

2 December 2024

Dear Sir / Madam,

UK Major Ports Group Response to the Connections Reform

By email only: box.connectionsreform@nationalenergyso.com

I write on behalf of the operators of the UK's largest port operations and their trade body the UK Major Ports Group. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed connections reform. We have not submitted responses to the specific consultation questions, but instead set out our interest in connections reform and any processes that help to improve access to grid connections for our members.

Who we are

The UK Major Ports Group is the body that represents 9 of the top 10 port operators across the UK, handling over 75% of port tonnage. We are key local employers, providing valuable gateways to the local economy and operating successful and adaptive businesses. Appendix 1 to this document shows the UK Major Ports Group members' port locations and owning groups.

Our members invest over £600 million of capital each year, ensuring we meet the needs of existing and future customers and embrace innovations. We have ambition to invest further and faster, unlocking UK growth and investing more than £600m of private sector capital each year in the UK's ports and surrounding coastal areas.

Ports Are How

As key enablers to our economy we believe that ports are how we will achieve the governments key missions on clean green energy and economic growth. The role of major ports is central to kickstarting growth – whether it is the energy transition,

growing international and domestic trade through our critical national infrastructure – ports are how we get the country moving further and faster. Growth can be achieved if, in partnership, we:

- Deliver a port & trade first modal shift programme for freight & logistics, to modernise our transport infrastructure and rebuilding Britain.
- Create a fit for purpose planning system built for port growth, to kickstart economic growth across the UK.
- Abolish regulatory drag to double levels of port investment, to grow investment and productivity that transforms our economy.
- Secure port power & future energy needs for UK plc, making Britain a clean energy superpower.

We welcome the proposed reforms to the energy system supporting place-based understanding and a whole system approach to the energy system. The UK Major Ports Group has identified energy connectivity as a potential barrier to port aspirations for decarbonisation and growth, limiting the amount of renewable energy that can be connected to the grid and providing cost prohibitive access to additional capacity to support changing infrastructure or the development of new facilities / industries in our port hubs. More strategic coordination from a national and regional perspective is welcome, to look at ways to identify future needs and remove barriers to growth and decarbonisation.

Our ports provide hubs of industrial activities, supporting cross modal transport and the import and export of goods. Ports are at the heart of accessing our offshore environments, providing bases for the development of operation and maintenance facilities. These sites are also ideal for developing our manufacturing capabilities, providing good access to the offshore environments and creating new jobs to our coastal communities and growing their economies. From a connections point of view our sites are often at the 'end of the line' and the available capacity for

connections is limited, we feel more effort is required to prioritise power for such a strategic sector closely aligned to some of the government's key missions.

The uncertainty and delays associated with potential upgraded infrastructure is unhelpful in an environment where you are trying to attract inward investment. We need clear decisions and plans going forward on how we better connect our growth sectors and industrial clusters. Future proofing our electricity infrastructure is key to allowing industry to decarbonise and electrify assets. The current 'postcode lottery' on costs and times associated with connections mean that accessing power can create an uncompetitive and unattractive market for energy users, this needs urgent reform to allow fair access to power and to support industrial growth and decarbonisation.

The UK Major Ports Group is keen to work in close partnership with the Government, and relevant players, on a shared ambition to supercharge, decarbonise and upgrade the UK's major ports as a strategic sector that delivers. We see the development of the NESO and the connections reform as positive developments in this regard, and would welcome the opportunity to input to these processes so that ports' needs are better understood and accounted for. Ports are how we improve UK productivity and grow a modern economy and we are pleased to contribute to how the current regimes can be improved. We would be happy to work with your teams further on any of these comments / proposals or provide further port context if appropriate.

Yours sincerely

Alex Pepper
Policy Director

Appendix 1 – UK Major Ports Group Members



United Kingdom Major Ports Group Members

Associated British Ports | Belfast Harbour Commissioners
The Bristol Port Company | DP World UK | Forth Ports Ltd
Hutchison Ports (UK) Ltd | PD Ports | Peel Ports | Port of London Authority