

**12 Lomond Ave
Port Glasgow
PA14 5SA
26/09/24**

Claire Baker MSP, Convener Economy and Fair Work Committee

Sub; City Region Deals

Dear Convener,

Our campaign wishes to contribute to your committee's understanding of the City Region Deals, their implementation and effectiveness, contribution to local issues and if the public fund investment has contributed to inclusive growth for the benefit of local communities such as Inverclyde.

Unfortunately, Inverclyde has seen little or no benefit from the City Deal investment - please find attached our complaint recently sent to the City Deal regarding Inverclyde.

Our campaign group formed in December 2017 following the destruction of the Inchgreen dry dock cranes in July of that year. We were very active from the start and received initial support from Inverclyde Council. In 2020 we were approached by the council's Director of the Environment and Regeneration asking us to support their application to Clyde Mission for investment to refurbish Inchgreen Dry Dock Platers Fabrication Shed as PED SHIPS were

moving into the shed to build steel hulled yachts, they received £1.6m but the company disappeared.

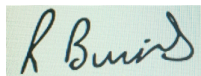
However, Inverclyde Council never approached or consulted us regarding their application for City Deal funding for the refurbishment of our national asset, Inchgreen Dry Dock. We found that strange after our successful collaboration on funding for the platers fabrication shed.

Inverclyde Council's business case for City Deal funding was treated as highly confidential by the Councils leadership team and councillors and us were kept in the dark until informed that the council leadership team had agreed a joint venture with Peel Ports. There was little discussion on this JV strategy by Inverclyde Council's Environment and Regeneration Committee, it was a 'fait accompli'. No scrutiny of the council strategy or measurable outcomes were properly discussed, only a bun fight on who would sit on the JV board, it was pushed through and rubber stamped by the full Inverclyde Council. The confidential strategy was used by the leadership team to keep everything secret until they needed councillor's agreement, a failure by Inverclyde councillors to scrutinise the strategy is coming back to bite them as no jobs have been created to date!!

The campaign agreed with Katy Clark MSP (supported by Paul Sweeney MSP) to create a Scottish Parliament Petition and submit it to the Citizen Participation and Public Petition Committee PE2029, but it was killed off by the Scottish Government at the committee meeting on 11th September 2024 despite concerns being raised by CalMac, Ayrshire Council, Ferguson Marine Trade Union Representatives, Professor Alf Baird and both MSPs Katy Clark and Paul Sweeney. We spent 18 months compiling information, encouraging additional submissions from other sources and provided information on our 3 submissions, but the Petition was still killed off without any opportunity to provide evidence to the Petitions Committee - so much for Public Participation! We believe the petition submissions would be a viable source of information for your committee as it highlights the use/misuse of public funds by the Clyde Statutory Harbour Authority Peel Ports, who have received millions from the public purse since their arrival on the Clyde in 2003.

We believe the City Deal Complaint attachment and the Public Petition PE2029 submissions will assist your committee's enquiry. Inviting MSPs Katy Clark and Paul Sweeney to give oral evidence would provide you with a bigger picture about the river and the neglect of our critical industrial marine facilities on the Clyde.

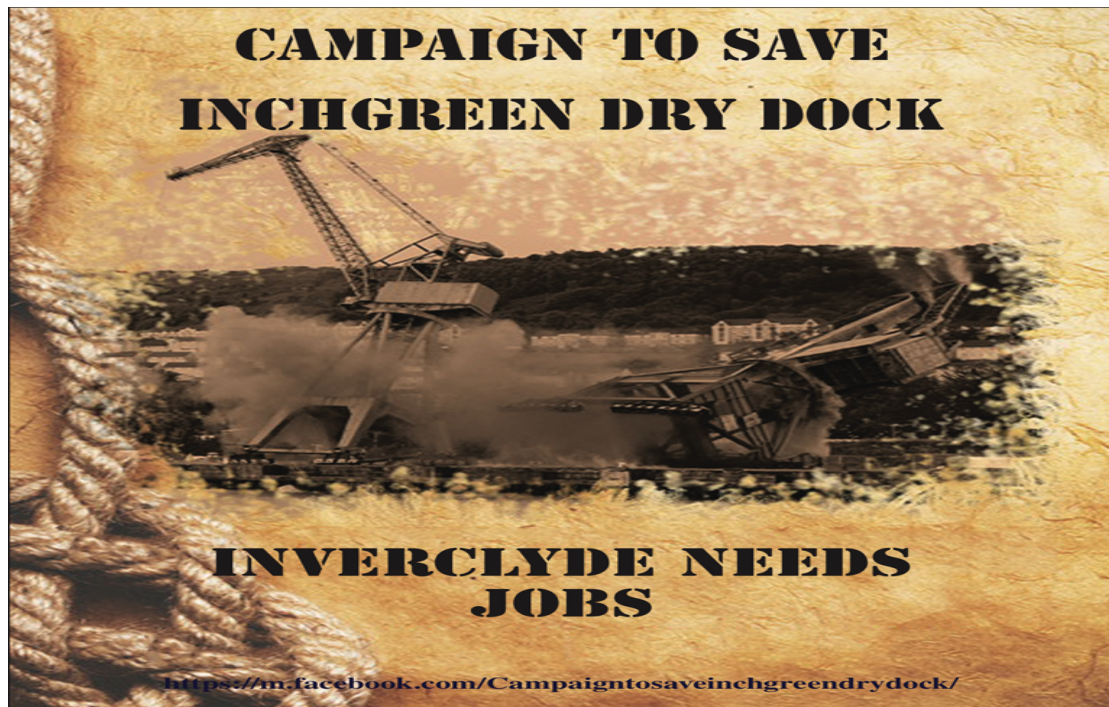
Yours Sincerely



Robert Buirds

Secretary

Campaign to Save Inchgreen Dry Dock



**12 Lomond Ave
Port Glasgow
PA14 5SA
24/09/24**

**Glasgow City Council
Accountable Body, Glasgow City Deal**

Sub; Complaint

To whom it may concern,
We are writing to you directly as the Accountable Body for the Glasgow City Deal.

Complaint

Our campaign complaint concerns the use/misuse of public funds by Inverclyde Council, Peel Ports and Inchgreen Marine Park Ltd (IMPL). Inverclyde Council made 3 applications for City Deal funding: Greenock Container Terminal; Inverkip A78 road junction; and Inchgreen Dry Dock. To date no substantial and sustainable new jobs have been created or delivered. On the whole, no measurable benefits received by the Inverclyde community!!

Cruise Ship Terminal. The terminal was to benefit the Scottish tourism sector with little benefit locally in Inverclyde. The City Deal investment was shared by two developments, the terminal pontoon jetty that allowed an additional ship to

berth, and a new passenger arrival terminal to welcome visitors from the cruise ships.

During the installation of the pontoon jetty, Peel Ports had a terminal workforce redundancy, stating a reduction in trade volume. No new jobs were created!!

The new passenger terminal has a George Wyllie Museum and a restaurant with around 20 full time and par-time jobs created, outweighed by the terminal redundancy.

Passengers are welcomed by the local volunteer Inverclyde tourist group.

Inverclyde council receives no passenger levy from arriving tourists who depart on trains, coaches and taxis to other destinations. There is no power link between ship to shore and ships run their engines to service the hundreds of cabins and onboard facilities. Inverclyde receives the pollution from the gigantic exhausts but no additional revenue from cruise ship tourism.

All in all, no real benefit received by the Inverclyde community from the City Deal investment and future health issues developing from increased pollution!!

Inverkipp A78 road junction. No work has started.

Inchgreen Dry Dock. Unfortunately, all the funding investment was spent on refurbishing adjacent land to the west of the dry dock and no investment was made directly on the dry dock. No jobs created, though it did enable Peel Ports to expand its land portfolio using public funds.

Background History

Inverclyde Council made 3 funding applications when the City Deal was created. Our National Asset Inchgreen dry dock was one of the projects put forward by Inverclyde Council.

Inverclyde Council also made an additional application to Clyde Mission for £1.6m for the refurbishment of the Inchgreen dry dock Platers fabrication Shed. We supported this application as Inverclyde Council Director Stuart Jamieson stated that PED Ships was moving in, this never happened. We later discovered this was a paper company that disappeared after the money was spent on the Platers fabrication shed. Any due diligence supposedly carried out on the PED Ships contract was negligent at best and warrants investigation as to whether the application for funding was fraudulent. We received no feedback on this debacle and believe we were misled and used!!

Inverclyde Council and Clydeport Operations Ltd/Peel Ports entered discussions on developing a joint venture, but Peel Ports refused to include the dry dock in the project (confirmed by a FOI). Unfortunately, Inverclyde Council quietly agreed to this omission and continued to discuss the JV with Peel Ports. The JV - Inchgreen Marine Park Ltd - was registered as a private company despite 50% of the investment coming from public funds, thus avoiding scrutiny and FOI

legislation. The project is advertised as a marine park but has no direct access to the river.

In July 2017 Peel Ports blew up the 3 mobile dry dock cranes claiming they were beyond repair. There was no outrage, concern or requests from Inverclyde Council to Peel Ports to verify the state of the cranes prior to their demolition, despite the loss of the cranes greatly hindering the operational capability of the dry dock facility.

In December 2017, the Campaign to Save Inchgreen Dry Dock was formed following the destruction of the cranes.

In March 2018 after correspondence between the Inchgreen Campaign and John Whitaker, Chairman of the Peel Group, Peel Ports arranged to meet members of the Inchgreen campaign and a group of Inverclyde Councillors. Mark Whitworth CEO Peel Ports claimed the dock cranes were destroyed to allow the company to pursue a Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carrier service and maintenance contract and the cranes would have prevented the ship entering the dry dock.

Whilst the large mobile dockside cranes may have prevented the carriers entering the dry dock, no investment was made to replace the cranes with a gantry crane, as installed at Rosyth. Destroying the cranes was a lose/lose situation for the dry dock.

The lack of investment in a new gantry crane left Inchgreen at a distinct disadvantage to Rosyth when bidding for the aircraft carrier work, whilst the loss of the existing cranes impeded the use of the dry dock for other contracts. This makes no economic sense and raises doubts about whether the Peel Group ever wants Inchgreen to be a commercially viable dry dock. From an internal business perspective, a viable Inchgreen dry dock could compete with other Peel Group interests on Merseyside, Tyneside, Teeside and Falmouth. Leaving the fate of Inchgreen dry dock to Peel Ports has been, and looks like continuing to be, an economic disaster for Inverclyde and the public money frittered away. It's as if Peel Ports is merely covering its Scottish overheads using public money, which instead of creating jobs is funding our own destruction.

In 2019 Inverclyde Council's business case for Inchgreen listed 4 companies that had registered their intent to move onto the park: the Scottish Salmon Company; PED-SHIPS; Marine Engineering; and Clyde Fisherman's Association - to date none have moved onto the park, and again it seems there was no apparent due diligence. The City Deal continued its consideration of the application for a £9.6m funding award and reviewing Inverclyde Council's development business case, prior to releasing funding, but it seems nobody has questioned the total failure to achieve what was promised. More public money squandered with no measurable benefits and no accountability.

Many of the listed items in the business case to be refurbished and repaired were already the responsibility of Peel Ports as the Harbour Authority, so no public

funding should have been allocated. It's doubtful any checks were made by Inverclyde Council and the City Deal on the Peel Ports responsibility as harbour authority to properly maintain its ports and harbours. Peel Ports had allowed the Inchgreen facility to fall into disrepair by not carrying out routine maintenance for over 20 years.

In 2023 Inverclyde Council made an application to amend the business case for the acquisition of the former AP Jess plot by Inchgreen Marine Park Ltd for £600,000, half from Peel Ports and half from City Deal and Inverclyde Council. The City Deal approved the amended business case that IMPL would purchase the plot. However, there is no public record that Inverclyde Council made any attempt to inform the City Deal that the registered owner of the purchased plot would be Clydeport Operations Ltd/Peel Ports and not Inchgreen Marine Park Ltd. They also failed to inform the City Deal that they waived a £310,000 Dividend payment from Inchgreen Marine Park Ltd in 2023. There appears to be no public record that this money was paid to Inverclyde Council - were the public and City Deal misled and misinformed intentionally? If so, who authorised this administrative 'omission'? Why has there been no accountability?

On reading the public records from the City Deal, Inverclyde Council and our FOI requests, it's clear that the City Deal, many Inverclyde Councillors and the public were misled and misinformed by Inverclyde Council & Inchgreen Marine Park Directors, 2 of whom are also Inverclyde councillors, about the true ownership of the AP Jess plot and the Dividend payment.

We also believe our national asset is vulnerable to any hostile Inchgreen Marine Park Ltd leaseholder preventing the dry dock becoming fully operational. On checking the map provided to City Deal on the AP Jess purchase amendment there's no room for the dry dock to become fully operational as it's squeezed out of the necessary land and facilities. There's no lay down area or space for materials and no safeguard to prevent the Platers fabrication shed and surrounding area being leased to competing interests!!

Peel Ports had allowed the dry dock facilities to deteriorate over 20 years and made no effort to repair or maintain, yet the City Deal awarded funding to refurbish the ground and facilities to the west of the dry dock, nothing to repair the flooded pump room and provide new cranes. The possibility of destroying the commercial viability of the dry dock would be advantageous to Peel Ports as they have starved it of work for 20 years to prevent competition for their shipbuilding and marine assets down south. They rejected a substantial offer from Dales Marine Engineering in 2021 to lease the dry dock. However, around the same period, a paper company - Atlas Decommissioning - was awarded an 8 year lease to turn our national asset into a scrap yard, but no ships arrived; the company is no longer registered at Companies House. Atlas was supported by Inverclyde

Council and their two appointed IMPL Directors, no due diligence on Atlas was done, which has become a common theme - no accountability!

We have constantly criticised this JV Inchgreen Marine Park Ltd strategy as it does nothing to regenerate our national asset that was deliberately omitted by Peel Ports to gain a larger Inverclyde footprint. If Peel Ports really wanted Inchgreen Marine Park Ltd to succeed, then why omit the dry dock from the JV, the park will then have direct access to the river? Unfortunately, the City Deal and the Inverclyde public have been hoodwinked and betrayed by Inverclyde Council, which has promoted the award to this offshore company of millions from the public purse, with little if any investment from Peel Ports.

Awarding funding through Inverclyde Council, knowing that our critical national asset was not included in the project, is a major failing of the City Deal and its apparent lack of scrutiny of the strategy and Inchgreen business plan. No questions were posed, or explanation requested as to why the dry dock was excluded from the Inchgreen project, yet the City Deal Cabinet described it as a critical national asset.

The City Deal never inquired if Inverclyde Council had carried out due diligence on the 4 companies put forward in their business case as legitimate, financially competent and viable.

The City Deal should have monitored the operation of Inchgreen Marine Park Ltd operations more closely, requesting company minutes as they were providing the millions. This would have alerted them to the omission of the dry dock, the waived £310,000 Dividend payment and the handover of the AP Jess plot to Clydeport Operations, a Peel Ports company.

Council leader Stephen McCabe stated in the Greenock Telegraph on the 19th June 2024 that Inverclyde Council on behalf of Inchgreen Marine Park Ltd would be applying for more funding for the project, bizarre. The Inverclyde Council strategy has delivered ZERO benefits to date, the dry dock lies empty, excluded from the Joint Venture IMPL, providing no work or jobs for the Inverclyde community and no leverage to change the current Peel Ports strangulation of the dry dock. The City Deal needs to re-evaluate the Inverclyde Council business case, make appropriate changes that will include the dry dock in the joint venture, reject additional funding applications until appropriate changes are made to the 75 year joint venture contract, and any addition project funding from public funds must include matched investment from Peel Ports to repair and refurbish the dry dock so that interested parties will have a commercially viable facility to operate and not be faced with millions of upfront investment before they have an operational facility to work with.

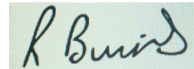
Most importantly, business cases previously submitted must be reviewed against measurable results and accountability for any misuse of public funds dealt with before more money is squandered.

Inverclyde needs jobs whilst prime industrial land and marine facilities lie dormant - why?

Who is responsible for the clear lack of due diligence when preparing business cases and who is responsible for not reviewing the use of public funds?

Questions need to be asked and solutions sought for the benefit and prosperity of the Inverclyde Community.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Buirds', is placed over a light green rectangular background.

Robert Buirds

Secretary

Campaign to Save Inchgreen Dry Dock