



THE NEWPORT HARBOUR COMMISSIONERS

24 Bridge Street, Newport, South Wales. NP20 4SF

Telephone: (01633) 265702

Fax: (01633) 258431

Our Ref: JR/JAC

23 February 2012

Ms S Phipps
Clerk to the Enterprise and
Business Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Dear Ms Phipps,

Re: **Future of Welsh Ports and Airports To Be Examined in National Assembly Enquiry**

Further to my email earlier today, I now enclose a hard copy of the Commissioners response to the above Press Release. Please contact us if the Committee wish to discuss this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Jonathan Rhodes", written in a cursive style.

Jonathan Rhodes
Secretary to the Newport Harbour Commissioners

RESPONSE TO THE PRESS RELEASE ENTITLED "FUTURE OF WELSH PORTS AND AIRPORTS TO BE EXAMINED IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY INQUIRY"

The Commissioners have considered the contents of the Press Release released by the National Assembly on 30 January 2012, and are grateful for the invitation to respond thereto.

Newport Harbour Commissioners (NHC) consider Welsh Ports to be a vital element of the Welsh economy. They welcome the Assembly's declared intention to examine the potential of the sector and to consider how this potential may be better realised.

Having said the above, we consider that certain decisions made by the Welsh Assembly in the last 12/15 months have been such as to place the Welsh Ports at a major disadvantage to their English counterparts. As a result, the Assembly has made the realisation of the potential in the sector harder rather than easier to achieve.

We refer in particular to decisions made on retrospective rate demands for Welsh-based port businesses. Prior to the 2010 General Election, work was undertaken by VOA to consider whether assessments to raise additional rates on port-based businesses should be raised. Following the election however, the new UK Government quickly quashed such action and announced that full relief was to be given and no retrospective charges levied – in England! Wales has not followed this course of action, preferring instead to collect these additional back-dated rates. This is clearly given English-based ports a competitive edge, severely hampering Welsh ports seeking to invest for the future and, ultimately, this could lead to businesses turning their back on the Principality altogether. In summary, the actions taken by the Welsh Government have not accorded to their professed aims.

We trust that it is clear from the above concerns that recognition of both the key role and future development of Welsh Ports is a major priority for the Board. The Commissioners possess a wide range of experience and expertise, and would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Welsh Government Enquiry.

NEWPORT HARBOUR COMMISSIONERS
16 FEBRUARY 2012