

First Minister announces rebirth for Port of Ardersier



The Port of Ardersier on Scotland's Moray Firth, previously a hive of activity during the early oil boom in Scotland, has today moved centre stage as one of the key manufacturing and port facilities for the UK's fast-growing offshore wind sector.

Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond today announced a memorandum of understanding between Highland and Islands Enterprise and the Port of Ardersier which recognises the port's capacity to become a major UK manufacturing, construction and installation hub.

With 138 hectares (340 acres) of vacant land and a deep water quay, the former oil rig fabrication yard is ideally placed to capture a slice of the estimated £70-80 billion UK offshore wind construction market.

Welcoming the memorandum of understanding, Port of Ardersier CEO Capt. Stephen Gobbi said:

"There are few other locations in the UK, or indeed Europe, which can offer this quality and quantity of vacant land, a 1000 meter deep water quay and proximity to major offshore wind development zones.

"It complements other sites in Scotland and offers offshore wind developers and manufacturers the opportunity to site their operations close to the first-generation deep water sites at Beatrice and Moray Firth.

"This memorandum recognises this potential, and commits the Port of Ardersier and Highlands and Island Enterprise to work

together to develop the port and bring new jobs and economic activity to this corner of Scotland.”

Alex Paterson, Chief Executive of HIE, said:-“Port of Ardersier offers significant potential to offshore wind developers. Given the scale of offshore renewables activity, the sheer size of the site means it is ideally placed to meet the range of needs for manufacturing and assembly. HIE is delighted to work with Port of Ardersier to bring the site back into commercial use and help it secure new tenants.”

Scotland’s First Minister Alex Salmond said:-“We are working hard with our enterprise agencies both to secure overseas investment into our world-leading renewable energy industry and to support Scottish businesses to seize the huge opportunities available, working in partnership with inward investors and the rest of the supply chain to create jobs and help re-industrialise communities right across Scotland.

“These ports are ideally-positioned to become key hubs for the deployment of offshore wind, wave and tidal energy – across manufacturing, assembly, operations and maintenance – and the new Memorandums of Understanding with Highlands and Islands Enterprise underpin the importance that we attach to ensuring that all of Scotland wins from the renewables revolution.”

This would be a second lease of life for the specialist port. Formerly the McDermott Fabrication Yard, it was built on land reclaimed from the foreshore in the 1970s for the fabrication and construction of North Sea oil and gas platforms. At its height, the yard employed 4500 people. It has lain dormant since 2001.

The port’s next step is to submit planning applications to Transport Scotland, Highlands Council and Marine Scotland to secure full consent as an offshore wind manufacturing port, with the goal of securing permission by the Autumn. The site’s current consent relates to oil and gas only.

The Port of Ardersier was identified within Stage 1 of the Scottish Government's National Renewables Infrastructure Plan as a key integrated manufacturing facility. The plan's goal is to enable Scotland to accelerate the development of offshore wind and capture a major slice of the supply chain and jobs potential.

Stage 2 of the National Renewables Infrastructure Plan involves the development of detailed investment plans for identified sites. The memorandum of understanding forms part of stage 2 for the Port of Ardersier and commits the two parties to work together to secure planning consent and maximise the economic and social potential of the port.