

Governments announce Green Freeport for Firth of Forth

Forth Green Freeport as well as Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport have been jointly selected by the Scottish and UK governments to become Scotland's first Green Freeports.

Sadly this means that the north east of Scotland has been turned down yet again by the UK government. This follows the government's refusal of any financial help for the carbon capture project proposed for the region, once rich with oil revenue, and which wants to turn to renewable energy as its future.

Following a rigorous assessment and selection process, the two winning bids will be supported by up to £52 million in start-up funding and will benefit from tax reliefs and other incentives through a combination of devolved and reserved powers.

Applicants to become a Green Freeport in Scotland had to demonstrate how they would contribute towards a just transition to net zero emissions by 2045 and create new, green jobs. They were also required to set out how they would support high-quality employment opportunities with fair work conditions at their core.

Deputy First Minister John Swinney said: "This is a milestone achievement in the process to deliver Green Freeports for

Scotland. Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport and Forth Green Freeport will support businesses to create high-quality, well-paid new jobs, promote growth and regeneration, and make a significant contribution to achieving our net zero ambitions. .

“A rigorous joint selection process has been followed. The successful applicants showed a strong determination to embed fair work practices, including payment of the Real Living Wage, and to enshrine net zero initiatives in their work.

“We look forward to working closely with them to ensure they deliver maximum positive impact and become operational as soon as possible.

“We will also work with the unsuccessful bidders to consider how they can build on the plans set out in their bids to deliver jobs and growth in their regions outside the Green Freeports programme.

“Scotland has a rich history of innovation, trade and manufacturing and as we look to seize the many opportunities achieving net zero offers, the creation of these internationally competitive clusters of excellence will help us to create new green jobs, deliver a just transition and support our economic transformation.”



Leader of The City of Edinburgh Council Cammy Day. Photo: © 2022, Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

Cllr Cammy Day, Leader of The City of Edinburgh Council, said: “This is great news for north Edinburgh, the city and the region as a whole. I want to congratulate everyone involved in what was a hugely impressive bid. The Forth Green Freeport will bring significant economic and other benefits to the region – most obviously in terms of new jobs, creating up to 50,000 in total, 11,000 of which will be here in Edinburgh.

“The project must be inclusive, benefiting local communities and providing proper pathways into work and learning for disadvantaged young people. I’ve made it clear that we need fair work, fair opportunities, with employers paying the real living wage, a unionised workforce and real benefits to the community to be central to the delivery of this project going forward. We’ve already had good conversations with Forth Ports and partners on the importance of working together to achieve our goals, including building more much needed affordable homes.

“Our extension of Edinburgh’s tram line to Newhaven will soon be live, unlocking many areas in the North of the city for long-term investment and regeneration while providing residents with fast and carbon friendly transport links. Plus, our £1.3 billion green vision for Granton Waterfront is creating a brand new sustainable coastal community, with jobs and thousands of net zero homes. The whole coastline has huge potential as we develop our city and address the climate emergency and, clearly, the Scottish and UK Governments agree.

“Through the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal we’ve already achieved massive success working collaboratively with our neighbouring councils, with central government and with the private sector. I’m looking forward to similar success unlocking a whole east-west corridor of net-zero economic growth with all the partners on the Forth Green Freeport.”

FORTH GREEN FREEPORT

The private-public bid consortium behind the transformational bid for a Forth Green Freeport (FGF) reacted to the positive news. The Forth Green Freeport consortium is a private and public partnership that includes: Forth Ports, Babcock, INEOS, Edinburgh Airport, Scarborough Muir Group, Falkirk Council, Fife Council and The City of Edinburgh Council.

The consortium says that the FGF proposal will generate up to 50,000 new green jobs and act as a catalyst for new green technologies and renewable energy manufacturing which will make a significant contribution to the re-industrialisation of Scotland. The partners also claim the bid will unlock £6 billion of private and public investment into productive and resilient industries including sustainable fuels, offshore wind manufacturing (including floating wind), shipbuilding, air transport and seaport fast-moving logistics.

The further claim is that the proposal will generate a £4

billion boost in GVA (Gross Value Add) to Scotland's economy and accelerate the country's Just Transition to meet Net Zero targets by providing investment incentives to deliver greater inclusive growth centred on fair work practices.

Charles Hammond, OBE, Chief Executive of Forth Ports and lead Forth Green Freeport bid partner with sites at Leith, Grangemouth, Rosyth and Burntisland, welcomed the shortlisting by the Scottish and UK Governments and said: "Today's shortlisting is great news for Scotland, for new green jobs and for the country's drive to net zero.

"Together with our consortium partners, our bid will re-industrialise the nation and create large scale economic development. Our green freeport will accelerate investment and generate 50,000 new green jobs by acting as a catalyst for new technologies and renewable energy manufacturing. This has the potential to unlock £6 billion of private and public investment for Scotland and create new training facilities, factories, logistics parks, rail, freight and fuel terminals and to enhance our creative industries.

"The benefits of trade will be spread widely into the communities that need it the most, through the establishment of a green growth investment corridor creating tens of thousands of jobs in low carbon logistics, renewable energy, green manufacturing and alternative fuels. These new jobs will not just be in Grangemouth, Leith and Rosyth, but in Glasgow and Edinburgh; the Lothians, Stirling and Falkirk; Dunfermline and Burntisland; and across the UK."

The bid's strategically located tax and customs sites span 550 hectares in Grangemouth, Leith, Rosyth, Burntisland and Edinburgh Airport. This will increase trade through Scotland's sea and air gateways and support the growth of trading businesses across the Firth of Forth and at sites spread north, south and west of the estuary. These locations are at the heart of Scotland's international trade, with goods

representing 30% of Scotland's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) flowing through Grangemouth alone.

POLITICAL COMMENT

Levelling Up Secretary Michael Gove said: "Scotland has areas of outstanding opportunity but there are also places that can benefit from more investment to truly level up communities that have been overlooked.

"This is a shared challenge faced by us all across the UK, which is why I'm delighted the UK and Scottish governments have collaborated to deliver two Green Freeports in Scotland, which will undoubtedly be transformative for future generations.

"Inverness and Cromarty Firth and the Firth of Forth are fantastic areas for these new Green Freeports to set up, ensuring the benefits are felt right across Scotland. This will help to create exciting new jobs, boost business and encourage investment in the local areas and beyond."

There is a clear political divide over the introduction of the Green Freeports, at least at the City Chambers.

While the Scottish Government back the introduction of Green Freeports, Edinburgh's SNP group leader Cllr Adam McVey said: "While SNP Councillors in Edinburgh voted against Leith's involvement in the Green Freeport bid, the decision has now been made, supported by Labour, Tory and Lib Dem councillors.

"We have continuing concerns about the amount of tax revenue that will be lost from Edinburgh, whether any investment generated will be genuinely lasting, and the potential impacts

on workers rights that the Tory UK Government are worryingly still responsible for. We will monitor these aspects extremely closely going forward and make sure this project is transparent and accountable.”

Lothians MSP, Miles Briggs said: “I am delighted that Forth Ports, based at Leith docs, has won Greenport status along the Firth of Forth.

“Securing Greenport status is something I have been campaigning on for a long time and will bring huge economic, environmental and social benefits to the region.

“The team at Forth Ports did extremely well with their bid for the Firth of Forth to be one of two locations for a Greenport in Scotland.

“This is a great example of the UK Government and Scottish Government working together for the betterment of Scotland.

“The Firth of Forth Greenport area will be key in Scotland’s efforts to become net zero by 2045.”