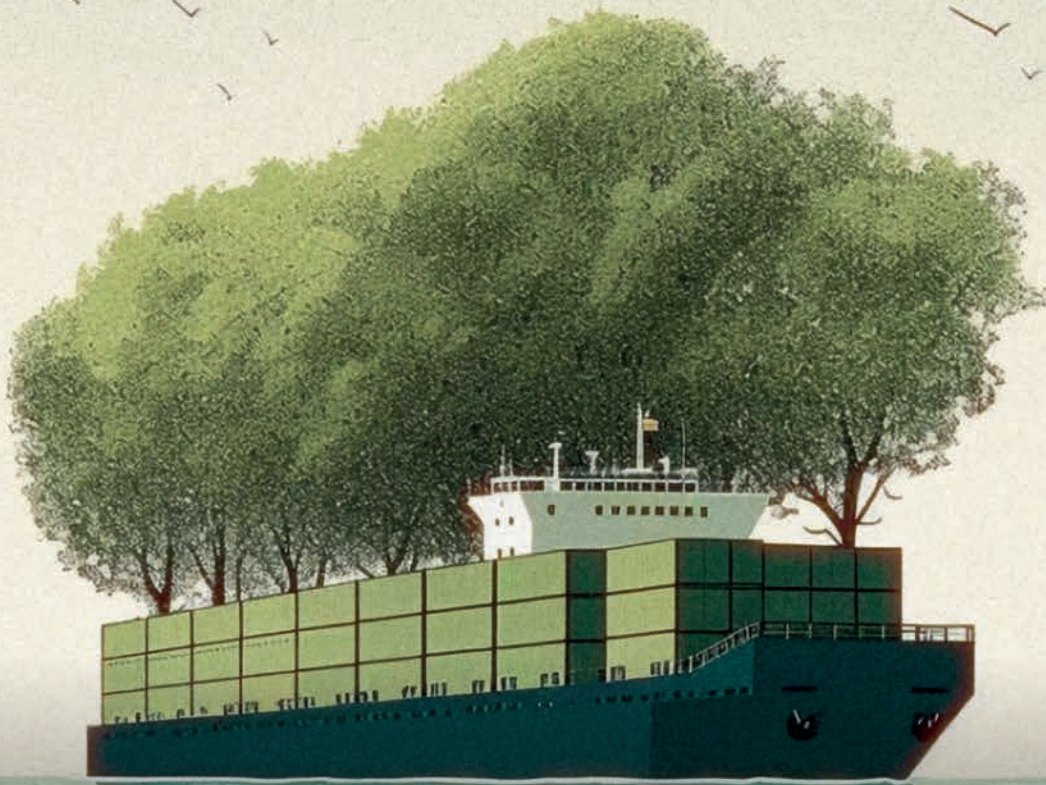


BRIDGE

Issue 02

A PD Ports Publication

Spring 2023



Navigating the Importance of ESG

Digital Trade
Peter Snaith

Embracing Equity
Claire Preston

Local Hero
James Thomson

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Foreword from **Kirsten Donkin**, Editor.

Welcome

Dear reader, I am proud to welcome you to the Spring edition of Bridge, as we share insightful stories and showcase how the River Tees and the Tees Valley is united in its shared ambition to see our region succeed.

Springtime has a real sense of energy, of new beginnings and positivity. There is a lot going on across the Tees Valley and whilst we continue to face a number of challenges and uncertainties in the current global climate, we are optimistic about our region's future success. Together, we are putting our region on the map; we are showing the world that the Tees Valley is a place for inward investment and innovation.

As a business with over 150 years of history in the Tees Valley, PD Ports is very much part of its DNA and continues to be a catalyst for delivering investment, jobs and growth. The River Tees is the beating heart of the Tees Valley. And it's from the River Tees, that we connect businesses across the entire North of the UK to global destinations, 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. This is a role we feel privileged to undertake and drives our continued commitment to work with our partners and customers to keep the nation supplied.

We are seeing a changing landscape in the Tees Valley, with public and private investment on a scale never seen before. With it, this brings a real sense of vibrancy and optimism in what we can achieve together as a region.

Energy Transition is one of the biggest game changers of our time. Industry across the Tees Valley is united in the challenge to decarbonise operations to help the UK reach net zero by 2050. It is time to seize the opportunity that lies before us, to position our region at the forefront of the UK's energy transition agenda and play a vital role in positioning Britain as a global leader in green energy.

Of course, it isn't all plain sailing, we all continue to battle with the ongoing challenges brought by COVID, Brexit, conflict in the Ukraine and surging energy costs, but we take on those challenges and embrace change, we adapt, we innovate, we grow, and we succeed.

In this edition, we are delighted to welcome contributions from Alex Pepper, Senior Policy Lead – ESG of UKMPG; Peter Snaith, Partner, Womble Bond Dickinson; Clare Bottle, CEO, UK Warehousing Association; Gary Dawson, Chairman, AV Dawson; Claire Preston, Head of Operations, Power of Women, Matt Williamson bp's UK Head of Hydrogen and, in our regular 'Local Hero' feature, the inspirational James Thomson of Teesside Lions.

We hope you enjoy the latest edition of Bridge and that the stories you read will both inform and inspire you.





The growing importance of sustainability is putting ESG (‘Environment, Social and Governance’) at the heart of the business agenda. **Alex Pepper**, Senior Policy Lead for UK Major Ports Group, reflects on the role of ESG in managing our impact on the environment and society.

Navigating the Importance of ESG

ESG, the acronym for Environmental, Social and Governance, is everywhere; but why has it become so important, and what does it mean for business?

“Ports are continually evolving and adapting to meet the changing needs of their users”

I joined the UK Major Ports Group (UKMPG) in December 2021, as the Senior Policy Lead, with a strong background in subjects covering environmental, energy and corporate social responsibility. UKMPG is the trade body for nine of the UK’s largest port operators who, via the 40 ports they run, handle three quarters of all the port volumes entering and leaving the UK. On taking post, we agreed that my focus would be on ESG subjects, an area of increasing importance for our members, but why?

ESG is a term relating to a range of issues that may have an impact on the financial performance of a company; in other words, they are subjects that people, and investors care about and if not managed correctly, can damage the reputation (and financial standing) of an organisation. For the maritime sector, and particularly ports that are predominantly privately owned, access to finance is crucial for the sector to thrive, but more than that we also need to work with our local communities and be an employer of choice – attracting and retaining skills and talent.

Ports provide critical gateways to the UK – they are significant employers, landowners and infrastructure providers and whilst an established industry, ports are continually evolving and adapting to meet the changing needs of their users. Our members invest more than £500m of private sector capital each year, in their ports and surrounding coastal areas, and will play a key role in supporting the UK’s green energy transition.

The ‘E’ part of this jigsaw is an area that has been relevant to ports for a long time, particularly given the statutory responsibilities of harbour authorities and the need to conserve and enhance the environment. For a number of years, businesses have been taking steps to reduce their carbon footprint and promote sustainable practices. Amongst a whole host of initiatives, many ports are implementing energy-efficient lighting, using electric vehicles and equipment, and investing in renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power.

The Social and Governance part of this story is in many ways a later addition, but of no less importance. Ensuring you consider these areas appropriately is generally aligned with good practice and a balance of risk. The social

aspects relate to a range of stakeholders, including employees, and how the company interacts with society. Recently, many sectors, including maritime, have had skills shortages and the need to nurture and retain talent is key; employees are now often looking at the bigger picture of what an organisation offers and stands for. As well as training and development programmes, this includes strengthening relationships with the communities they serve.

The governance of a company cannot be forgotten, as this is the backbone to how an organisation is led and managed. Strong governance means that an organisation has carefully considered its operations, risks and processes which should result in more rounded decision-making. In this regard, port agencies are particularly working to improve

transparency and accountability. Whether it be engaging with stakeholders or implementing effective compliance programmes, these procedures serve to build more ethical and progressive businesses.

The maritime sector is fascinating to understand, and as we move through this next technological revolution and decarbonise, the access to finance as well as talent recruitment and retention will be crucial. For many organisations, it means a more strategic approach to practices and culture. Having a clear approach on ESG matters helps our sector to demonstrate that we are responsible, and have considered more than the bottom-line in decision-making; with practices that are sustainable, measured, fair and contributing to the communities in which they operate.



In 2019, PD Ports CEO, Frans Calje, laid down the gauntlet to achieve carbon neutrality across PD Ports Tees-based operations by 2027. **Maurice Brooksbank**, Technical and Sustainability Director of PD Ports, reflects on how the team is working towards this objective as the Company develops plans for a net zero future.

Carbon Neutral Port Operations

Energy transition is one of the biggest game changers of our time. Industry across the Tees Valley is united in the challenge to decarbonise operations and reduce our impact on the environment, whilst supporting in the delivery of the UK government's strategy to reach net zero by 2050.

We have an opportunity here in the Tees Valley to position our region at the forefront of the UK's energy transition agenda and play a vital role in positioning Britain as a global leader in green energy.

The Tees Valley has already seen a huge boost of confidence from Government in our collective ability to enable delivery of the nation's 2050 Net Zero target, with good progress already being made.

At PD Ports, we are committed to leaving a positive legacy for the next generation. Decarbonisation is a prominent and important part of our agenda to be the UK's most sustainable port company.

In 2019, our CEO, Frans Calje, set out the challenge to achieve carbon neutrality across PD Ports Tees-based operations by 2027.

This is no easy task in an environment where we consume huge quantities of energy, powering equipment, machines, lighting, heating, and vehicles 24/7, 365 days of the year, across our vast and hungry infrastructure.

Our first action was to look at alternative fuel sources and introduce Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) as an alternative to regular diesel. The use of HVO results in a 90% reduction in permanent CO₂ emitted to the atmosphere when compared to regular diesel. By March 2023, we had successfully converted 66% of our compatible assets across Tees and Hartlepool to HVO, which included container handlers, terminal tractors, loading shovels and forklifts. The remainder of those assets, with the capability to be converted, will be done so by the end of Q2 this year.

Accelerating our commitment, in 2022 we concluded a £2m investment in a wider electrification process that saw four diesel-driven Rubber-Tyre-Gantry-Cranes at Tees Dock converted to electric power. Building on the three fully electric cranes we had already procured, this now means that 70% of our fleet is powered by renewable electricity. The remaining three cranes will be converted this year, resulting in an average saving of 700 tonnes of CO₂ emissions each year compared to diesel.

This complements the five electric vehicles now in operation across Tees Dock and Conservancy, and the arrival of two new fully electric mobile harbour cranes, which became operational in May 2023.

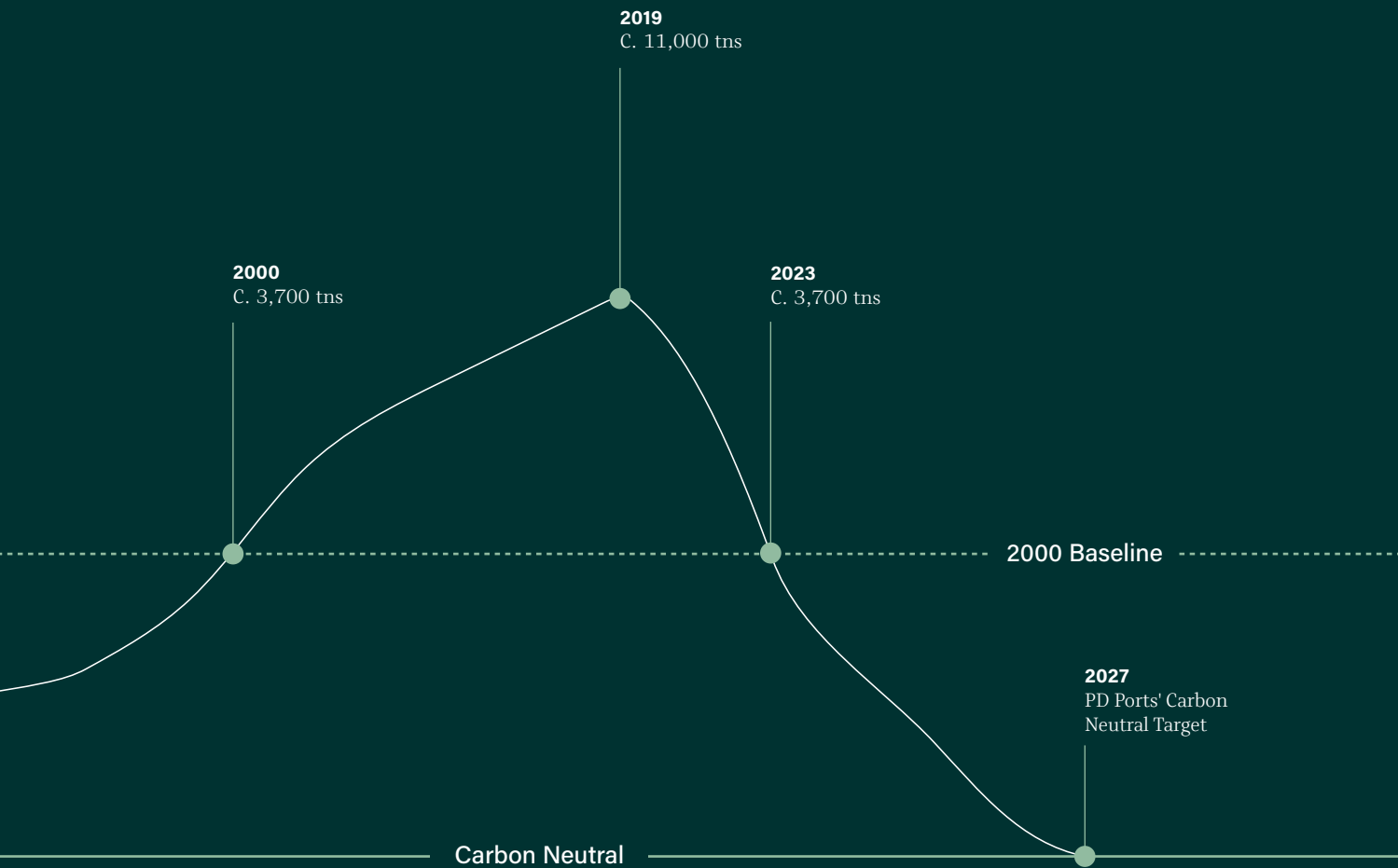
With more than 27% of the UK's total CO₂ emissions resulting from transport, 91% of which is emitted from road transport vehicles, it is more crucial than ever to look at more sustainable transport solutions to transport freight around the UK.

And that's what we continue to do. Advancing our efforts to move more freight by rail rather than road, we continue to invest in rail services through our dedicated intermodal rail terminal. This has the potential to remove over 61,000 road movements from the UK road network each year.



Driving Down CO₂ Emissions

PD Ports wants its Tees-based operations to be carbon neutral by 2027; so far, CO₂ emissions are already back to levels last seen in 2000.



“Decarbonisation is such a prominent and important part of our agenda to be the UK’s most sustainable port company”

i

- Scope 1**
Includes all direct emissions from owned or controlled sources.
- Scope 2**
Includes indirect emissions from the generation of purchased electricity.
- Scope 3**
Includes all other indirect emissions that occur in a company’s value chain.

I am delighted with our collective efforts over recent years, and thanks to the hard work and dedication of our people, our Scope 1 and Scope 2 CO₂ emissions are now pushing towards the same levels they were at in 2000. Of course, we are not stopping there, and there is a long way to go to reach our 2027 goal.

To help achieve this, we have now adopted a procurement policy that requires all future assets to be capable of running on more sustainable fuels. For example, in July 2024, we will welcome a £23M investment in the form of a new dredger that will enable us to carry out our dredging obligations as the Statutory Harbour Authority in the most sustainable way possible. The vessel is the most advanced, dredging vessel in the UK thanks to its HVO electric hybrid technology, as well as being the first dredger nationwide to encompass high level methanol and ethanol fuel readiness.

In our role as an enabler and catalyst for inward investment and economic growth in the Tees Valley, we continue to work with our customers, key partners and stakeholders to position the River Tees at the forefront of the energy transition in the UK.





Furthermore, as we look to explore the opportunities of hydrogen as an alternative fuel source, we are working closely with key partners, EDF Hynamics, on their plans to develop the Tees Green Hydrogen project; an initiative which will use green electricity from the Tees Bay Wind Farm to generate green hydrogen. PD Ports will be one of the first off takers of the green energy, which will be used to power mobile port operations.

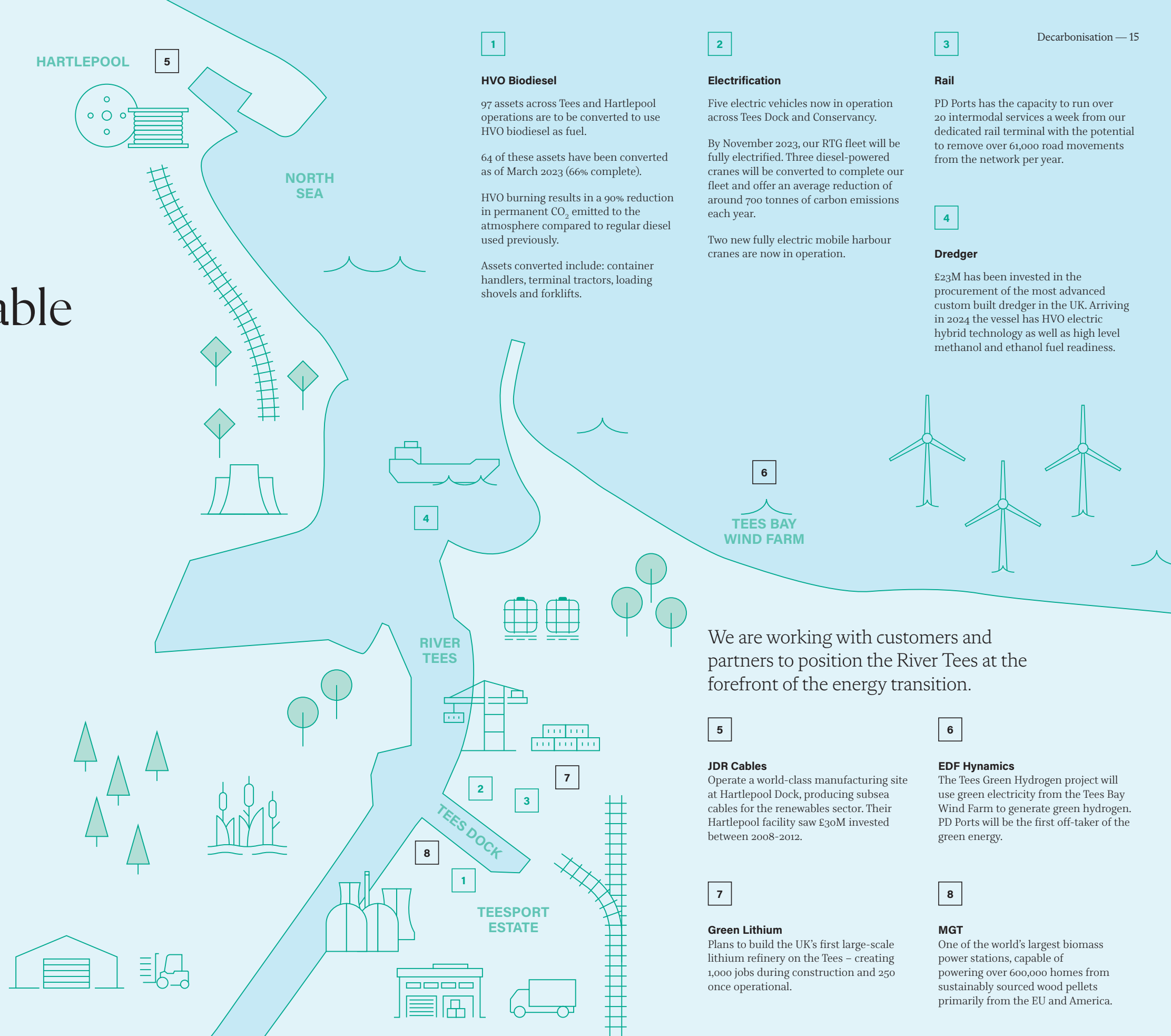
Our current work will combine to contribute towards a net zero future for PD Ports and the Tees Valley. By continuing to collaborate and to invest in sustainable technologies, we will achieve our sustainability ambitions.

Aiming to be the UK's Most Sustainable Port Company

PD Ports wants its Tees-based operations to be carbon neutral by 2027; so far, CO₂ emissions are already back to levels last seen in 2000

The Plan

-  Switch from fossil fuels
-  Reduce energy usage of equipment
-  Introduce low/zero carbon fuels
-  Establish regenerative power including solar panels and wind turbines



1

HVO Biodiesel

97 assets across Tees and Hartlepool operations are to be converted to use HVO biodiesel as fuel.

64 of these assets have been converted as of March 2023 (66% complete).

HVO burning results in a 90% reduction in permanent CO₂ emitted to the atmosphere compared to regular diesel used previously.

Assets converted include: container handlers, terminal tractors, loading shovels and forklifts.

2

Electrification

Five electric vehicles now in operation across Tees Dock and Conservancy.

By November 2023, our RTG fleet will be fully electrified. Three diesel-powered cranes will be converted to complete our fleet and offer an average reduction of around 700 tonnes of carbon emissions each year.

Two new fully electric mobile harbour cranes are now in operation.

3

Rail

PD Ports has the capacity to run over 20 intermodal services a week from our dedicated rail terminal with the potential to remove over 61,000 road movements from the network per year.

4

Dredger

£23M has been invested in the procurement of the most advanced custom built dredger in the UK. Arriving in 2024 the vessel has HVO electric hybrid technology as well as high level methanol and ethanol fuel readiness.

6

TEES BAY WIND FARM

We are working with customers and partners to position the River Tees at the forefront of the energy transition.

5

JDR Cables

Operate a world-class manufacturing site at Hartlepool Dock, producing subsea cables for the renewables sector. Their Hartlepool facility saw £30M invested between 2008-2012.

6

EDF Hynamics

The Tees Green Hydrogen project will use green electricity from the Tees Bay Wind Farm to generate green hydrogen. PD Ports will be the first off-taker of the green energy.

7

Green Lithium

Plans to build the UK's first large-scale lithium refinery on the Tees – creating 1,000 jobs during construction and 250 once operational.

8

MGT

One of the world's largest biomass power stations, capable of powering over 600,000 homes from sustainably sourced wood pellets primarily from the EU and America.

Clare Bottle, CEO, UK Warehousing Association, considers the challenges posed by the continuing shortage of warehousing space across the country, the effect this has had on supply chains and the potential solutions.

The Rise and Rise of Warehousing

Warehousing is growing. In fact, it's one of the fastest growing sectors in the UK economy, characterised by record take-up, low vacancy rates and rising demand.

There are several drivers behind this emergence of warehousing into the spotlight. Firstly, it has become essential to the home delivery supply chain required by online shopping, with most retailers outsourcing at least in part to 3PLs. Warehouses are no longer simply storage and distribution points, but complex order fulfilment spaces, where packaging and other added value activities are performed and returns processed. Accordingly, more – and larger – warehouses in the right locations are needed to meet the new and growing demands on the sector.

A second factor has been the recognition that long and complex supply chains are vulnerable. Initially, the prospect and eventual realisation of Brexit caused companies importing into the

UK to increase inventory levels to avoid likely supply chain delays. Subsequently, disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate-related events, and geopolitical tensions – the most recent being the conflict in Ukraine – have underlined the need to keep more inventory closer to markets, to safeguard supply chain resilience. This was relatively inexpensive when interest rates were low, but may prove less attractive as the cost of working capital climbs.

At this year's UKWA National Conference, Savills confirmed that nearly 48 million sq. ft of warehousing space was transacted in 2022, alongside a record 3.9% low in vacancy rates. Despite predictions that demand may be slowing down, clearly, we still need more space.



As a globally recognised and widely used standard for measuring and certifying building sustainability, BREEAM Excellent or Outstanding premises are increasingly hard to find. And while second-hand stock is trickling back onto the market, older warehouse spaces are often obsolete, due to low eaves height or poor power supplies, not to mention stringent Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) bandings as outlined in upcoming legislation. In fact, well over half of the UK's second-hand warehouse stock simply doesn't reach this standard.

The good news is that developers have risen to the challenge. There is plenty of warehousing space in the pipeline and over a third of it is already let. 354 sites have consented space, so there is land availability with options for good quality buildings. Meanwhile, vacancy rates are gradually increasing, and Savills predicts an influx of supply, both from new build and as a result of online retailers having overestimated their space requirements and releasing stock back onto the market.

It's not all about new space though. We need to optimise and use existing warehouses more efficiently. With the digital transformation of our working environment, systems and automation are already increasing throughput and accuracy, empowering workers and enabling warehouses to provide better services to their customers.

Meanwhile, the opportunity to embrace renewable energy sources – particularly by installing solar panels on warehouse rooftops – looks set to play its part in securing energy supplies for warehouses and saving costs as the industry transitions to electrification and decarbonises, on the journey to net zero.

Reducing energy consumption and product waste will be key to achieving the government's targets, as well as meeting stringent new Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) regulations. Crucially, warehouses that are both energy efficient and self-sufficient, with on-site renewable sources and equipped with the latest technologies, will be the most resilient, future-proof facilities, able to cope with demand and focus on long-term success.



Peter Snaith, Partner of Womble Bond Dickinson, explains how the digitalisation of trade documents has the potential to transform international trade, and why collaboration across the global trade system will prove key to its success.

Accelerating the Digitalisation of International Trade

The global trading system suffers from antiquated laws and a lack of standardisation. As a result, systems are fragmented, and processes are unnecessarily paper-heavy, inefficient and costly, especially for smaller companies.

A typical trade transaction can take up to 2–3 months to complete and involve up to 27 paper documents. Four billion paper documents float through the trading system at any given time, and only 1% of bills of lading are currently handled in digital form.

Digitalisation of trade documentation will lower transaction costs and promote greater efficiency, transparency and security in international trade.

Legal change and the potential benefits for businesses

Currently, laws governing key business-to-business trade documents, such as bills of lading, require the physical possession of paper documents. UK law, and the law of almost all of the UK's trading partners, does not currently regard electronic documents as being capable of possession.

This view of possession makes little sense now that technology can generate electronic documents with the same relevant properties as their paper equivalents. These electronic equivalents are usually cheaper, simpler, faster, and more secure than paper.

Given the cross-jurisdictional nature of international trade, global legal reform is required to facilitate the use of electronic trade documents. In recognition of this challenge, the UN proposed a Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records (UNMLETR). Whilst some smaller jurisdictions, such as Singapore and Bahrain, have enacted legislation consistent with the model law, no major economy is currently fully compliant.

International trade transactions tend to be based on the laws of England and Wales, even transactions that do not involve the UK. It is therefore widely accepted that UK legal reform in line with UNMLETR will act as a catalyst towards global legal reform and the development of an electronic trade document ecosystem. As such, the UK has secured agreement amongst G7 countries to work together to progress coordinated legal reforms in line with UNMLETR.

The UK Government commissioned the Law Commission of England and Wales to examine the UNMLETR and make recommendations on how to bring UK law into conformity. Their final report provided a draft legislation, namely the Electronic Trade Documents Bill. The Bill states that business-to-business electronic trade documents which satisfy certain criteria should be treated as functional equivalents of their paper counterparts. This may sound like a relatively minor, technical change, but it has the potential to transform international trade.

Putting electronic trade documents on the same legal footing as paper trade documents will support the development of a global ecosystem for electronic trade documents. This will reduce trade costs, accelerate trade transaction times, increase administrative efficiency, reduce documentation errors and increase access to trade finance.

The Bill is currently going through the parliamentary process, and is expected to be approved and brought into law soon.

Whilst the Bill has the potential to be a catalyst for truly transformational change, it is arguably just an enabler. All of the participants in the global trade system, including businesses, policy makers, thought leaders and the Government, must work together to ensure that the new legislation does not languish on the statute book. The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) has already started to play a pivotal role in bringing the new legislation to life.

The ICC Centre for Digital Trade & Innovation

The Centre for Digital Trade & Innovation (C4DTI) is an ICC United Kingdom-led, global initiative based at Teesside University established with support from the Tees Valley Combined Authority.

A strong advocate for reform, the Centre supports the Electronic Trade Documents Bill and also the ICC's Digital Standards Initiative.

The C4DTI provides an impartial environment in which industry and government can collaborate on practical pilot work to accelerate the pace and scale of digitalisation, ensure there is a consistent application of standards, rules and laws and increase the prospects for the adoption of digital trading processes in the future. It is agnostic to technology, and advocates for open, interoperable systems.

The Centre delivers training to support SMEs and global supply chain ecosystems, and is also actively engaged in research to provide thought leadership and identify potential barriers and solutions to digitalisation. This research includes a baseline investigation into Tees Valley-based SME's capacity, interest and capability for digital trade, and to participate in the C4DTI's testbed and pilot projects.

One of the C4DTI's current pilot projects is focused on trade between the UK and Singapore. The main objective of this pilot is to achieve interoperability between systems that are digitalisation the process of creating, issuing, transferring, and endorsing bills of lading, using a blockchain-based system to enable secure and efficient sharing of trade-related documents in an immutable format. Good progress is being made.

“Our region will continue to play a vital role in enabling the collaboration that needs to happen”



A bright future

With the expected passage of the Electronic Trade Documents Bill, the UK is likely to become the first major global economy to enable critical documents used in trade, such as the Bill of Lading, to be assured and transferred digitally with full legal effect. This has the potential to bring huge benefits to all trading entities, large and small.

However, we must never forget that the new legislation is only an enabler, and its provisions need to be put into practice on an open and internationally collaborative basis. The C4DTI is a global initiative, led out of the UK which is based on Teesside. Through it, our region will continue to play a vital role in enabling the collaboration that needs to happen, and showing how the benefits can be realised.





bp's UK Head of Hydrogen, **Matt Williamson**, sets out the vision for transforming Teesside into a green industrial heartland, built on the region's unique location, heritage and skillset.

Reimagining an Industrial Heartland

Teesside has a proud heritage as one of the UK's industrial heartlands. Today, the region faces the dual-challenge of promoting industrial regeneration and delivering a low-carbon transition.

bp's large-scale hydrogen and Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) projects in the region – H2Teesside, HyGreen Teesside, and Net Zero Teesside Power – aim to meet these challenges, and in the process help transform Teesside into a world-leading low carbon energy hub.

Hydrogen is a multi-purpose zero-carbon fuel, which can be used for many purposes from industrial heating through to transport. And it provides a medium to store energy. So, hydrogen will play a big role in the net zero economy. Respectively, H2Teesside and HyGreen Teesside plan to be among the UK's largest blue and green hydrogen facilities, and together could provide over 15% of the UK Government's target to develop 10GW hydrogen production by 2030.

Net Zero Teesside Power will be the world's first commercial scale gas fired power station with carbon capture technology and could generate enough low-carbon electricity to power close to 5% of all UK homes.

We're making good progress on these projects. In March of this year, H2Teesside and Net Zero Teesside Power were selected as Track-1 Capture Projects to proceed to negotiations for government funding support with the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ), whilst HyGreen Teesside was selected to progress to the next stage of DESNZ's Hydrogen Business Model and Net Zero Hydrogen Fund programmes.

As we make these positive next steps, it's worth looking back to why we chose Teesside as the ideal location for these projects.

Firstly, Teesside's industrial heritage means there is a wide array of industries in the region looking to low carbon energy to decarbonize their operations. We're already seeing great interest from potential customers, having signed agreements with a range of carbon intensive businesses looking to decarbonize through the low carbon hydrogen produced at H2Teesside and HyGreen Teesside.

Secondly, Teesside's location and geography is highly attractive – providing access to gas

pipeline infrastructure and secure offshore carbon storage in the Endurance aquifer in the Southern North Sea. bp is playing our part in developing new infrastructure to take advantage of this storage capacity as lead operator of the Northern Endurance Partnership – the common pipeline infrastructure which will safely capture, transport and store CO₂ from projects across Teesside, including H2Teesside and Net Zero Teesside Power, and the Humber to the Endurance aquifer 145 kilometres offshore.

Thirdly, it was Teesside's people that attracted us to the region. Teesside's experience and industrial heritage means there are people with the endeavour and skills needed to create a new green industrial heartland and hydrogen hub. Equally, our plans have to bring benefits to local people. They must create opportunities that enable people to build their careers and their lives in the community they call home. That's why we are proud that our projects will not only be a source of low carbon energy – but also high-quality jobs.

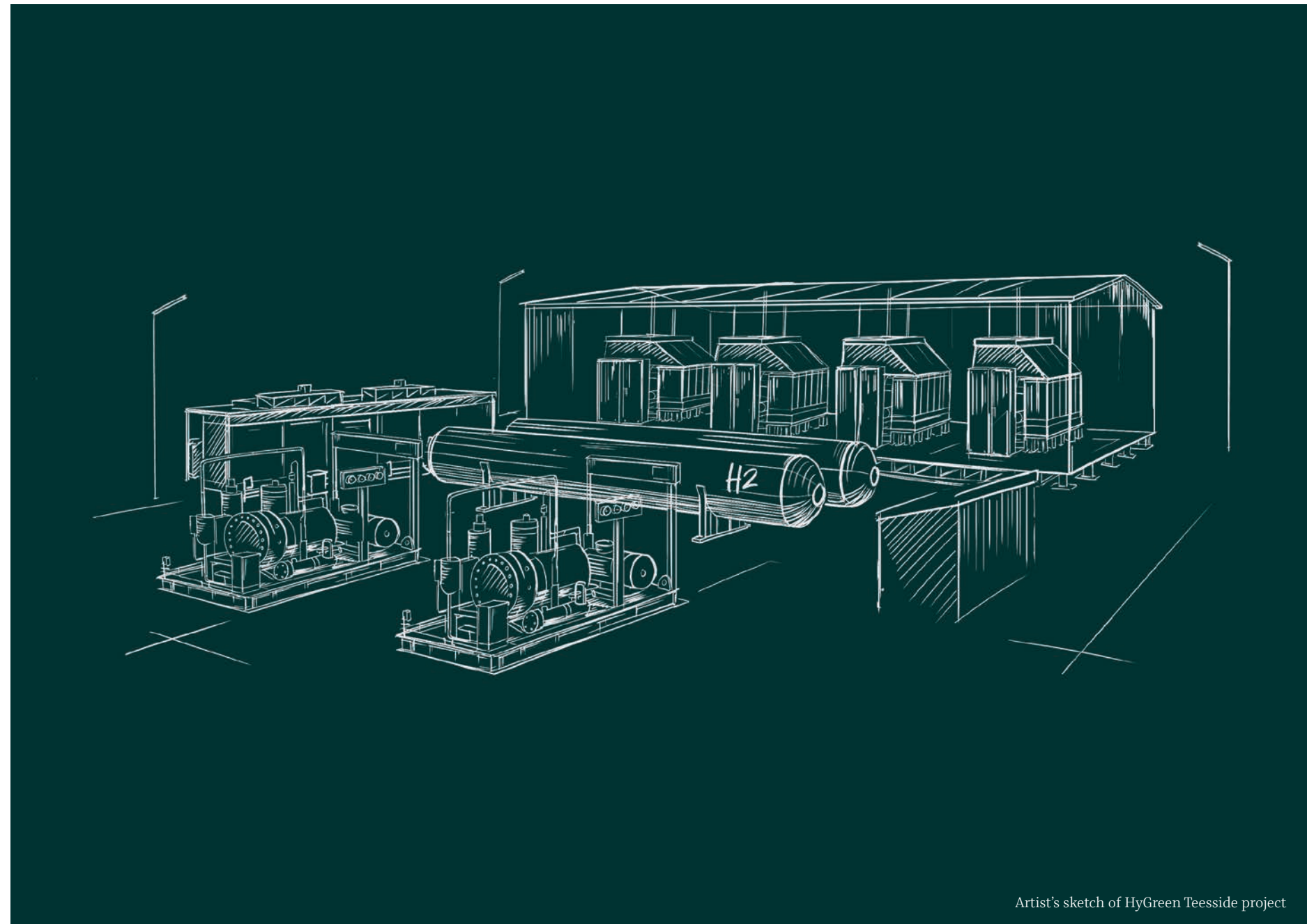
We expect Net Zero Teesside Power alone to provide 3,000 jobs annually in construction, peaking in 2024, and then 1000 jobs annually during operation. Together, H2Teesside and HyGreen Teesside could support approximately 1860 jobs per year annually during construction, and support over 700 jobs per year once operational.

And we are helping to ensure that training is in place so that local people have the specialist skills needed for these jobs. That is why, for example, we are supporting the development of Clean Energy Education Hub at Redcar & Cleveland College. This will train school leavers, apprentices and adult learners in the skills needed for jobs in the kinds of facilities we are building – as well as in wind and solar farms and other roles.

“We are helping to ensure that training is in place so that local people have the specialist skills needed for these jobs”

We are deeply proud of these partnerships, not just because they demonstrate our long-term commitment to Teesside, but because they reflect our overriding approach to the region – namely, that bp's projects are being delivered together with the local community, as a partnership.

As our projects in Teesside enter their next chapter, we look forward to continuing to work with our partners towards the shared goal of transforming the region into a low carbon industrial heartland.



Artist's sketch of HyGreen Teesside project

Claire Preston, Power of Women (POW) Head of Operations, argues how visible female role models are critical to raising the future aspirations of young women and empowering them to achieve equity in the workplace.

Embracing Equity

The Power of Women, the Community Interest Company spearheaded by the late Professor Jane Turner, believe that today's young women have the power to change the world.

Through work in partnership with local educators and businesses, we intend to break down gender stereotypes, raise aspiration and confidence within our young women and enable them to pursue exciting careers and fulfilling lives.

The evolving, transformative programme will soon include digital content, with the aim of reaching more children, who will also benefit from planned, inspiring interaction with professionals from a range of sectors, presenting opportunities and building dreams.

But there is so much more we need to do to ensure that all women are empowered to achieve equity within career choices, employment pathways and professional development, at all stages of their career journey, with awareness at a very local level

being the first step to tackling some of the many limiting obstacles which currently exist.

One major barrier is the lack of visible role models, well reported as being a significant influence on aspiration, particularly for women; we need to find ways of addressing this, modelling ambition and showing what is possible, now.

Research shows that attracting females to a business is more effective where women role models are prominent. And likewise, whether it's unconscious bias or the perception of a male-dominated environment, where recruiting managers are men, we know this can make a difference to potential applicants. But until gender imbalance is redressed and females are more visible in non-traditional roles and senior positions, what can be done?





“Females should also be encouraged to take risks”



Allies. Developing men as allies within the workplace is a tangible, positive step which can be taken to demonstrate commitment to equality, immediately. It's wonderful to see fantastic examples of local leaders as allies, but this needs to be replicated and extended; we need so many more if we are going to accelerate necessary change, for everyone's benefit.

The language we use is also key and this starts with parents and educators (we are all guilty of imposing our own unconscious biases) and this continues through post-16 education into employment, with lasting negative consequences for many. Recruiters often use male dominated language and look for competence and capabilities which may not be essential, rather than seeking qualities and ambition which can be nurtured – potentially more limiting for women.

Business leaders need to act as sponsors, opening doors for aspiring females, where possible not demanding experience which will preclude so many from roles in which

they could develop and excel. We have some catching up to do, with many opportunities on the horizon in our region, so some risks may need to be taken to pull women through the talent pipeline. Females should also be encouraged to take risks, with necessary support and mentoring, developing and promoting talented women who can then be the next cohort of role models, showing junior employees an aspirational version of themselves.

Start by listening, be aware of the barriers that exist within your business and consider how to reduce or remove them. Support diversity and inclusive practice through training and coaching; set an example to others as an ally and role model, and celebrate others who are.

Be proactive and do more than you think you should; if you really want to have the competitive advantage, achieve business goals and contribute to regional prosperity, then you really do need to embrace equity and champion the power of women.

PD Ports Chief Executive Officer, **Frans Calje OBE**, looks at the recruitment landscape, and the challenges facing both PD Ports and the wider maritime and shipping industry.

Anchoring Talent

A business is only as good as its people. And our people are our greatest asset. As one of the Tees Valley's largest employers, we've been providing career opportunities to people across the region for over 50 years.

However, as a business and as an industry, we face several significant challenges when it comes to recruitment. From changing perceptions and attracting talent to broadening skills and staying ahead of the rest, companies are coming to terms with a competitive and ever-changing landscape.

Attracting and retaining talent is perhaps the most significant of those. Much work is being done, but the industry needs to continue to promote itself as exciting and rewarding, with a diverse and often unexpected range of opportunities. The chance to work with emerging technologies and play a vital role in global trade, are both unique advantages. And passing that message on to the next generation is of great priority. Our work with High Tide Foundation, Tees Valley Logistics Academy and The North East School of Shipping is testament to that, and so too is our commitment to changing perceptions and raising awareness of the sector.

Investing in people is of critical importance, and it's long since been the cornerstone of our strategy. Equally, for potential employees, it's something that often ranks highly amongst the list of things they look for in an organisation. With a focus on succession planning and talent management, our award-winning training programmes ensure that we support personal and professional development, while

improving the skills base of our teams. As older workers approach retirement, there's a real need to start plugging the future skills gap today – particularly so, given that some of these are highly specialised roles. Alongside a culture of continuous learning and upskilling, that's why it's pivotal that we maintain strong relationships with education settings of all natures.

Of course, competitive salaries and benefits packages are crucial too – not only so people feel valued and rewarded, but also to help them through the current cost of living crisis. Consideration also needs to be given to how things like flexible and hybrid working can be applied to the sector. It's an open and ongoing debate but one which we need to engage with, or risk losing talent to agile industries that have already set the narrative.

Despite the challenges, there are plenty of reasons to be positive. By investing in people and embracing change, we can nurture a workforce that supports our growth and long-term success. But we can't do it alone. To create an appealing and supportive environment that attracts and retains top talent, it requires a collaborative effort between industry stakeholders, education and government. Only then can we reach our true potential – as an industry, as a business and as a people.

“It requires a collaborative effort between industry stakeholders, education and government”





Gary Dawson, Chairman of the AV Dawson Group, talks about his favourite things about the Tees Valley region.

My Tees Valley

With our family descending from local shipwrights and coal merchants, I am immensely proud of our heritage. The Dawson name is now synonymous with the Tees Valley region and over the past 85 years, as owner and operator of Port of Middlesbrough, we have grown to become one of the largest family businesses in the area.

More recently we have established a new group structure, encompassing three subsidiary businesses, with a fourth to follow. We have recently restructured our board of directors, and I have taken on a new role as Chairman of the AV Dawson Group, driving forward our values-led business and supporting the next generation of business leaders.



“I love how we, as a region, and as people and communities, have once again shown that we can adapt and prosper”



Here are my three favourite things about Teesside:

Success Stories

I love to hear success stories about the town, its people, its businesses, and of course Middlesbrough FC. I will always talk up the area wherever I am, and fight against any negative press, comments, or injustice that I come across.

I want every Teesside business and particularly those in our river community to have a bright future. I strongly believe that we all have our own niches, our own specific strengths and weaknesses and that we can complement each other and collaborate for the greater good of the whole of the Tees Valley and our communities. We need to work closer with our fantastic schools, colleges, our amazing university, our amateur sports clubs, and our local charities to make the best of our young people who can go on to represent and shine a light for Teesside and the Tees Valley wherever they go.

Embracing Change

Not surprisingly, with my family business background, I'm a huge fan of our industrial heritage and the significance of Teesside to the UK and across the world. I'm even more excited by a renewed sense of purpose and of progress that I am now seeing for the first time in over 30 years of my working life.

In our world of River Tees based port, shipping, and logistics, I am proud and honoured to lead our brilliant team here at Port of Middlesbrough as we continue to serve Teesside's rejuvenated steel industry, whilst also supporting new investment on the Teesworks site, and fully embracing diversification into burgeoning green energy markets.

Waste-to-energy projects and products, and offshore wind cable and equipment storage, which are both new markets for us, are all being driven by the net zero carbon agenda and are creating a bright new future for the whole of the Tees Valley.

I love how we, as a region, and as people and communities, have once again shown that we can adapt and prosper. The level of investment, the buzz and positivity around the river, and the pace of change has never been as high.

Coast and Country, Food and Drink

I like nothing more than a walk on our lovely beaches, along our cliff tops, and across our local moors.

Once a month a small group of Teesside walking friends from diverse business backgrounds, along with our dogs, spend a morning putting the world to rights on the sands of Redcar, Marske and Saltburn, or along the Cleveland Way somewhere between Osmotherley and Whitby. The fact that we can experience such stunning countryside and beautiful sea views, all with a spectacular industrial backdrop and often all three at the same time, is in my experience quite unique and should be treasured and celebrated.

Of course, a good walk should always be finished off with a well-earned pint and something to eat, and the choice of good pubs and restaurants is plentiful. From award winning fish and chips to Yarm high street, up and coming Norton, and new venues in Middlesbrough centre with the redevelopment of the historic quarter near the rail station, there really is something for everyone.

And One More Thing

Middlesbrough's motto adopted in 1853 when the town was undergoing phenomenal growth due to the iron and steel industry is the Latin word 'Erimus'. Translated as 'We shall be', it was a true statement of intent and it seems as appropriate today as it did all those years ago!

I am so excited for the young people of Teesside, as they will have opportunities and prospects arguably far greater and wider ranging than many previous generations. I hope that we leave them with solid foundations to build upon and I look forward to seeing what they can achieve.

River Tees Roundup

Highlights of exciting developments taking place around the River Tees and across the Tees Valley.

Tees Svitzer sailing towards carbon neutrality

Towage and marine solutions provider, Svitzer, has converted four tugs based on the River Tees to run on Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) biodiesel, significantly reducing carbon emissions. Svitzer, who delivers services to customers worldwide, is committed to becoming fully carbon neutral by 2040 and this achievement marks another step forward in its EcoTow programme. The conversion will mean that around 1,800 Teesport tug jobs will be carried out by vessels running exclusively on HVO, resulting in an approximate reduction of 1,800 tonnes of CO₂ emissions.



PD Ports backs inaugural Tees Business Awards

The first annual Tees Business Awards was a night to remember – as organisations and individuals across the Tees Valley were recognised and celebrated for their successes in enterprise. As the event's headline sponsors PD Ports', Kirsten Donkin, Head of Communications, opened the night's proceedings with a speech which shone a spotlight on the region's collective resilience and determination as the backbone for past, present and future success:

“We all continue to battle with the ongoing challenges brought by COVID, Brexit, conflict in the Ukraine and surging energy costs, but we take on those challenges and embrace change; we adapt, we innovate, we grow, and we succeed”, said Kirsten. “And that is what tonight is all about recognising and rewarding the talented people and progressive businesses achieving great things across our region.”

“We adapt, we innovate, we grow, and we succeed”



Local charity's mission boosted with new welfare vehicle

Contributions from The National Lottery Community Fund have allowed Tees River Rescue to purchase a van to aid their search and rescue endeavours on the River Tees. The local charity, who provide an independent rescue facility in the event of emergencies on the river, will also use the vehicle for community events and school visits to promote the message of water safety.

Osprey inspiring next generation to build rewarding careers

Osprey Group is capitalising on its recent growth, by inviting emerging talent interested in a career in engineering to join the business as part of its new 'Year in Industry' internship and graduate programme. Positions are available for a variety of specialties as both initiatives provide unprecedented insight into skills and experience into engineering. During the programmes, prospective interns and graduates will both be exposed to vital on-site experience, taking part in specific projects either onshore or offshore.

Lisa Nandy visits Teesport

Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up and Labour MP for Wigan, Lisa Nandy, recently visited Teesport to hear about recent investments taking shape along the River Tees to support economic growth and boost employment. The visit highlighted the region's shared ambition to lead the UK in energy transition and the collaborative work from the river community in supporting future skills development and community initiatives.





LOCAL HERO

James Thomson

Driving force behind the Teesside Lions and visionary behind the recently launched 'Drop the Knife' campaign, local lad, James Thomson, talks to Bridge's Emily Bulmer about the importance of providing pathways for the next generation, his 6'10" Argentine best friend, Cacú, and his dream for the future of sport in the Tees Valley.

21 years ago James' playing days were cruelly cut short following a tragic car accident. Now, aged 43, James finds himself courtside at the helm, as owner and chairman, of one of the UK's most dynamic basketball clubs; the Teesside Lions.

Established in 2007, the club has continued to grow in both stature and popularity, breaking record attendance figures and attracting talent from across the world, as well as nurturing those who are homegrown.

Finishing the 22/23 season unbeaten and with the playoffs looming, James started by reflecting proudly on what his club has achieved in that time.

"We're a real grass roots club with an elite programme of development and I couldn't be prouder of that," said James. "A lot of the big national clubs, like London, have money behind them whereas we don't so that really shows you the strength and commitment behind everyone involved with the club."

Off the court, James' career is equally as impressive.

He has coached north of 20,000 children across a community legacy that spans over 25 years and is the mastermind of the Role Models project – an early intervention programme which aims to provide positive sporting role models in-order-to reduce crime in the Cleveland Police service area.

In 2022, backed by funding from Curv and Thirteen Group, James founded the innovative social project, which uses players from Teesside Lions to act as 'big brothers' to local school children, offering support and aiding personal growth and development.

"It all started when we went into a local school to deliver a basketball session," explained James. "It became immediately apparent that some of the younger generation no longer have any fear of consequences – it's like they have lost their sense of direction.

"Sports, like basketball, offer a great opportunity to provide a 'surrogate' role model that can guide and positively influence where that figure may otherwise be absent for some children.

"Kids are placed under an awful lot of emotional pressure at such a young age with exams, SATs, life in general. That's why it's so important that they have a sense of direction and someone to guide them along a positive pathway.

"If we can do that, whilst also teaching them any transferable skills like communication, teamwork and how to deal with failure, then that's all we can hope for from the project. We don't just want to provide role models, we want to create them out of the children themselves."

Whilst directly targeting transformation to healthier and more productive ways of life, the Role Models campaign's latest launch, 'Drop the Knife', offers a stark warning about the dangers of knife crime through early intervention presentations including a live re-enactment of an attack.

Knife crime in the Cleveland Police area is the second highest in the country, James tells me, and statistics also show that if you carry a knife, you're three times more likely to be stabbed with it.

"The drop the knife campaign takes role models from the Teesside Lions into schools to alert the dangers of carrying knives whilst also inspiring and encouraging children to follow a more positive pathway, away from crime and violence," explains James.

"The aim is to show the true consequences of knife related crimes and ultimately shock people away from carrying weapons."





“He leaves a lasting impression wherever he goes”

It is not just home-grown basketball heroes though, who are advocating James’ work in the community. In January, James welcomed friend and former teammate, Cacú Alemanno, to West Middlesbrough after a 25-hour, 10,000-mile flight from Argentina to participate in the project’s school engagement.

He laughs as he shows me a video of the 6’10” superstar and his son, Josh, dancing in the kitchen, “Do you see how down to earth he is for a big giant?”

“He is one of my best friends and has always been a huge supporter of what we are trying to achieve with Role Models. He leaves a lasting impression wherever he goes – not even 24 hours had passed, and word had already spread of his arrival. That just shows how much impact we can really have by engaging our people with our communities.”

James will undoubtedly leave a sporting legacy here in Teesside. He radiates authenticity, has an abundance of hope and has genuine good intentions. What’s next, he says, could really be something special.

“For me, Role Models must be sustainable. It must continue to have a positive impact. We’re currently looking to find sponsorship that will enable us to fund two more community coaches to dedicate their time to promoting the club and the project in our communities.

“We have the potential here to reach thousands of children and get them truly engaged in a positive activity – that is a sustainable model.

“I also want the project to continue to grow and develop so that we can make sure we continue to reach children in those ‘hot spot’ crime areas and provide opportunities where they are needed the most. In that sense we will continue to drive on.

“The long-term vision is to have everything under one roof; develop a truly world-leading facility that tackles the four main problems in sport; awareness, access, finance and infrastructure.

“I have grand plans for a facility that will do just that whilst also providing access to coaching, spectating, and training for nine major sports. Watch this space.”

BRIDGE

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