

Merry Christmas &
Happy New Year



PETERHEAD



PORT AUTHORITY

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New landings record at Peterhead

Peterhead Port Authority smashed its record for fish landings early this year, with more than £257 million worth of catches traded across the quaysides by the end of November.

That easily surpassed the £232 million total for the whole of 2023, further cementing Peterhead's position as the largest fisheries port in Europe.

Total landings to 30th November 2024 stood at 219,269 tonnes with a gross value of £257,288,470, compared to 189,805 tonnes worth £225,947,904 from the beginning of January to the end of November 2023.

Over the same period whitefish accounted for 54,502 tonnes worth £100,184,023 (52,765 tonnes worth £96,785,626 Jan-Nov 2023).

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Pelagic stocks reached 159,229 tonnes worth £143,253,386 (131,534 tonnes worth £113,082,36 Jan-Nov 2023).

Shellfish figures were 5,538 tonnes worth £13,851,061 (5,506 tonnes worth £16,079,913 Jan-Nov 2023).

Peter Duncan, PPA head of fishing – commercial, said: “It has certainly been a huge year for landings, with a further increase in pelagic landings due to the economic link and a more modest increase in whitefish landings.

“The Port provides first-class facilities and infrastructure for both the landing and selling of fish, and we place a premium on quality.

“But we will not be resting on our laurels – we strive constantly to improve our contribution to the seafood supply chain.”

In recent years PPA has invested over £50 million in a new state-of-the-art fish market and quayside improvements that allow for vessels to land at all states of the tide.

Peterhead Fish Market this year successfully renewed its key storage and distribution accreditation from BRCGS and has Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) chain of custody status, highlighting its reputation as a centre of sustainable seafood excellence.

Peterhead was also the first UK port to receive Responsible Fishing Port status from Seafish.

The Port’s ongoing support for the fishing industry was further underlined by its investment the new ice factory adjacent to the fish market that was completed this year (see p.8).

E-auction approved for fish market

The Board of Peterhead Port Authority (PPA) has approved the introduction of an electronic auction within the fish market.



PPA launched a wide-ranging consultation process on the subject earlier this year, and the results showed overwhelming support for its introduction.

The consultation also highlighted a number of challenges, which PPA has been reviewing and seeking solutions to.

PPA chief executive Graeme Reid said: “This is an exciting moment for the Port and Peterhead community. Peterhead Port Authority has invested around £70m on facilities in the Port in the last 10 years, and this next investment will further reinforce and future-proof Peterhead Port’s position as the leading fish port in Europe.”

He said PPA staff had met with some representatives from stakeholder groups to consider how challenges could be resolved.

“The Board of Peterhead Port Authority are now content solutions to these challenges have been found.”

Work will now commence on detailed design of the E-auction system, involving further engagement with stakeholder groups, with a view to it going live in early spring of 2026.

PPA support for young deckhands 'invaluable'

Peterhead Port Authority has been sponsoring the Trainee Deckhand course at the Scottish Maritime Academy, part of North East Scotland College (NESCOL), since 2013.

Chris Bell, who manages the course, which gives students all the necessary qualifications for a deckhand job on vessels in the Merchant Navy sector, from fishing to standby to wind farm support, said the support is vital.

"It's essential. It helps the profile of the course. It gives it the gravitas that is needed and helps financially as well. Our budget is always tight, so having this support from a major partner is invaluable."

The course runs three times a year with a maximum of 12 students and an average of 10, meaning around 30 go through it every year.

The majority of the students go on to get jobs in the sector, while some return to complete cadetships, allowing them to become Merchant Navy officers of the watch, or in fishing for Class 2 (mate) and Class 1 (skipper) tickets.

Students on the Trainee Deckhand course at the Scottish Maritime Academy.



We spoke to three of the students coming to the end of their course and heard about their aspirations for the future.



Siobhan Douglas

Since I left school back in 2008, I have worked in child care. Within different sectors – worked my way up, got my degree, went into management, worked in a children’s home for a little while as well.

But this year I had been talking to someone who did this course two years ago – he has been working with Sentinel Marine, and just hearing from his trips, and seeing photographs, and finding out the whole ins and outs of it, made me really interested in applying for the course.

Luckily I got on to the course – I wish I had done it sooner! I love the sea, I have always lived next to the sea. It was just really appealing to me – just calling my name to be honest.

The group of people on the course have been great, and the tutors have been fantastic. You can see the passion shining through as well – it’s something to wake up for in the morning.

It’s bittersweet now, jobs are on the horizon, the cosy class that we have had is coming to an end. But it opens up new opportunities.

I’m looking forward to getting into work and progressing, getting as many tickets as possible and working my way up the ladder.



Marcus Main

I was an apprentice chef before, but I didn’t like it. I just wanted to go to sea, to follow in my dad’s footsteps. He was in the Royal Navy, so I am going Merchant Navy instead, standby to start with and hopefully make my way up.

The practical side of the course has been the best for me, I am not big into classroom work – thought it needs to be done at the end of the day.

It has been really good – I have grown and developed as a person. In 10 years I would like to be a first officer.

The staff are brilliant – they are really good at explaining everything and that has helped us get through our assessments.



Lewis Cameron

I was a stonemason for 10 years prior to this. My boss was at retirement age, so it was either take over the business or if I fancied a career change.

Now was the time to do it, I’m 25 and not getting any younger, and I have always wanted to go to sea. I thought this would be a great opportunity.

I have really enjoyed it. I am more interested in going to the fishing side of things, so doing the net mending, and splicing, that sort of thing, has been my favourite activity.

I have got a few numbers to call when I get out of college, but I am really keen to go to the fishing sector. I am definitely planning to come back and do my Class 2 and my Class 1.

Jack Gauld

Jack returned to the Scottish Maritime Academy this month, having completed the course earlier this year, to receive the award of Trainee Deckhand of the Year.



He received a glass trophy from PPA harbour master and director of port operations Ewan Rattray.

He is now working on board the Fraserburgh-registered fishing boat *Karen Ann*. In a short speech prior to the award being handed over, Mr Bell noted that Jack had won the respect of all his classmates and teachers on the course and now of his skipper and crewmates.



Dianne Beagrie

Ernie Lamza

New faces on PPA Board

The Port Board will have two new members from 1st of January, when Aberdeenshire councillor Dianne Beagrie and chemical engineer Ernie Lamza join.

It comes as long-serving Board members Alan Gardiner and Michael Skitmore stand down from their roles.

Board Chair Gavin Thain said: “We look forward to having Dianne and Ernie on the Board from early next year and given their experience and knowledge I expect them to contribute significantly to our work.

“I would like also to pay tribute to the enormous effort put in by both Alan and Mike over the years – their service has been invaluable to the Board. I hope they enjoy their well-deserved retirements.”

Senior staff and Board members at their most recent meeting in Peterhead.

Back row from left: Keith Mackie, Ian Downie, Ewan Rattray, Graeme Jones, Gary Bruce, Alan Gardiner, James Stephen, Michael Skitmore, Steve Murphy and Robert Milne. *Front:* Stephen Paterson, James Buchan, Gavin Thain, Graeme Reid and Dr Elaine Leith-Hedley. *Missing was John Wallace.*





PPA supports local charities

As well as sponsoring the deckhand course, Peterhead Port Authority is a generous supporter of a range of local charities and other community bodies.

PPA chief executive Graeme Reid, who took up his role in March, was struck by how much it “punches above its weight” in this area compared to other similar organisations.

In December PPA staff donated goods (pictured) to the Aberdeenshire North (Peterhead) Food Bank, and Buchan Giving Tree alongside official PPA donations to each of £1,000.

The Port also sponsored the Mission café Christmas meal for 56 retired fishermen and widows to the tune of £1,500.

Furthermore, a donation of £1,000 was given to the Light Up Peterhead for its extensive programme of Christmas events.

Visit by Chair of GB Energy

The Chair of GB Energy, which has been set up by the government to support the energy transition, paid a visit to the Port earlier this month.

Senior port staff outlined present and future plans to an enthusiastic Jurgen Maier, who was positive about the potential for assisting the Port Authority in the years ahead.

The Port’s location means it will be central to offshore renewables, carbon capture and storage and hydrogen as they develop.





All change for Peterhead quays

Peterhead Port Authority has resumed operational management of two of its most prominent deepwater berthing quays, and has exciting plans for future development there.

NorSea UK had been leasing Smith Quay since 2014 and the adjacent Merchants Quay since 2018 following demolition of the old fish market.

But with its eyes on the coming offshore windfarm construction boom, and the transition to net zero more generally, as well as the growing decommissioning market, PPA took back control in September this year.

The Port's Board has approved initial plans for an extension to Smith Quay from its present 120m to 200m and the construction of a mooring dolphin, extending berthing space by a further 40m, and dredging to a depth of 10m along the length of the quay. The extension will allow the quayside to accommodate vessels of up to 200m in length, an essential improvement for the Port as the size of offshore wind vessels continues to increase. Final investment decision will be made in late 2025.

With land reclamation at Smith Embankment having provided an additional 30,000 square metres, a total of 67,000 square metres of operational and laydown space is available. This includes an additional 5,000 square metres which will be reclaimed as part of the quayside extension.

Operation of the bunkering facility, with two MGO fuel tanks, has been taken over by the ASCO Group. It is investigating the provision of MGO/HVO blended fuel as a means of vessel operators reducing their carbon footprint.

The number of vessels using Smith and Merchants quays in the first two months since the takeover was up 50% on the previous two months, but more pertinently the Port has been handling an increased volume of enquiries from a range of different companies about operating from these quays.

PPA chief executive Graeme Reid said: "Most of the key skills developed built up over the past 50 years within the oil and gas sector are transferable to the new sectors of offshore wind, hydrogen and carbon capture.

"At Peterhead we are exceptionally well placed to play a key role in for example supporting a wide range of offshore wind developments and providing crucial O&M (operations and maintenance) and marshalling and storage services.

"We will look to build on our track record as the base for Equinor's Hywind Project, the world's first floating offshore wind farm, which sits on our horizon, and spaces like Smith Quay and Merchants Quay will be critical components of our offer, with extensive deepwater berthing, operational and laydown space and support services.

"Our location in relation to the siting of many of these new projects is worth huge savings in time, fuel, vessel costs and overall efficiency.

"As a Trust Port, Peterhead is focused on continuous improvement over a longer period of time, which enables us to focus on long-term investments that can ensure our clients get what they need while the Port maintains the flexibility to cope with ever-evolving markets."

New ice factory a vast improvement

A brand new £3.5 million ice-making plant is up and running at the Port, further enhancing its support for the fishing industry.



The factory, located on Greenhill Quay adjacent to the fish market, is far more efficient and much more accessible than the two old plants it replaces, both from the quayside and roadside.

It means vessels can take on supplies of ice at any state of the tide and lorries can park easily and safely to load ice for local fish processing facilities.

Peterhead Port Authority operates Europe's biggest fishing port, and the investment is the latest instance of its ongoing support for the sector.

It follows on from a major £50 million investment five years ago to deepen the waters at Greenhill Quay, rebuild the quayside and erect a brand new fish market.

Ian Downie, senior port engineer, said: "Midway through 2022, when we took over Peterhead Ice Company that used to operate as a private concern, we recognised that the two factories that were currently operating were close to the end of their lives, and we needed to replace them.

"We then went out to tender to four different suppliers who had a track record of providing ice factories, and we eventually went with KTI Plersch, a German manufacturer.

"The period of manufacture was quite short. We had to complete the whole project within a year. Everything had to be shipped across from Germany to Peterhead, and it was assembled by local suppliers in Peterhead, supervised by KTI Plersch."

The 15m by 5m unit was transported from a warehouse on the edge of Peterhead down into the town.

Construction was supported by a 25% grant from Marine Fund Scotland, and included a new 130kW PV system installed on the fish market roof, which will provide at least a third of the unit's power.

"Each of the three ice makers can produce one tonne per hour. So it is more efficient than the old plants, plus the physical location on Greenhill Quay means boats can come and go at any state of the tide.

"Supplying fish to the market in the best possible condition is the ultimate goal, and this project makes that more readily achievable for our customers here in Peterhead."