Aberdeen, Scotland

Name of Port: Aberdeen Harbour

Type: Riverport

Function: Cargo, oil and gas, passenger

Scale of regeneration: Major project started in 2017.

Main project: Expansion of Port at Nigg Bay and new infrastructures in the old Harbour.

Stage: Implementation

Figure 1: Aberdeen Port and limit

Source: Aberdeen Port (2016)

History of the Port

Aberdeen has been shaped by the harbour since 1136, when King David I of Scotland granted the Bishops of Aberdeen the right to place levies on trading ships. During Tudor times trade links with Scandinavia and Baltic ports resulted in further improvements to Aberdeen
harbour. Aberdeen’s first “cargo-handling crane” was enacted in 1582 followed by the deepening of the harbour in 1596. In 1860, Torry Battery was fortified enhancing the strategic importance of the harbour. During World War Two, the harbour was a major target for the Nazis and experienced extensive damage. The Harbour has always supported the fishing industry growing significantly during the 1880s due to the invention of the steam trawler. At this time and until the 1990s, Aberdeen also became a site for the shipbuilding industry. The harbour underwent intense modernisation from the mid-1960s due to the development of the offshore oil and gas industry. This resulted in the harbour becoming one of the most modern ports in Europe. The port is continuing to grow and develop as a site for offshore renewable energy.

Public Policy and Governance

The most recent Strategic Development Plan for Aberdeen City and Shire was published in 2014, with an update due to be published in 2019. The 2014 strategy indicated the significance of the Harbour and its need to be recognised in national and regional policy as a site of economic importance. The 2009 National Planning Framework recognised Aberdeen Harbour as key to the National Renewables Infrastructure Plan. This sets the context for the symbiotic growth of the port and city. The harbour is of significant importance to the energy industry, tourism and lifeline ferry services. Aberdeen has a growing focus on the renewable energy sector. Expansion and relocation are problematic as the location of the harbour offers limited land for expansion. These factors are compounded by the River Dee Special Area of Conservation. Any potentially available land is zoned for mixed use development, which is not compatible with port activities. Three sites were assessed as potential sites for relocation or partial relocation of port activities. In 2016, Nigg Bay was identified as offering the greatest scope to accommodate a new deep-water facility with the least impact.

Impact

The Pre-Feasibility Study carried out during the early stages of planning identify four potential impacts. Firstly, any expansion or relocation of the harbour would require improved transport links both by road and rail. In 2018 rail improvements were announced between Aberdeen and Inverness. Secondly, communities could benefit from regeneration projects. Thirdly, there may be environmental impacts in relation to ecology, habitats, heritage and geological features but it is emphasised that all measures will be taken to minimise these
impacts. Fourthly, the scale of development will likely influence the landscape and viewing sites.

Statistical analysis using Eurostat datasets show a positive upward population growth between 2008 and 2018 (Figure 2). This data was only available at functional urban area level but it does show growth in the wider metropolitan region during the regeneration timeframe, which suggests a generally positive impact.

![Figure 2](image)

Figure 2 demonstrates an increase in the economically active population i.e. the number of actively working residents between 2008 and 2017. The most interesting change is between 2011 and 2016, when just under 10,000 people joined the workforce as this represents both before and immediately after the regeneration project begun potentially suggesting the port regeneration may be generating creating employment.

![Figure 3](image)
Implementation

To date several improvements have been made or are planned to meet the expanding needs of the port. These include:

- Commercial Quay East Operational Torry Quay-Phase One
- Operational Delivery of Torry Quay Phase Two
- Deepening and widening of the Navigation Channel Complete
- Construction has commenced on Aberdeen South Harbour – which follows six years of engagement with the public and wider stakeholders.

The rest of the planned port relocation and expansion is detailed in table 1.

**Table 1: Implementation projects and deadlines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of construction/completion</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May-October 2017</td>
<td>Preconstruction Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2017- December 2019</td>
<td>North Breakwater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October-November 2017</td>
<td>Coast Road/St Fitticks Road re-alignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2018-April 2020</td>
<td>Closed Quays (with caissons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2018-October 2019</td>
<td>Open Quays (pile construction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2018-November 2019</td>
<td>South Breakwater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2019- April 2020</td>
<td>Superstructure Works (buildings, etc)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Catalysts/Drivers of change

The ‘Case for Growth’ report (2016) indicated the catalysts for harbour regeneration include but are not limited to:

- The harbour has continued annual growth requiring plans to ensure capacity.
- Aberdeen Harbour Board recognises its unique position as Europe’s leading marine support centre for the offshore energy sector.
- It is Scotland’s gateway for trade linking with more than 40 countries.
- Certain industries may cease or relocate due to the restrictions in the oil and gas industry. Therefore, the replacement of these industries with offshore renewables is being anticipated.

References


