

## IMPROVING PORT SUSTAINABILITY - STRATEGIES AND NEXT STEPS FOR DECARBONISATION

The UK Major Ports Group recently chaired a webinar focused on the future of port sustainability and the practical steps ports can take to accelerate decarbonisation. The session was led by Geraint Evans, Chief Executive of UKMPG, and featured expert insights from Richard Willis, Technical Director for Port Operations Technology at Haskoning, and Dr. Jake Rigby, Global Head of Innovation and Research at BMT.

Key themes from the discussion, highlighted the technologies, investment priorities and policy factors shaping the next phase of port decarbonisation in the UK.

## SETTING THE SCENE: WHY DECARBONISATION MATTERS FOR PORTS

Evans emphasised the growing pressure on ports to reduce emissions as expectations rise from policymakers, customers, investors and neighbouring communities. Ports are increasingly required to provide transparent emissions reporting and show measurable progress towards cleaner, more efficient operations.

Willis noted that while regulation provides the baseline, most momentum is coming from customer demand, the drive for operational efficiency, the need to access green finance and the rising value of strong sustainability credentials.

## UNDERSTANDING PORT EMISSIONS: SCOPE 1, 2 AND 3

Willis outlined the importance of understanding the full emissions profile of a port. Scope 1 and 2 emissions fall under the port's direct control, covering on site energy use and fuel consumption. Scope 3 emissions include ships, trucks and tenants. Although ports cannot directly control these, they play a vital enabling role in wider community decarbonisation.

A clear emissions baseline is increasingly important for funding, regulatory compliance and long term energy planning.

## THREE PATHWAYS TO PORT DECARBONISATION

The three possible pathways to decarbonisation include:

### 1. Reduce

Ports can deliver meaningful emissions cuts through operational efficiency. Telemetry, data insights and improved equipment management have already generated fuel savings of more than 20 percent in several projects.

### 2. Replace

Clean technology adoption, including electrification and the transitional use of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), enables ports to shift away from diesel dependent operations.

### 3. Renew

On site renewable energy production is expanding across the sector. Peel Ports' 30 MW solar installation offers a clear example of how ports can generate and consume clean energy as part of their decarbonisation strategy.

## ENERGY, STORAGE AND RESILIENCE CHALLENGES

As ports electrify equipment and support new fuel types, energy demand is growing rapidly. The intermittency of renewable power and limitations in current battery storage systems remain key challenges.

Both speakers stressed that energy resilience is becoming strategically essential, given the critical national infrastructure role that UK ports play.

## PORTS AS FUTURE ENERGY HUBS

Dr. Rigby outlined the long term potential for ports to act as multi vector energy hubs. This includes capturing excess renewable generation, supporting the production and distribution of low carbon fuels and enabling wider regional clean energy ecosystems.

However, uncertainty surrounding future vessel fuel choices and evolving regulation means ports must maintain flexibility in planning and investment.

## CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

The webinar highlighted the pivotal role ports will play in supporting the UK's transition to a low carbon economy. While the sector is already developing innovative solutions, accelerating progress will depend on clearer government policy, targeted infrastructure funding and strong cross industry collaboration.

These themes, along with other major issues affecting the ports sector such as renewable energy integration, digitalisation, infrastructure development and future fuels, will be explored in greater depth at the UK Ports Conference 2026, taking place 3–4 June in London.

The conference will provide updates on growth opportunities, port infrastructure delivery, sustainability strategies and the challenges and opportunities shaping the future of UK ports. Find out more and secure your place - <https://www.ukportsconference.co.uk/>

This webinar took place on 13th January 2026 and panellists included:

- **Geraint Evans**, UK Major Ports Group
- **Richard Willis**, Haskoning
- **Jake Rigby**, BMT