

Wynns Group written evidence to the Transport Select Committee's enquiry "UK Ports Industry"

Introduction

1. Wynns Ltd are the UK's only independent transport consultancy specialising in the movement of abnormal indivisible loads. In 1998 and working on behalf of Powergen, Wynns engineered the delivery of 7 loads in excess of 150 tonnes to Cottam Power Station in Nottinghamshire. The loads were delivered directly to site via the River Trent.
2. In November 2000 Wynns subsidiary company Robert Wynn & Sons Ltd was awarded an £8.5m freight facilities grant. The grant represented 99% of the total cost of the design and build of a specialist ro/ro barge and the purchase and conversion of a former inland tanker barge.
3. The vessels, later named the Terra Marique and the Inland Navigator, work as a system to maximise the potential of the inland waterway network for the carriage of the largest and heaviest abnormal indivisible loads. Specifically, Special Order & VR1 categories which are granted for road movement by the Secretary Of State for Transport. Special Order permits are issued for loads which when transported are either in excess of 150 tonnes in weight, 6 metres in width or 30 metres in length and VR1 permits which are for loads which when transported are above 5 metres in width.
4. The Government's "water preferred policy" was announced on June 11th 2002 by the then Parliamentary Under Secretary for Transport David Jamieson MP and clearly states that
5. *"the Department's VSE Division will henceforth adopt a policy whereby water transportation is the preferred mode for the movement of the largest and heaviest abnormal indivisible loads. Road movements will only be authorised where the Department has considered the possibility but believes water transportation is not feasible"*

Summary

6. The committee has asked for submissions commenting on the Ports Policy review and as well as requesting views as to the adequacy of surface access to ports.
7. May I begin by stating that we welcomed the Government's Ports Policy Review with particular reference to consideration of inland connections to ports?
8. The UK's commercial Inland waterways will, we believe, have an increasing part to play in ensuring that the UK port sector continues to contribute greatly to our national economy.
9. The problems associated with port congestion and congestion on routes in and out of our major ports are well documented. We hope that the thoughts set out below are a coherent set of proposals which highlight the potential and if adopted we believe will ensure that the commercial navigations play their part within a national and regional integrated transport system.

Wynns response

10. We do not believe that the Government should rule out a port strategy, which is location specific. As with Airports, we believe that the Government has a duty to ensure that port development is targeted, proportionate and sustainable.
 11. Having read Section 4 of the Ports Policy Review, we would advocate a two level approach
 12. Firstly the Government should make an assessment of the inland connections to all ports and publish a table that ranks those with good inland transport links against those that do not. Further assessment should be carried out into the potential improvements which could be derived should investment be directed towards existing inland infrastructure.
 13. Once this is carried out this should be used as a central pillar of the Governments thinking in the areas of inland waterway and port development.
 14. Secondly the ports themselves should be required to develop a "Master Plan"
 15. Each Port should be asked to clearly set out their thinking with regard to future development.
 16. These master plans should be compiled using an agreed framework, which would include the consideration of alternative modes of onward transportation. Such a framework should again give great weight to the utilisation of existing inland transport links as well as consideration as to the potential to upgrade such infrastructure.
 17. **We would ask the question: Is the Government doing enough to encourage traffic already using ports to make more use sustainable modes of freight carriage for onward or inward freight carriage, and if not what future measures might be taken?**
 18. The Government we believe is in our opinion doing very little to encourage traffic from ports for on carriage by inland waterway. I cannot site one regular cargo that is transhipped at a coastal port and carried along the inland waterways that have come about as a result of government encouragement, either in the form of grant aid or policy.
 19. The government needs to review its grant regime and the way it makes regional funding allocations. Commercial waterways often flow through various local authorities and even RDA areas and therefore can easily be ignored. The Grant regime is cargo specific and therefore does not encourage ports, which will handle more than one shipping lines cargo and many different types of cargo.
 20. We would make reference to our thoughts below which sets out what measures we would propose that may be taken to encourage traffic to use the inland waterways as a means of freight carriage two and from ports.
- Planning - The Government should follow the success that has been achieved on the Thames and seek to role out nationwide a safeguarding of waterside sites throughout the commercial waterway network.

- Departmental - The Government should transfer responsibility for the commercial waterways to the Department for Transport. The DfT has responsibility for road, rail and Ports so why not the Commercial Navigations. The potential of the inland waterways as a freight-carrying mode we believe is being compromised by the fact that responsibility currently lies with DEFRA.
- Managerial - Those who are responsible for the managing of the commercial waterways should be incentivised to increase their utilisation as a freight-carrying mode. Currently most of the commercial waterway network is managed by British Waterways, who are funded in such a way that does not encourage them to increase the amount of freight carried. This cannot be the best way forward and we would request a review.
- Economically - Road pricing in one form or another will be upon us soon and therefore the Government should start now to put in place the infrastructure and the incentives to encourage the transfer of freight from road to water. The current grant regimes needs to be strengthened to ensure that water is not losing out to rail. Steps need to be taken to ensure that government takes a joined up approach such that waterborne freight carriage opportunities are not lost.
- We would also suggest that consideration is given to the sighting of bonded warehouses.

Duty is payable on off loading unless the cargo is placed in a bonded warehouse at the port. We propose that bonded warehouses are sited at strategic interchange sites at the head of the commercial navigations. We believe this would be another incentive for shippers to use inland waterways as opposed to road or rail.

To conclude

21. Generally the development of an existing facility, port or otherwise, follows the introduction or improvement of primary infrastructure put in place by central funding. It is then reasonable to request that enhancement of that infrastructure is carried out by the developer who sees commercial opportunity.
22. This in the case of waterways would mean that government would have to invest in the waterway network in terms of scale, reliability and integration following which commercial interest should be stimulated through grant aid encouragement.