protocol and post-Brexit

The Port is ready to play its part in the economic growth of Derry/Londonderry and its surrounding city region. Our uniqueness lies in the fact that we offer a UK and European trading gateway.

Our Corporate position was in support of remaining within the EU Single Market and Customs Union to ensure that our trade remained free of red tape which would impact our future competitiveness. However, the NI Protocol offers us access to both the UK's and the EU's internal markets. Whereas other ports in NI have roll on/roll off passenger ferry services and import goods and materials like food products and consumer goods, which are subject to checks from GB, Foyle Port deals primarily in bulk goods.

Only around 20% of our trade comes from GB and, as such, our experience of the NI Protocol has been largely positive and seamless.

Support for the agricultural sector

Foyle Port significantly supports the agri-sector and hundreds of farms in both Northern Ireland and in counties such as Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim in the Republic of Ireland in a number of ways.

Our long-established bulk commodity operations importing vital products for regional consumption. By facilitating the import of essential agri-products, Foyle Port supports around 20,000 farms in the North West and various other local business sectors like construction.

Diversification for future growth

We have, over recent strategic cycles, successfully diversified our portfolio into marine services, manufacturing and renewable energy divisions. For example, located within the harbour estate, the state-of-the-art facility with highly specialised equipment such as automated plasma cutting, offers both repairs and manufacturing of steel products for the agricultural, construction and marine sectors as well as specialist port products including hoppers, grabs and lifting equipment.

Community Impact

The Port has also supported a number of charities and charitable initiatives over the past 12 months which includes forming a new partnership with leading mental health charity Aware NI, implementing a new Mental Health Policy at the Port, and ensuring that 1% of all Port profits go towards the Port's Corporate Social Responsibility Fund with donations to local charities and clubs.

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