



# **ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING 2026**

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Port of Blyth held its Annual Public Meeting on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2026 at 6.00pm, in person and online, with 105 registered attendees.

## Purpose

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As an independent statutory Trust Port (formally Blyth Harbour Commission), the Port of Blyth's Annual Public Meeting is a key event for the Port as it forms an important part of the engagement process with all stakeholder groups.

The meeting enables the Port to officially report to all interested parties on the performance of the Port in the previous year and share its plans for the future. It also provides an important opportunity for stakeholders to ask questions of senior management and Board members (commissioners) and feedback on any issues or concerns.

## Presentations

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Attendees were welcomed by Port of Blyth's Chair, Catherine Young, who opened the Annual Public Meeting. Port of Blyth Chief Executive Martin Lawlor then presented a review of another strong year of financial and operational performance in 2025, reporting a Port turnover of 20.29m and Group turnover of £29.07m, with an operating profit and profit before tax of £1.8m and £1.4m.

The presentation highlighted continued growth in core offshore energy sector activity, alongside the handling of a diverse range of cargoes, and the contribution of subsidiary businesses to overall Group performance. It also provided a comprehensive overview of the business covering safety, people, and community initiatives over the year to strategic investment plans aimed at expanding capacity and reinforcing the Port's role in supporting large-scale offshore renewable energy and the wider energy transition.

The presentation concluded with the launch of the Port's Battleship Wharf Expansion scheme, an up to £100 million infrastructure project with the early development phase supported by the Crown Estate, North East Combined Authority and Northumberland County Council.

The proposed development would include approximately three hectares of reclaimed land, 260 metres of quayside extensions and rock vetement and enhanced connectivity to the new deep-water berth at Cambois and the adjacent JDR Cable Systems factory. The scheme would also include additional heavy-duty handling equipment, and channel deepening works to accommodate larger vessels and support increasing offshore energy mobilisation activity.

Martin Lawlor explained that the proposed scheme would support future inward investment opportunities, expand manufacturing and fabrication capacity and strengthen the Port's ability to support the offshore renewable energy sector.

Henry Kippin, Chief Executive of the North East Combined Authority, welcomed the announcement and highlighted the regional significance of the project. He spoke about the importance of collaboration across the North East through the North East Combined Authority and the North East Ports partnership and described clean energy and offshore wind as a major economic opportunity for the region. He also highlighted the importance of long-term investment in infrastructure, skills and supply chain innovation to ensure the North East is well positioned to benefit from future offshore wind development and wider clean energy growth.

## Question & Answer Session

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A number of stakeholders put questions to Martin Lawlor, Chief Executive of Port of Blyth, who answered the questions as follows:

### Graham Atkinson

1. In light of the container service being taken over from Samskip by Cobelfret, are there plans to increase the frequency of calls? When the A2B vessels maintained the service there were two calls a week, and since Samskip took over the service it is now only once a week.

*Answer: Firstly, the sale has not gone through yet, so it is still a Samskip service. The reason we moved from A2B is that the service had gone down to once a week, and the move to Samskip gives us an opportunity for further growth. We are already seeing a growth in the number of containers on that service. Whether it is with Samskip or new owners, we are confident that the container service will continue to expand and move forward towards re-establishing a twice-weekly service.*

2.
  - a. When is the cable manufacturing factory on the site of the former Blyth power station expected to start manufacturing subsea cables?

*Answer: That is imminent. There is test cable coming out very shortly and, as their orders grow, we are looking to do regular volumes thereafter.*

- b. And will these cables be shipped out of the Port using the former ash dock which has had considerable amount of time spent on its improvement? If it is not going to be used for exporting cables, then are there any plans for the ash dock?

*Answer: The new dock's main purpose will be serving the JDR Cable factory. It will be a really busy quay, not just with their activities but also other cargoes. If you were to go up the river today, you would see that our Battleship Wharf berths are full, and therefore the new dock is another important asset that will support the Battleship Wharf Expansion Scheme and the important opportunities we see to come.*

### Eileen Cartie

I was a councillor here for the last 12 years and when this building was first built, we were in talks about sharing the facility's car parks with local residents, given the limited parking available to them with Ridley Park being so busy. I know in busy times such as bank holidays, weekends and summer holidays, the car parks are virtually empty, so now that the building is running and successful, can we pick up discussions again about sharing the car parks at these prime times?

*Answer: The Energy Central Learning Hub is increasingly busy with major conferences etc. and at times, we are over capacity but like you say during bank holidays and weekends the carpark is generally quieter. We therefore can pick up those conversations again and see if any shared use is feasible. However, the main focus should be to bring forward the transformation of the site of the old garden centre into a car park for larger scale public use shared with the Learning Hub. Northumberland County Council are leading on this but that is probably still another 12 months away.*

### **Scott Bullock, ORE Catapult**

Given the good news on the Battleship Wharf development, what are the target operations and customers that you for see for this new development?

*Answer: It will support all of the vessels operators that we currently work with, alongside a significant increase in offshore windfarm mobilisations for developers and major contractors. We have also previously been reluctant to release further land at Battleship Wharf for manufacturing/fabrication operations due to space constraints, but by reclaiming land there that will allow us to release up to 3 hectares of land at the back of that site for new inward investors. This could create hundreds of jobs whilst the land at the front will be used for mobilisation work. The recent leasing round announcement from The Crown Estate will give confidence to inward investors to come to the North East, put down roots and create that extra economic growth that we need.*

### **Carole Thomson**

As part of the expansion, you mentioned that there are plans for the road structure to be re-done, is there a timescale for that or is it just on the wish list?

*Answer: In terms of Blyth as a whole, there is the Blyth Relief Road which has been through the planning process, so that is something we are hoping will be taken forward which will bring a dual carriage way right down towards our South Harbour terminal and relieve rush hour traffic in and out of Blyth. The Northumberland Line has also been a massive investment, which has reduced the numbers of cars on the roads, so there are absolutely plans to enhance the connectivity around Blyth.*

*In terms of timescale, the Relief Road proposal has gone into Government for approval, so it all depends on funding rounds, but we are keen to see that move forward.*

### **Lyndsey Shaw**

Have you predicted what the increase in traffic would be from the expansion and how would you mitigate those impacts on the environment and also noise pollution for local residents as well?

*Answer: The early development phase is going to go on for the rest of this year. That will look at the cost of the scheme, how we develop it and how we can do it in an environmentally friendly way. It will also assess those impacts on traffic, environment, and noise pollution before we start any construction work and consider appropriate mitigations.*

### **Richard Ballantyne, British Ports Association**

Can you elaborate more on the North East Ports collaboration MOU and what it will do/mean?

*Answer: Fundamentally, it is an opportunity to show that the North East Ports and the region are acting as one. We will have marketing materials, we will attend events together, and there may well be offshore and inward investment opportunities coming forward over the next few years, which may be too big for any one Port to handle alone, and we could bid together on those projects. We can also share best practice and collaborate on procurement, dredging, and operational activities.*

### **Alex Oates**

1. There is a rumour that the Port tried to buy the derelict North Blyth bar, is there any truth in that?

*Answer: Yes, we have bought it. No plans have been confirmed yet, but it is just something that was adjacent to our Battleship Wharf terminal.*

2. Where are the three hectares of reclaimed land at Battleship Wharf?

*Answer: It is the North of the existing Battleship Wharf berth, so if reclaimed from the Estuary, it would join the existing berth to the new dock adjacent to the JDR Cable Factory.*

### **Revd Chris Webb**

What do you think is going to be the biggest challenge that the Port is going to face over the next year or two?

*Answer: I think the global uncertainties in the Middle East and wider geopolitical influences, are not great in terms of stability for long-term investment. However, we have successfully come through COVID and Brexit, and we will continue to meet future challenges head on and get over those hurdles.*

### **Claire Young**

I wish that all of the 41,000 people that live in this town could feel as proud as I am feeling right now. I acknowledge the difference that the Energy Central Learning Hub has made as it has given some ambition to young people, and I was at the opening of the R&D centre at ORE Catapult and I think that message is getting through for

younger people whose maybe parents or grandparents didn't think there was a job for them in this town, but I would love it if you could say to me that this year one of the things you are going to do is find a way to make all the 41,000 people of this town feel as proud as we all do now.

*Answer: One way that we would do that is with the opening of the Visitor Centre at the Learning Hub around Q3/4 this year. It will be open to the public and we absolutely want to ensure that the population of Blyth and further afield understands the importance of the Port and the Energy Central cluster around the estuary and the wider opportunities in the North East because I am proud of it and we all should be proud of it.*

### **Andrew Thelwell, Principal Bede Academy Primary & Secondary**

1. Firstly, thank you for giving Bede Academy the opportunity to be here in the Learning Hub providing transformational courses for the students coming through.

My question is around phase 2 of the Energy Central Campus, the Energy Central Institute in the centre of the town, which will potentially allow students from Blyth to stay in Blyth up to PhD level and enter incredible opportunities in this sector. How do we ensure that the link stays strong so that the community benefits as well as having a regional and potentially nationwide draw of talent to the town?

*Answer: That is a really good point. Just to highlight the full education pathway so we have STEM engagement starting with primary school students from the age of 9 inspiring them about opportunities at the Port and careers in clean energy/marine etc. then Level 2/3 courses in the Learning Hub where students can move into apprenticeships and then potentially degree apprenticeships, undergraduate courses, PhDs, research and innovation at the Institute and then hopefully get a really good job in the area. At any point of that higher education pathway, they can come off of that and progress into employment. The main point is that this is a first-of-its-kind project being done right here in South East Northumberland to ensure our local community benefit from these opportunities as well as the wider region. Employers in this room today have taken students who have completed courses in the Learning Hub on as apprentices and have expressed that they are some of the best, most-prepared apprentices they have ever had so this shows that the process is having real benefit.*

2. Do you have a rough timeline for opening, delivery and study beginning in that facility?

*Answer: The build will start this summer, with the building opening around late 2027. But we are looking to start courses before the end of this year, including some of those undergraduate courses potentially as well as CPD courses to help companies around the estuary and further afield.*

## **Informal networking & feedback**

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Following the end of the formal presentations, in person attendees were able to make the most of an informal networking session with access to senior management and Board members from the Port.

After the meeting, attendees were asked to rate the event via a feedback form which presented some very positive results relating to the hybrid style of the meeting, the communications prior to the meeting, and the clarity of the presentation. The quality of the presentation was rated at an average of 9.5 out of 10 with positive feedback such as:

'It was a very vibrant and welcoming meeting. The presentation was excellent with amazing video footage of Port activities leaving me with no doubt that Port of Blyth is producing some first-class opportunities which will benefit residents and particularly young people wanting to be part of this new industry.'

## **Annual Review**

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The Port's Annual Review for 2025 has now been published and contains full details of its financial performance during the year as well as introductions to the Board of Commissioners and senior management and information on each department's achievements. A PDF version of this document is available to download from the Port's website [here](#). Watch our year in review video [here](#).

## **Battleship Wharf Expansion Scheme**

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To find out more about the Battleship Wharf Expansion Scheme, please visit: [Battleship Wharf Expansion - Port of Blyth | Leading UK Offshore Energy Support Base](#)

There is an FAQs section at the bottom of the page. If you have any other questions, please feel free to email [comms@portofblyth.co.uk](mailto:comms@portofblyth.co.uk)