

**First Corporate Shipping Limited  
trading as The Bristol Port Company**

**23 November 2020**

# **Responses to Examining Authority's first written questions and request for information**

## **(ExQ1)**

**Application by North Somerset Council for an order granting development  
consent for the Portishead Branch Line – MetroWest Phase 1**

**Planning Inspectorate reference TR040011  
Unique reference PORT-S57657**

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EXQ1	Question to	Question	BPC's answer
GC.1.12	<p><i>Current Operational Practice</i></p> <p><b>Bristol Port Company</b></p>	<p>In your RR [RR-10] you raise a concern that the proposed development would, when operational, potentially interfere with the operation of the existing freight line to the port. In order to be better able to better understand this concern please provide the following information as to how the freight line operates:</p> <p>(i) How many freight movements are there on a daily basis?</p> <p>(ii) Are these movements scheduled, if so, provide a copy of the timetable?</p> <p>(iii) If they are not scheduled how are they arranged/ managed and what is the maximum number of movements in any one day?</p> <p>(iv) How is the interface of the freight line with the existing rail network managed?</p>	<p>North Somerset Council's consent to the Port's Planning Application referenced 11/P/1893/F records that the number of freight trains using the link (Royal Portbury Dock to Parsons Street Junction) must not exceed an average of 20 trains each day in and out of the Port.</p> <p>Use of the Port's rail link for transporting coal fell after the Government's announcement to close all coal fired power station by 2025. Instead, the link is now used for a variety of different cargoes, including motor vehicles, aggregates and even outbound traffic comprising imported train sets that are imported by vessel from Spain. This trade started in early 2018 and continues on a regular basis today; the train sets comprising motor units and carriageways are assembled on the Port's rail terminal before being driven to site within the UK. This demonstrates how the link continues to provide a versatile, efficient and environmentally friendly solution for a wide range of cargoes.</p>
Cl.1.4	<p><i>Rail freight</i></p> <p><b>Bristol Port Company</b></p>	<p>Paragraphs 4.9.4-4.96 of the Transport Assessment [APP-155] refers to existing freight movements and data relating to a period between February and March 2016. Would the relevant Interested Parties:</p> <p>(i) Confirm the accuracy of this information.</p> <p>(ii) Provide your own data of existing rail freight movements to and from the port, in terms of frequency and typical movements in a more recent time period.</p> <p>(iii) Details of any expected increase in such movements during the anticipated project construction period to winter 2023.</p>	<p>The change in the nature of cargo moved over the link has resulted in a change to the pattern of its working. Previously, the demands of the power stations meant that trains had to run on a fairly regimented basis, but the move to handling a wider range of cargo has meant that is no longer the case and, instead, the Port needs to be able to provide rail access as far as possible at times to suit the varied customers. Rail movements - including those over the national network - are arranged by the FOC (freight operating company) and for the reasons given this is no longer on the basis of any particular timetable. The FOC makes all the necessary arrangements for the end to end journey of the freight trains including the timing and safe</p>

			<p>operating procedures for the switch between the branch line and the main line.</p> <p>In our answer to GC 1.13 we explain the critical need as part of any Freeport's offering for an unconstrained link to transport cargo by heavy rail.</p>
GC.1.13	<p><i>Permitted development rights for Ports</i></p> <p><b>Bristol Port Company</b></p>	<p>The Government recently consulted (<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/freeportsconsultation">https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/freeportsconsultation</a>) on whether from April 2021 Ports should have the same Permitted Development rights as airports and that the use of Local Development Orders in such facilities would be 'encouraged'. What, if any, implications would this have for Royal Portbury Docks and for the Proposed Development?</p>	<p>The Government's Freeports Prospectus was published on 16 November 2020 and included a reference to some changes being proposed to permitted development rights, although final details of what will be proposed are not yet available. BPC's view is that whatever changes are made, those changes, combined with the Government's policies to promote Freeports, can only lead to increased trade at Royal Portbury Dock (RPD) and hence an increased level of operational activity. This in turn will lead to a demand for land immediately available to support that increased activity. The Port, including RPD and its estate, can only get busier.</p> <p>Importantly, BPC believes that Freeport status would be likely not only to increase the quantity but also to change the range and mix of cargoes which the Port, including RPD with its deep water facilities and extensive inland transport links, would handle, leading to a greater demand for access to rail facilities. This would also be in line with general Government policy supporting the modal shift to transporting freight by rail and/or water instead of road.</p> <p>It will therefore clearly be critical for any Freeport to have available unconstrained rail facilities and rail network access.</p> <p>Any Freeport bidding consortium must include a port, so it is vital that Bristol, including RPD, can play that role for the benefit of the region. If for any reason RPD's rail facilities or access were constrained that would not only defeat the</p>

			achievement of the Government's objectives for its Freeports policy and damage RPD's standing but it would also be a lost opportunity for the whole region.
BIO.1.37	<p><i>Wildlife Corridor</i></p> <p><b>Bristol Port Company</b></p>	<p>Whilst on our Unaccompanied Site Inspection [EV-001] the ExA observed the existence of a wildlife corridor adjacent to Royal Portbury Dock that is managed/ owned by the BPC.</p> <p>BPC: Provide further detail of the wildlife corridor including why it is provided, what animals use it, how long it has been in existence and any plans/ maps to show the extent of the corridor.</p>	<p>BPC is unsure which specific wildlife corridor the ExA may have seen, since BPC has an extensive network of wildlife corridors and green areas in Royal Portbury Dock. Together they safeguard rich wildlife habitats and provide links to allow the free and safe movement of mobile species throughout the Port estate.</p> <p>The wildlife corridors comprise a range of natural and semi-natural habitats including wetlands, reed beds, grassland and flower-rich meadows, ponds and ditches, ancient woodland, hedgerows, scrub, and saltmarsh. These habitats in turn support a diverse variety of wildlife, including protected species such as water vole, great crested newts, badgers, bats, and overwintering and breeding birds.</p> <p>The majority of the Port's wildlife corridors were established as part of the development of Royal Portbury Dock in accordance with a Wildlife and Landscape Masterplan in 1991 and the first Ecological Management Plan in 1993. Since that time, the Wildlife Management Plan has been updated regularly to reflect changes in the Port and in the diversity and health of the wildlife corridors, which are regularly monitored to ensure that ecological objectives are met. Over the years as a result of further sustainable development within the Port Estate, additional green areas have been incorporated within the network of corridors, including most recently the creation of the Court House Farm habitat corridor. Further information on the extent of the wildlife corridors, and the ecological and landscape management prescriptions required to maintain and enhance</p>

			<p>key ecological areas, is provided within the Avonmouth and Royal Portbury Docks Ecological Management Plan 2018-2022 (The Landmark Practice, 2018), a copy of which is annexed. The ExA will note the specific management measures included in this Plan in relation to Court House Farm and the wetland and saltmarsh area to the east of the M5 near Pill the Area to East of M5, but BPC's wildlife corridors and green areas adjacent to the MetroWest proposals also include Portbury Drove Rhyne.</p>
CA.1.2	<p><i>Protective Provisions</i></p> <p><b>Statutory undertakers</b></p>	<p>A number of Statutory Undertakers have requested that their Protective Provision wording should be used as opposed to that which is currently contained within the draft DCO [AS-014]</p> <p>Statutory Undertakers: Either provide copies of preferred wording or if you have provided it explain why you don't want to use the wording as currently drafted.</p>	<p>BPC has not suggested that any standard wording should be adopted in the protective provisions for its benefit. Instead it needs bespoke provisions, designed specifically in the context of the particular development proposals affecting its land and undertaking, to minimise the adverse impacts of those proposals which BPC has identified through its examination of the application documents. Protective Provisions of this nature are necessary if serious detriment to BPC's operations and statutory undertaking are to be avoided.</p> <p>The draft protective provisions contained in the draft DCO are necessarily not adequate to achieve that objective either as to their extent or content. Details of the protective provisions required are set out at section 6 of BPC's Written Representations and will be the subject of discussions between BPC and the Applicant.</p>