

Clyde Docks Preservation Initiative

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Report on the Planning History of Govan Graving Docks**November 2016**

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1. Executive Summary

The report will look in some detail, at the history of planning and development proposals for Govan Graving Docks, since the closure of the site as a working dock facility.

The core of our thesis is that an extensive redevelopment of Govan Graving Docks for residential and commercial use is not feasible on grounds of desirability/popularity, financial viability, technical viability, industrial/maritime heritage concerns and the A-listed status of the site. The information we have researched and collated in this report will serve unequivocally to prove that.

On the basis of research conducted in preparing this report; we have concluded that in order for a housing development at Govan Graving Docks to be financially viable, meet the exceptionally high infrastructure / site preparation costs and provide any return on investment for shareholders and investors – it would need to be an exclusive luxury development with property prices well above the average for the local area. Given the site is bounded by primarily social housing it is questionable whether this could be achieved.

The site has continued to lie derelict for 28 years despite several proposals for housing redevelopment having been put forward and later shelved for various reasons. We have concluded that housing/commercial proposals for such a prominent site as Govan Graving Docks would have gone ahead already had they any real viability and prospect of success.

The report also aims to raise questions of whether a private sector property developer is the most appropriate type of organisation to be entrusted with the stewardship of one of the most unique and significant maritime heritage assets in Europe.

We aim to demonstrate that Local Government strategy in dealing with Govan Graving Docks has in the past lacked objectivity, coherence and consistency in the time that the site has been derelict. Further that this has not aligned with stated policy objectives aimed at encouraging regeneration of the River Clyde corridor. Additionally the approach of the Scottish Government (formerly the Scottish Executive) and previously the Scottish Office prior to devolution has largely been passive. This report is not intended to level criticism at public bodies or officials but simply to identify lessons that can be learned from past experiences.

Clear opportunity to create a major maritime heritage centre at Govan Graving Docks was twice presented during the 1990s however there is no evidence that these proposals received the requisite municipal or political support beyond the granting of planning consent. This is an oversight that was particularly surprising given that Glasgow (once referred to as the “Second City of the Empire”) was once synonymous with maritime and shipbuilding industry. Yet the city does very little to preserve and promote its heritage.

The work of artists such as Charles Rennie Mackintosh is widely celebrated as part of Glasgow’s cultural heritage and rightly so. But what too of the legacy of the shipbuilding pioneers and the graft of thousands of shipyard and dock workers?

Proposals to create a major maritime centre (along with a social enterprise hub) at Govan Graving Docks, that would draw visitors/tourists and contribute immensely to the local economy in the long-term, have emerged once again alongside a campaign that has drawn wide support [39]. This has been coupled with a strategy to create social enterprise and micro business franchise opportunities for young and unemployed people from the Glasgow area, alongside proposed nature reserve areas, studio/workshop space, stalls and a facility for historic ship repair, replica build projects and skills preservation. The proposals are about much more than just maritime heritage and would transform Govan Graving Docks into a cultural hub and centre of community.

The greatest potential threat to the emerging opportunity to create a maritime park is the time needed for detailed proposals to be carefully formed and thus the potential for attempts to streamline the planning process and fast track the plans of housing developers – a scenario that could see Govan Graving Docks lost as an historic site permanently.

2. Background

The dry docks at Govan – Govan Graving Docks – were completed in the late 19th century with the last one to be built, the large dock nearest to Govan Rd, opening on 27th April 1898.

Commissioned by James Deas, the Chief Engineer of the Clyde Navigation Trust, No. 1 dry dock and No. 3 dry dock were the deepest dry docks in Britain when opened and could accommodate the largest ships in the world of the time. They pre-date the former burgh of Govan being incorporated into the City of Glasgow.

They have been described by Historic Scotland as “an outstanding graving dock complex without parallel in Scotland”

The docks were used to repair and refit hundreds of Clydebuilt ships and were in active use until the late 1980s. Since closing down the site has lain derelict.

The walls of the dry docks are built from grey granite some of which is hand carved and they are category A-listed. The only remaining building on the site is the sandstone pump house for No.1 dry dock. Also an A-listed building it is in poor condition with only the walls and a few roof beams remaining.

The Govan Graving Docks site is a significant piece of Glasgow’s shipbuilding and maritime heritage and is the only major historic dock complex on the Upper Clyde that has not been filled in to make way for modern redevelopments.

3. Housing/Commercial Proposals

Environmental consultants representing the current owners of Govan Graving Docks submitted a request to Glasgow City Council in July 2016 for a Screening Opinion under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations [1]. This sought agreement from the council that an Environmental Impact Assessment report would not be required to accompany a planning application. Glasgow City Council Development and Regeneration Services (DRS) issued a decision that an Environmental Statement will need to be submitted.

The Screening Opinion request indicated that planning consent will be sought for a development comprising 600 homes, a 195 room hotel and 7,520sqm of offices.

On the basis of this it can be inferred that the owners of the graving docks intend to pursue a development similar in scope and scale to the proposals presented by (then owners) City Canal Ltd in 2002 [2].

The report to the Development and Regeneration Services Committee on 15th August 2002 by the Director of DRS provides the most detailed description of the 2002 proposal that is readily available. While later reports iterate the cost and complexity that would have been associated with the proposed scheme. The report outlines the City Canal Ltd proposal in the context of a policy framework for wider regeneration and amenity of the River Clyde – also described in the report – but there appears to be little cohesive relationship between the two.

The 2002 plan proposed a development of 430-530 residential units, 300 hotel rooms and between 7,500 – 11,500sqm of offices. The intention was to use dry docks 1 and 3 to create basement car parking with blocks of flats sitting above these – effectively filling in these two docks. Infilling of the tidal basin (formerly the Harland and Wolff fitting out basin to the West of the dry docks) was also proposed to provide additional land for housing [14] and a planning application for this was later withdrawn after validation [28].

The report to the DRS Committee by the Director of DRS on the application for infilling of the basin [14] identified concerns raised by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) that no proposals for flood mitigation had been provided. Glasgow City Council Land Services echoed SEPA's concerns and also raised an issue regarding the potential impact of infilling on the river and tidal flows. Scottish Natural Heritage raised no objection but it seems conceivable they might be persuaded to take a different view in future due to the frequent presence of a seal and birds in and around the basin at present. No evidence has been found that an ecological survey was ever conducted or presented in connection with the proposal. The Director of DRS recommended that outline consent be granted for infilling of the basin subject to certain conditions and the signing of a Section 75 Agreement. The report did not address the need for a Harbour Revision Order to be enacted before infilling of the basin could be allowed.

The DRS Committee approved the City Canal Ltd masterplan proposal on 15th August 2002 on the provision certain conditions were addressed relating to flood risk, environmental issues, transport and land use [3] as also recommended in the DRS Director's report on the proposal [2]. Heritage, the historic significance of the site and its A-listed status do not appear have been deemed of relevance by the Committee on that date although these were emphasised in the background information presented in the Director's report in terms of the international significance of the site to shipbuilding history. The report indicated the proposal had been presented to the Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland but does not state their views on it.

The masterplan application for this development, submitted by McGurn Architects on behalf of City Canal Ltd, is listed on the Glasgow City Council planning website as 'for information only' with status unknown [31].

It is not made clear how the 2002 proposal would have delivered or complimented certain key policy objectives stated in the report particularly the following [2]:

"Regenerate the River's infrastructure taking account of flood risk assessment, quay wall stability and continuous management issues relating to flow regimes, bridging, environmental quality and protecting natural habitats"

"Investigate the concept of a Linear Park along the River Clyde Corridor"

"Establish stronger links with the City Centre, the Green Network and improve access to the River"

"Promote greater biodiversity and environmental sustainability through the expansion of the City's Green Network along the River corridor"

"Reinforce the character and containment of Govan Road through the introduction of buildings of an appropriate scale and mass"

"Achieve greater integration between key development sites along the River corridor, with the objective of delivering the full potential benefits of comprehensive regeneration particularly the repair/redesign of quay walls and accessibility to the River"

"Identify and promote Glasgow's 'River Clyde' as a visitor/leisure destination on the UK canal and maritime network"

"Evaluate the provision and management of additional moorings and infrastructure to support canal /water based leisure activities"

"Encourage the imaginative redevelopment of Govan Graving Docks to fully exploit the sites unique architectural and maritime heritage"

"Promote the River Clyde as an asset of national importance"

A lack of progress, in the years since this report was produced clearly suggests that these policy aims were formulated as strategic "bullet points" with no following plan of action for implementation. Glasgow City Council's approach to past proposals for Govan Graving Docks also suggests there was no consistency in terms of addressing the future of this unique historic site in the context of wider policy or its significance to shipbuilding and maritime heritage. Furthermore there is no evidence that Councillors representing Govan have ever sought to hold the administration to account over this. It seems unlikely this will change without Scottish Government intervention.

Additionally the *Assessment and Conclusions: Assessment* section of the Director of DRS report on the proposal for infilling of the tidal basin cites a 1997 council document "Planning for Development [14]:

"The City Council's "Planning for Development" document published in June 1997, recognised the River as the City's most important linear corridor and noted growing interest in its potential for mixed use development including residential, leisure, commercial and industrial uses. The Glasgow Alliance Action Plan 5, Objective 5, refers

specifically to the river and the need to prepare a development and movement framework. More recently the CIDRE (Cities Divided by a River in Europe) study provided guidance on the development of a regeneration strategy for the Clyde (Glasgow City Plan Part 1, 9.14)."

This further underlines the conclusion that the Council's approach to dealing with Govan Graving Docks lacks coherence and consistency. Thus it would seem not unreasonable to further conclude that the Council cannot be trusted to protect the future of this unique and historically important site from speculative redevelopment with proposals that address only the bare minimum concessions needed to comply with planning requirements. Scottish Government intervention may ultimately be essential to ensure the site is not lost as an historic asset through attempts to railroad planning consents and failure to allow the time needed to consider emergent alternative proposals and social impacts.

The report in part repeats verbatim many of the points addressed in the earlier report on the City Canal Ltd masterplan proposal [2] but does not suggest any progress in council strategy to ensure Govan Graving Docks is developed in line with policy objectives for the river corridor.

Proposed Council Partnership With City Canal Ltd

Early in 2003 Development and Regeneration Services proposed that Glasgow City Council enter into a partnership with City Canal Ltd whereby the council would fund approx. £7 million of the identified approx. £24 million enabling infrastructure costs by seeking funding from the European Regional Development Fund [5]. It was made apparent that this was necessary to facilitate the proposed development and ensure it went ahead [38]. The Council authorised DRS officials to submit an application for ERDF funding. This was later approved by Strathclyde European Partnership subject to conditions but later withdrawn due to a change in funding policy [4].

If a development similar in scope to the 2002 proposal is indeed planned then this is going to require a similar level of investment in enabling infrastructure. The question of how these costs would be met for a private development, without options for public or EU subsidy, remains unanswered.

Funding from Glasgow City Region Deal (although one of the strategic aims is to help stimulate private sector investment) is only available for public contracts that are put out to competitive tender and therefore cannot be used to subsidise or enable single specific private sector developments [11]. It is therefore interesting that individual Glasgow City Council members have made reference to the City Deal funding in the context of public discussions and comments about Govan Graving Docks [20, 21, 22]. However Govan Graving Docks is not specifically identified in the list of projects that are included in Glasgow's City Deal programme [27].

With surrounding sites fully developed in terms of infrastructure, Govan Graving Docks is in need of site-specific infrastructure investment – something that could only be raised by the owner of the property and not from public funds. Even if the site were to pass into public ownership there would still be questions raised about the affordability and budget priorities given that budgets for core services e.g. social care and road maintenance are severely stretched.

Thus it is a reasonable conclusion that the full cost of enabling infrastructure for a housing development at Govan Graving Docks would need to be met by the developer, without any *pump priming* from public funds. A wise investor or lender expecting to see a return would need to be satisfied that these costs would be able to be covered by the eventual sale of properties on the site before they would provide capital.

The 2002 City Canal Ltd masterplan identified 60% of the development as residential. This would in theory, assuming a proportionate allocation of infrastructure costs to the sale prices (£14.4 million), have required on average an additional £28,800 to be added to the price of each dwelling at 2002 property values were 500 homes to be built (with approx £8,500 of that subsidised by ERDF had the project gone ahead as planned).

Adjusting for inflation this would put the figure at approx £43,000 based on RPI adjustment to 2015 [6] for a contemporary development and without any public/EU subsidy.

The average house price in Govan is just over £90,000 [7] while at Glasgow Harbour across the river properties are sold for an average of £166,000 [8] however this is in Partick which already has a higher house price average than Govan at £180,000 [9].

“2.3 The initial technical investigations which City Canal Ltd have undertaken have identified exceptionally heavy enabling infrastructure and site preparation costs – including the existence of contaminated land, the poor condition of quay-side walls, and other structures and the heavy costs of service provision etc. These costs are likely to increase as further technical investigations are undertaken, and are considered to pose a significant threat to the implementation of the development proposal.” [5]

The above paragraph extract seems to have been tantamount to an admission that the development proposal may not be commercially viable.

It is likely these infrastructure costs will have increased since the 2002 proposal due to inflation and further deterioration on the site. Additionally it is not clear whether flood defences were factored into these cost estimates or whether Glasgow City Council undertook any assessment of risk of cost overrun in considering its proposal to partner with City Canal Ltd. These are questions that remain unanswered but nevertheless have a significant bearing on the commercial viability of a housing development at Govan Graving Docks today.

City Dock Proposal (2004)

A later revision of the 2002 proposal (City Dock) presented in 2004 indicated between 844 and 1,039 residential units (up from 430-530), live/work units and retail space with plans for a hotel seemingly shelved. This was outlined to the DRS Committee in a report by the Director of DRS on 28th April 2005 [4].

On this basis it seems the current proposals are reverting to the strategy behind the 2002 proposal at this stage.

Many of the core elements of the 2002 proposal were retained in the later City Dock plan – including the use of dry docks 1 and 3 for basement car parking using embedded silo structures to render this watertight. The 2002 plan had also sought planning consent for infilling of the tidal basin which was granted subject to conditions [29]. A Harbour Revision Order was also issued in 2004 in relation to the earlier proposal [30]. The basin is home to cormorants and swans, is often visited by seals and thus it seems less likely consent would be granted again for infilling. Although it is understood this is no longer intended by the developers.

Relevant extracts from the DRS Director's report to the DRS Committee of 28th April 2005 [4]:

4.2 The development of the Graving Docks site should be viewed in the context of proposed developments at Glasgow Harbour, SECC, Pacific Quay and the Greater Govan area. The proposed development should be capable of integrating with surrounding building types in terms of scale and massing. Relationships and connections with surrounding key buildings such as the Millennium Tower and Science Centre should be respected.

4.3 The site appears to be capable of providing adequate levels of off-street car parking and servicing by removing the majority of car parking spaces from the surface of the site. The precise location and configuration of that parking, in addition to measures to maximise public transport access to and from the site, as well as safety issues, would require to be agreed through subsequent applications. In particular a Transport Assessment will determine the extent of any works required beyond the site to the highway network/public transport facilities.

4.4 Given the historical and architectural significance of the site, and to address phasing of development, it is crucial that proposals submitted for the listed aspects of the site are capable of being implemented in full. This will require the lead developer to establish a development framework for the site, which would guarantee continuity of the development of the site. Any phasing proposals may form the basis of a legal agreement implemented through a section 75 agreement to facilitate overall development of the site.

4.5 Detailed applications for the whole or constituent parts of the site, in a phased approach to be agreed by the Council, will require to be supported by Listed Building consent(s), Flood risk Assessment(s), Environmental Assessment(s) and Design Statement(s) to enable the scheme(s) to be properly considered.

4.6 With regard to environmental issues, the developer will be expected to submit a detailed flood prevention scheme and flood risk assessment which would need to be implemented during the first phase of the development, prior to the occupancy of any of the uses on site.

The overall cost of the City Dock proposal, which was being put forward without the option of ERDF subsidy for the infrastructure costs [4], was estimated at between £100M and £150M [49, 50]. Assuming similar levels of enabling infrastructure cost to the 2002 proposal this puts infrastructure works at as much as a quarter of the overall project value.

The City Dock proposal listed residential floor space as forming 84% of the overall development (compared with 60% for the 2002 proposal which included hotel and more office space). If 84% of the development costs (i.e. between £84M and £126M) are allocated to the residential component of between 844 and 1,039 dwellings this would have required properties to be sold for an average price of approximately £112,000 just to break even on the

development costs and assuming no cost overrun particularly on the enabling infrastructure. Potentially the development cost per dwelling could have been as high as £150,000

These figures are in the context of 2004 valuations. Adjusting for inflation using RPI based calculation [6] would put the 2015 average at £160,000 with the upper estimate cost at £214,000. As stated previously average house prices in Govan are in the region of £90,000.

Clearly luxury housing, assuming Govan Graving Docks to be a marketable location for this, is the only way private sector development costs could be recouped as well as a return on investment delivered for shareholders and creditors.

Artists impressions of the City Dock proposal, showing the extent of the development are available online [42, 43]. A site plan of the proposal is also provided in the report by the Director of DRS [4].

Given the numbers of dwellings stated in the recent EIA Screening Opinion application [1] it is evident that proposals currently being developed by New City Vision will require similar overall building footprint and heights to the City Dock proposal (as well as potentially use of dock basins to create basement car parking as previously proposed) unless these numbers are scaled back drastically. However a significant reduction in the number of saleable units would impact negatively on the commercial viability of developing the site given the infrastructure costs identified in 2002 and the (well above average for the area) dwelling prices that we have calculated would potentially be required to cover the development cost [5].

A report to the DRS Committee by the Director of DRS on 23 March 2006 [44] on the DRS Budget and Service Plan 2005/2007 indicated an allocation of council budget for capital projects of £460,000 to Govan Graving Docks (Section 5 ref 4.1). While the annual DRS performance report 2005/06 identified Govan Graving Docks as a Capital Project on hold with no milestones or targets set [45].

The DRS Service Plan Quarterly Progress Report at 7 September 2006 [46] stated the then current status of the Graving Docks Proposal (service plan target ref. 4.10) as "under possible reconfiguration". Progress statement:

"Further discussions have been held with the Developers to ascertain the projected timescale for commencing this Project. In view of the continued delays from the Developer's side, the DRS Funding Contribution has been reallocated to the **Shipbuilding Task Force Fund.** "

A Service Plan progress report by the Director of DRS to the DRS Committee in January 2007 [47] identified the Govan Graving Docks Project (service plan target ref. 4.10) as still "under possible reconfiguration". The Progress Statement was as follows:

This project is being led by the private developer. Discussions are continuing on the format of the proposed development, although no substantial progress has been made and there has been no activity on the site. **The Council is considering selling the adjacent site at Stag St to the developer to facilitate better site access.**

The circumstances surrounding the decision on this proposed sale of the derelict land at the corner of Stag Street and Govan Road to the developer are not fully clear. Nor is it clear whether the proposed sale of this land was advertised seeking bids. Later DRS documents indicate continued negotiation with the developer over the sale of this land.

A report by the Executive Director of DRS to the DRS Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee of 20th November 2007 [48] identified the land at Govan Road/Stag Street as:

“Ground is reserved only for use in association with New City Vision’s limited [sic] proposal for the redevelopment of the adjoining graving docks site. “

It is not clear how this was approved or what procedures were followed. However it appears to show attempts by DRS to make concessions in order to try to facilitate the developers’ plans. No minutes have been found to demonstrate that this was ever approved by Committee.

Housing Market Implications

What is clear is that any housing at Govan Graving Docks would need to be at the high end of the market even just to be able to absorb the enabling infrastructure costs. Rightly or wrongly Govan is still perceived as a post-industrial-decline district that continues to be affected by petty crime, antisocial behaviour and high levels of unemployment. It is not clear whether the immediate area of the graving docks is able to attract homebuyers with high-end market levels of purchasing power given the nature of local retail and amenities as compared with the West End or more affluent nearby parts of the South Side and East Renfrewshire. There are also questions of whether such levels of gentrification are in the interest of the established community even if it is deliverable.

Experiences in London demonstrate that this is generally damaging to established communities where investment is poured in with very little of direct benefit to them. Often what is seen is upward pressure on house prices that excludes young people and lower income families from the property market.

The ability to realise high prices for properties at Govan Graving Docks (and even the viability of the site for housing) is tenuous at best and the investment risk involved in a commercial development is becoming clear. This would appear to support the view that developers intend to seek planning consent for the site purely to raise the balance sheet value of the asset in the short-medium term. Looking at their accounts filed with Companies House (and in the context of other housing development projects undertaken by New City Vision Group – primarily mid market suburban type villa/maisonette housing) it may be reasonable to speculate that this may be needed to satisfy their existing creditors [10]. On this basis alone it could be argued that Glasgow City Council should take a presumption against housing development at Govan Graving Docks and should delete the site as a housing proposal (Housing Proposal H015) from the City Development Plan 2 [12, 13]. To grant planning consent for a speculative housing application would likely serve only to increase the asset value as land for development. This would lock out alternative proposals on an acquisition cost basis and potentially mean the land continuing to lie derelict until such time as developers see fit or are able to raise capital to undertake construction work.

Experiences in other cities where dock sites have been redeveloped for housing (even where historic buildings have been sympathetically converted) show that far from attracting visitors and engaging the existing communities – these often create closed off (either physically or perceptively) middle class ghettos that discourage non-residents from entering. This is particularly pronounced in the East End of London in residential developments in the vicinity of Canary Wharf where luxury housing in places exists in adjoining streets to council housing and respective residents continue to be segregated. These developments have done nothing to tackle inequality or social exclusion.

A particular danger in terms of housing development is that an initial masterplan could be presented with large areas of public realm, elements of “affordable housing” and features to address historical and heritage concerns. These concessions could easily be scaled back as

the development progresses and individual components go through the process of seeking detailed planning and listed building consents. It could gradually reach the point of a perception of the *horse having bolted* at which point public officials may no longer see any reason not to clear a path for the site to be fully built on or altered beyond recognition – including seeking to remove the listed building status so as not to hold up progress.

The Clydebuilt Museum at Braehead was funded by the developers of Braehead Shopping Centre and this was a condition for the granting of planning consent for the development [57]. The funding was withdrawn just over a decade later and the museum was forced to close. The building is now occupied by a doughnut shop.

4. Public Policy

There is no evidence of any consistent Glasgow City Council or Scottish Government strategy to encourage the Govan Graving Docks site to be brought into use again. Indeed this is a symptom of a much wider lack of a coherent strategy for the development and use of the river corridor in the city. Most City Council documentation relating to Govan Graving Docks and options to bring the site into use simply references the developers' previous abandoned proposals as context for what can be done with the site.

One of the key arguments often put forward generally in favour of major housing developments is the construction jobs these create. However construction work is only temporary for the duration of the build project and rather than employing locals, construction companies tend to bring in their own people from a wider area. To claim that a housing development at the docks would bring employment into Govan is misleading. Furthermore a luxury housing development would primarily serve to accommodate people who commute and use services in other locations such as the city centre or out of town shopping centres. This type of development at the graving docks would likely contribute no more to the regeneration of Govan than the Glasgow Harbour development has contributed to Partick.

Private sector developers are fully entitled to seek to maximise their profits from projects they undertake and it is not incumbent upon them to prioritise wider concerns such as heritage and social impact. However questions of ethics arise where public bodies are seen to be unduly facilitating private profit without addressing public opinion, community needs, historic environment and wider concerns.

Minutes of Glasgow City Council Committee meetings that make reference to Govan Graving Docks, looked at in researching this report, show no significant concern for the future of Govan Graving Docks in the context of its relevance to Glasgow's shipbuilding and maritime history. Similarly historic Development and Regeneration Services reports appear to make only platitudes to this. There is no evidence to date that demonstrates any clear commitment by Glasgow City Council to protect and promote Govan Graving Docks in the context of maritime heritage and this seems to have been raised in council reports only as a means of providing historic context.

Since 2010 the Development and Regeneration Services Committee appear to have taken little interest in the graving docks, as there are no minutes of Committee meetings where the site has been discussed in any detail. This is despite a campaign for the restoration of the site as a maritime heritage park having run since April 2014 that has been growing in profile and gaining media attention.

Since 2010 the graving docks receive only cursory mention in publicly searchable council documentation – including the 2015 Govan-Partick Charrette Report [15], 2016 Thriving Places Report [16], and the City Development Plan 2 [17], which states no modifications to the Housing Proposal H015. This is also addressed in the Scottish Government Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) report on the same [18]. The DPEA Reporter acknowledged the A-listed status and historic significance of the site and the need

for any proposal to comply with historic environment policy (including listed building consent being a requirement). While recommending no modifications to the housing proposal at this stage, the reporter stated this should be reconsidered in the next stage of the City Development Plan. This appears to be an indication that the Scottish Government could be more conducive to maritime heritage based proposals with opportunities to develop the visitor, leisure and tourism market. This would of course be contingent on deliverable plans being presented – something the Clyde Docks Preservation Initiative (CDPI) is in the process of putting together - with a design competition forming a key consultation exercise due to be launched soon.

Despite a lack of Glasgow City Council Committee minutes referencing the graving docks in more recent years there does appear to have been a considerable level of correspondence involving council officials regarding the site. This is evidenced by the response to an appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner of a recent Freedom of Information Request made by CDPI [19]. 700 pages of documents referring to Govan Graving Docks were identified by the council as being available for the 2 years to January 2016 with the council deeming the request to be covered by Environmental Information Regulations and not the Freedom of Information Act (thus considerably higher fees for information disclosure being applied).

Recent documents from the Govan Area Partnership show no mention of the graving docks.

There has been no evidence of attempts by Glasgow City Council (either currently or at any time since the closure of the docks) to address a wider range of options for the site. The only significant action from the council being a failed bid for ERDF funding to subsidise the 2002 housing proposal by City Canal Ltd [4].

Many see the Clyde as a dead river that Glasgow has turned it's back on and there is no evidence of municipal initiatives to draw example and learn from experiences of other maritime cities (in the UK and overseas) and how they have, taking holistic approaches, adapted and developed their waterfronts for leisure, cultural and economic activity. It is evident that the opportunity to draw large number of visitors and tourists to the Clyde and the waterfront is not being pursued – at least not with adequate pace or stakeholder engagement.

There is also opportunity to draw a larger number of ships and vessels into Glasgow with the right approach and marketing, e.g. tall ships and other historic vessels. Seemingly this has at best been neglected and at worst actively discouraged as a matter of policy – an example being the very low air draft of new bridges built over the Clyde in Glasgow during the past decade – meaning that masted vessels are now only able to navigate as far upstream as Stobcross Quay and Pacific Quay. It is unlikely terminating the navigation channel was a conscious aim of this but lessons must be learned and stakeholders must do all possible to ensure any future proposed bridges open to allow navigation.

The clear opportunity is in developing a 'maritime quarter' around the Govan-Partick-Stobcross area of the Clyde that could compete with Greenwich, Liverpool Waterfront and other maritime cities in terms of tourism draw. However this requires a level of innovation and coherent entrepreneurial thinking that the relevant public bodies have yet to demonstrate. The private, third and voluntary sectors are going to have to take up the mantle in terms of providing stimulus. It is not something that property speculators can be relied upon to deliver nor can it be accomplished with expectation of commercial profit. Rather a broad range of initiatives, conceived with social good as the underpinning strategy, are what is needed and the vehicle for this would be a cooperative community of social enterprise type ventures.

There is also an opportunity to develop the River Clyde as an artery for amenity water transport (including between the centre of Glasgow and riverside communities throughout the Firth of Clyde Region) but infrastructure creation needs to be coupled with the right kind of marketing to convey the benefits and encourage use.

In a 2002 report to Glasgow City Council Development and Regeneration Services Committee by the Director of DRS, it was stated that a key policy aim of waterfront regeneration in Glasgow was the “**accommodation of national visitor attractions and capitalising on the industrial heritage of the river**” [14]. However after 14 years there appears to have been little if any action taken to progress this policy aim - either by Glasgow City Council, Historic Scotland or other public bodies.

The council may be looking for maximum economic impact (and housing supply for council tax receipts - and high CT bands) from development of the docks but it won't have any economic impact if developers cannot fund or complete whatever they get consent for and sit on a derelict site for another 10+ years – only with an improved balance sheet due to the increased value of the site that planning consent would render.

5. Planning History

There is no precedent for a housing proposal on Govan Graving Docks ever being granted full or detailed planning consent or listed building consent.

Full Planning Permission and Listed building Consent was granted to the Clyde Ship Trust by Glasgow District Council in 1993 for use of the site as a maritime heritage centre [2, 14, 23, 24]. This included plans to restore the dry docks to display ships in them (including the Carrick AKA City of Adelaide and County of Peebles).

Earlier in 1989 a repair order had been served on Windex Ltd - the then project managers for a proposed commercial redevelopment of the docks alongside a bid for compulsory purchase by the Clyde Ship Trust [24]. This establishes a strong precedent for any contemporary demands for the site to be placed under a compulsory purchase order.

The current legislation relevant to a compulsory purchase is covered by sections 42, 43, 44, 45 and 46 of the The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act [58, 59].

A later planning application and Listed Building Consent were granted to the Clyde Heritage Trust in 1997 for use of the site as a maritime heritage centre [2, 14, 25, 26]. This was part of the failed bid to berth the Royal Yacht Britannia in Glasgow – which would have seen it accommodated in one of the dry docks.

This establishes two precedents of full consent for a maritime centre to be created on the site.

A masterplan application for the 2002 proposed development was submitted by McGurn Architects on behalf of City Canal Ltd on 30th April 2002. The status of this is unknown and is listed on the Glasgow City Council planning website as ‘for information only’ [31]. The decision was issued on 15th August 2002 but is not specified on the planning website. The DRS committee minutes from the same date show the committee approved the proposal however this does not constitute an award of planning consent.

An application for outline planning permission by Windex Ltd for a residential and commercial development of Govan Graving Docks was refused consent on 20th April 1990 [14, 32].

Given the A-listed status of site the planning authority would need to notify Scottish Ministers prior to granting any planning consents. Potentially any application could be called in by the Scottish Government, which could take a different view from Glasgow City Council [61, 62].

6. Owners' Plans and Finances

The Govan Graving Docks site is currently owned by Bishop Loch Developments (Scotland) Ltd, a subsidiary of New City Vision Group.

A review of the owner's accounts filed with Companies House appears to suggest that any pump priming of their development with public funds would be a considerable risk.

An assessment of New City Vision's financial position based on documents available from Companies House raises many further questions of their ability to secure funding to pursue a major development at Govan Graving Docks.

Companies House Documents show that a standard security over the graving docks and a floating charge over the company have been passed from AIB into the Irish banks toxic debt NAMA portfolio.

New City Vision's development of the former Gartloch Asylum Hospital site in the North East of Glasgow remains incomplete with community disillusionment over the development having been brought to the attention of Gartloch Community Council. A-listed Victorian buildings at the Gartloch site remain in a severely derelict state with at least one having been granted a demolition warrant [34, 63, 64, 65]. If the developers have been unable to complete the (significantly less complex) development at Gartloch, how can they be expected to successfully develop Govan Graving Docks?

Given the recent EIA Screening Opinion application [1] it is reasonable to conclude that enabling infrastructure requirements will be of a similar scale and nature to those required for the 2002 City Canal Ltd proposal. This means that a similar if not greater (given a further 14 years of deterioration of the site) level of investment will be needed to implement this. It is questionable whether a private investor expecting a return would foot the cost of this in the current economic and housing market climate and against the backdrop of the uncertainty surrounding the UK's schedule for withdrawal from the EU along with the possibility of a second referendum on Scottish independence in the near future.

This would appear to suggest considerable risk for any venture capitalist, bank or other mainstream source providing development capital for a commercial redevelopment of Govan Graving Docks. The nature and complexity of such a project and thus the time it would take overall to develop would suggest that enabling infrastructure and public realm works might need to be completed or at least commenced before detailed planning and listed building consents for individual buildings are even obtained and with no guarantees of these being granted. This adds considerably to the investment risk (and prospect of any return on investment) in funding the enabling infrastructure costs.

All this would seem to support our drawn conclusion that the developers' primary short-medium term aim in seeking planning consent is to increase the balance sheet value of the asset and create the impression that their plans are still progressing even if at a slow pace. We could speculate that ultimately their aim may lie in realising the maximum price possible in disposing of the site to a third party (by increasing the asset value via planning consent).

Notwithstanding our objections to redevelopment of Govan Graving Docks for primarily residential and commercial use, CDPI has no confidence in the ability of the current owners to finance or deliver a development of the site of the nature they propose. New City Vision's core competence is in house building and the group has no track record of major developments of the scale of the City Dock proposal. Additionally their previous proposals for Govan Graving Docks failed to make any significant progress beyond presenting masterplans to Glasgow City Council DRS.

Subsidiary New City Vision (Renton) Ltd (SC368260) was the subject of a 2013 winding up petition by HMRC at Glasgow Sheriff Court seeking the appointment of a liquidator [35].

New City Vision Subsidiary Bells Mills Limited (SC228589) is currently in administration under a floating charge held by Clydesdale Bank with no accounts having been filed since December 2013 [66].

At the time of writing New City Vision group accounts to January 2016 are overdue.

It is interesting to note that the New City Vision Group has a track record of companies being wound up, some of which never filed any accounts, and new companies formed over the years. Multiple Gazette Notices have been recorded against group companies. The following New City Vision companies are now dissolved (Source: Companies House, Duedil.com):

Company Name	Company Number
New City Vision Limited	SC279156
Bishop Loch (Properties) Ltd	SC303922
Bishop Loch Homes (Scotland) Ltd	SC209806
Bishop Loch Developments (Glasgow) Ltd	SC209805
Bishop Loch Developments Ltd	03822458
NCV Windex Ltd	SC330330
Bells Mills Developments Ltd	SC228589

7. Ownership History and Related Details

The docks were disposed of by the Clyde Port Authority to Clydedock Engineering in March 1980. A clause was put into the title deed around this time obliging the owner to maintain the condition of the key walls at their own expense. At this time the tidal basin (formerly the Harland and Wolff fitting out basin) was not part of the property and was appended later. The sum paid for the docks as a going concern was £150k. A further condition was added to the title deeds such that the Clyde Port Authority would be entitled to half of the net proceeds of any future sale of the property in excess of £400,000 for non dry docking purposes [36].

Of greater interest is the disposal of the docks by Clydedock Engineering Ltd (SC061819) to City Canal Ltd (SC200244).

Registers of Scotland Land Register records show that the site was disposed of by Clydedock Engineering Ltd (previously in partnership with Windex Ltd from 1989) to City Canal Ltd in December 1999 [36]. Windex Ltd had earlier been granted a pre-emption right to buy the site for the sum of £400,000 in a 1989 agreement with Clydedock Engineering, which it passed into the connected company City Canal Ltd.

Windex Ltd was served a repair order for the site in 1989 for which there is no evidence of compliance with. Windex Ltd was the project manager in a joint venture with Clydedock Engineering and others for a proposed commercial redevelopment of the site that was eventually refused planning consent in 1990 [24, 14, 32].

In December 2006 the site was disposed of by City Canal Ltd to Bishop Loch Developments (Scotland) Ltd – the latter holding a major stake in City Canal at that time [37]. City Canal was later dissolved in a Members Voluntary Liquidation. It appears that no price was paid.

The accounts of City Canal Ltd at March 2006 indicate:

- That their ultimate parent company is Bishop Loch Developments (Scotland) Ltd
- That the land held by City Canal Ltd was revalued that year, leading to a £16M revaluation surplus
- That the land isn't intended to be developed or sold, but is held for its investment potential

- ❑ That the revaluation was done by Knight Frank in January 2006 on an open market basis
- ❑ That City Canal Ltd had a £2.5M loan from Bank of Scotland
- ❑ That as at 31 March 2006 City Canal owed Bishop Loch £247k.

It is not clear if this relates only to Govan Graving Docks or to a wider land portfolio but Govan Graving Docks is the only standard charge the company has registered with Companies House.

It is stated in the City Canal Ltd accounts for the year to March 2006 that the land isn't intended to be developed or sold but is held for investment potential. However this was at the same time as there were apparently ongoing discussions with Glasgow City Council DRS regarding the City Dock development proposals for the site.

From Bishop Loch Developments (Scotland) Ltd accounts:

Accounts To:	Date Filed	Value of Investment Property
31 March 07	5 Feb 2008	17,370,000
31 March 08	22 Dec 2009	-

The 2008 accounts appear to show that *investment property* was reclassified as *stock* and the value adjusted to £4,563,267 - an adjustment of £12,806,733 (Page 4 of March 08 accounts) [40].

The 2009 accounts show stocks valued at £1,050,000 though it is not clear if this reduction is a result of revaluation or property sales. The 2015 accounts show stocks at £1,101,667.

It is unclear how Windex Ltd were still able to gain possession of the site and pass it into a connected company a decade after a repair order being served that the physical evidence on the site shows clearly was never complied with [24]. It would appear that a loophole existed in respect of Clydedock Engineering Limited being the owners at the time of the repair order, which presumably had lapsed by 1999. Why it took a decade for Windex to exercise its pre-emption right to buy the site is not clear.

The site was never in the possession of the Clyde Ship Trust or the Clyde Heritage Trust despite both organisations having been granted planning consent and listed building consent for their proposed developments.

Windex Ltd (SC063853 not to be confused with the existing company of the same name and owners – SC210745 previously Portmuir Ltd – name change on 14 Dec 2000) company name was changed to Portmuir Ltd on 14 Dec 2000 prior to dissolution [41].

Current owners of the docks Bishop Loch Developments (Scotland) Limited acquired a stake in City Canal Limited in November 2001 as a joint venture with Windex Ltd, subscribing £400k for 1 "B" ordinary share [40].

8. Listed Building Issues

Govan Graving Docks is a Category-A listed site and the remaining pump house building is also A-listed.

The listing places statutory obligations on the owners to maintain the building and to not make any modifications to them without obtaining Listed Building Consent. The listing also places restrictions on what can be done with the site that would impose considerable constraints on a redevelopment proposal.

Neither the 2002 proposal from City Canal Ltd nor the revised 2004 proposal ever reached the stage of seeking detailed planning or listed building consents. The only proposals to have ever gained listed building consents were the maritime heritage proposals from the Clyde Ship Trust (1993) and The Clyde Heritage Trust (1997).

There is physical evidence (in the poor condition of the structures and listings on the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland) [34, 37, 63, 64, 65] to suggest that New City Vision have failed to comply with Listed Building Regulations at the Gartloch Hospital site as well as at Govan Graving Docks. This evidence also shows the failure of planning officials to enforce the laws for example by the serving of repairs notices.

Unfortunately there is a culture in Glasgow of lack of care of listed historic buildings and many that are disused remain in a state of deterioration and subject to vandalism. Sadly Scotway House in Partick was recently demolished following a major fire that severely damaged the structure. Fortunately, despite a spate of fire raising incidents in 2014, the pump house at Govan graving docks avoided further damage due to a lack of combustible material and is still able to be renovated despite what appears to be subsidence damage to the Eastern wall.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 (and later amendments to the act) lays down the requirements for care of and what is permissible to be done with a listed building or structure [58, 59].

9. Heritage/Conservation Based Proposals and Opportunities

In a 2002 report to Glasgow City Council Development and Regeneration Services Committee by the Director of DRS it was stated that a key policy aim of waterfront regeneration in Glasgow was the “accommodation of national visitor attractions and capitalising on the industrial heritage of the river”.

So far there appears to have been little if any action taken to progress this policy aim either by the City Council, Historic Scotland or other public bodies.

Govan Graving Docks is the only waterfront site in Glasgow where it would be at all possible to create a major maritime attraction on the waterfront utilising a site of historic maritime significance. The proximity to Glasgow City Centre would also make it a more appropriate location due to major transport hubs and the numbers of visitors and tourists to the city (as compared with other potential sites in West Dunbartonshire or Inverclyde).

It is questionable whether a major maritime and visitor attraction would be compatible with a residential development on a single site – especially if it attracts large numbers of visitors – as this could negatively impact on the desirability of living there (who wants hundred of tourists milling around outside their front door throughout the year?). For this reason a housing developer, putting the needs of occupants (i.e. their customers) first and foremost, would likely want to ensure they do not include anything in a development that would attract large numbers of visitors other than a limited number of retail units and cafes/bars sufficient to cope with little more than the demand of residents in the development. Placations made towards heritage considerations early on in the planning process could easily be abandoned later on

as a development project progresses – an experience anecdotally seen with many developments throughout the UK.

Previous maritime heritage based proposals are identified above in section 5: Planning History.

In 2015 Final Year students at the Urban Design Studies Unit, Department of Architecture at the University of Strathclyde produced masterplan projects for the Clyde waterfront area in Glasgow based on a brief supplied by Glasgow City Council. Several of the students had looked at the area around Govan with ideas for the graving docks very much in alignment with the strategic vision that Clyde Docks Preservation Initiative (CDPI) is putting forward. None of the students identified the site for housing or commercial development but rather looked at “heritage park” type uses [67]. The Executive Director of CDPI met with some of the students and one of their tutors to discuss their ideas.

10. Maritime Park Proposal

The Clyde Docks Preservation Initiative (CDPI) is proposing the restoration of the entire Govan Graving Docks site as a maritime park/centre with permanent buildings restricted to the edge along Govan Road. This would mean significantly smaller enabling infrastructure costs as compared with those previously proposed for ERDF funding [5].

The aim is for the Govan Docks Maritime Park SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation) charity [60], which has been formed specifically for the purpose, to acquire the site and fund the restoration and maritime park project without any significant net cost to the Glasgow City Council.

CDPI has identified the Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Environment Scotland grants and other sources, most of which require charitable, community ownership or social enterprise status as being the most appropriate sources of finance for the project. Since these do not have to be repaid it would remove the need for commercial revenue to finance the development costs and all future revenue into the charity could be committed to pursuit of its charitable aims for the long-term maintenance and protection of the site as an historic asset for future generations and community benefit.

A key objective of CDPI is to see at least one of the dry docks restored to working order. It remains questionable whether commercial ship repair could return to Govan but we see opportunity for a facility for restoration of historic ships and replica or tall ship construction projects. People will always want to build new tall ships styled on those of the past and with its shipbuilding history Glasgow has a unique opportunity to create such a facility that would also be a tourism draw. It would also create skills preservation opportunities in an area that was once synonymous with shipbuilding and enable young people to strengthen their ties to the history of the area. Sailing ships are also now being looked at as an opportunity for sustainable / emissions-free cargo transportation [68, 69]. There is a clear opportunity for Govan graving docks to be a centre for development of this – giving Glasgow shipbuilding a more secure future in a context that can co-exist with tourism and volunteering opportunities.

CDPI also aims to see a hub created for micro businesses and social enterprise opportunities with an objective to facilitate young and unemployed people from the area to establish their own autonomous franchise opportunities within a mutually supporting social enterprise community.

There is also opportunity to develop nature park areas; proposed by CDPI taking in the tidal basin and the adjoining land (possibly involving the creation of a tidal lagoon to provide an aquatic habitat and looking at Greenwich Peninsula Ecology Park [33] as a reference example) and a venue for outdoor visual and performing arts and events.

11. Primary Research by the Clyde Docks Preservation Initiative

The heritage park campaign that led to the formation of the Clyde Docks Preservation Initiative [51, 52] began early in 2014 with a petition calling on Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government to support the restoration of Govan Graving Docks as a “shipbuilding heritage park” [53]. The petition has now been signed by more than 8,300 people with many leaving comments positive about a heritage centre and disparaging about the prospect of the site being redeveloped for housing.

Recent additional petitions have been launched as part of the campaign – calling on The Scottish Government to launch a full public inquiry into the ownership history of Govan Graving Docks [54] and calling on Glasgow City Council to serve a repairs notice on the owners [55].

CDPI are about to expand consultation by launching a competition for final year architecture students to produce masterplan proposals for a maritime park at Govan Graving Docks. We aim to run the competition during the 2017-18 academic year and set up a public exhibition of the students’ work in an appropriate venue to engage community and stakeholder feedback.

Early in 2016 CDPI launched an online consultation survey to gather views on the future of Govan Graving Docks [56]. The key findings from this survey included:

General Questions

- 54% of respondents most favoured a maritime heritage centre
- 23% most favoured a working dry dock facility
- 3.2% most favoured either housing or mixed use housing/retail
- 93% would like to see at least one dock restored to working order
- 92% expressed opposition to housing
- 92% favoured restricting permanent buildings to the Govan Road edge of the site
- 48% said CDPI should take the lead role in efforts to save the docks
- 25% said the Scottish Government should take the lead role
- 8% said Glasgow City Council should take the lead role

Strategic Factors

Respondents were also asked to rate the importance on a scale of 1-5 of strategic factors in the restoration of Govan Graving Docks. The percentages rating as either ‘important’ (4) or ‘very important’ (5) are shown on the following page:

Factor	Scale Rating 4+5 (Important)	Rating 1+2 (Not Important)
Preservation of maritime/shipbuilding heritage	96%	0.5%
Bringing long term skilled/technical jobs into the area	75%	8%
Creating trading/franchise opportunities and/or a co-working hub for small business and social enterprises	50%	19%
Providing new housing supply	14%	67%
Creating a visitor/tourism attraction to bring visitors into the area	84%	1%
Completing the pedestrian thoroughfare along the waterfront	77%	2%
Providing a habitat for urban wildlife	51%	16%
Creating a centre for arts and culture	47%	26%
Ensuring infrastructure is preserved for maritime industry development on the Clyde	81%	5%

It needs to be recognised that the data has likely been collected from individuals who have a strong bias against housing developers' plans and in favour of creation of a maritime centre. However even applying a large margin of error to the data the unpopularity of housing developers plans and the popularity of a heritage/leisure-based attraction is still demonstrably clear.

In the period to date campaigners and CDPI have collected feedback from the public and a range of experts. Anecdotal claims have been made to CDPI of the following:

- ❑ Hoteliers have expressed the opinion that Govan Graving Docks is not a viable site for an hotel due to the number of hotels already existing or at advanced planning stages near the river and closer to the city centre.
- ❑ Several developers have scouted and appraised Govan Graving Docks with a view to making a purchase offer but after due diligence concluded the site is not viable for housing and commercial development due to it's A-listed status and the technical challenges that would be involved.
- ❑ Questions have been raised of the structural load bearing capacity of the quays without extensive excavations, pile driving and alterations to the listed structures.
- ❑ Anecdotally CDPI has been told of experiences in other parts of the country where developers have made concessions to pressure groups and campaigners on various issues during the process of obtaining planning consent but these are often marginalised once consents have been obtained.
- ❑ It has been speculated to CDPI (and confirmed as potentially accurate by experts from major blue chip property and engineering companies) that the Govan graving docks site is likely of 'nil' (and possibly even negative) value due to the cost of remediation work the site requires. **This would seem to support the case for action to be taken applying Section 45 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act: "Minimum compensation in case of listed building deliberately left derelict"**

12. Conclusions

Proposals for commercial redevelopment of the docks for housing and offices have been put forward since 1989. There is no reason to believe that any proposals currently being developed by the present owners have any greater prospect of going ahead than those put forward in the past.

Housing proposals currently being developed appear to be similar in scope and scale to the 2002 proposal put forward by City Canal Ltd

The site will continue to lie derelict if planning and other public officials persist in entertaining property developers as they go through the motions.

With council budgets under strain it is not feasible for the site to be brought into council ownership. Public feedback provided to CDPI suggests that this is not the most popular vehicle for restoration of the site in any case.

The most feasible way to bring the site into use is for it to be acquired by an independent charity that would be in a position to finance a restoration of the site and develop it as a waterfront visitor attraction in stages with finance being sought from a range of grant funding bodies. A compulsory purchase may be necessary to facilitate this, which will require cooperation of Glasgow City Council, if the developers cannot be persuaded to sell voluntarily.

We take the view that council officials should stop wasting council time, money and resources in dealing with developers' proposals for Govan Graving Docks that would have gone ahead already (at the peak of the housing boom in the early-mid 2000s) had they had any real prospect of success.

The current owners have sat on the site for 15 years with no sign of being anywhere near ready to 'break ground'. We infer that this is due to inability to develop a proposal that would be both profitable and be able to succeed in gaining Listed Building Consent.

Grounds appear to have been established for Govan Graving Docks to be placed under a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) with a Direction for Minimum Compensation under Section 45 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997.

There is a clear opportunity for Govan graving docks to be a centre for building sailing ships as sustainable / emissions-free cargo transportation (as well as for loading/offloading small cargo consignments from these). This would give Glasgow shipbuilding a more secure future in a context that can co-exist with tourism, skills preservation/development and volunteering opportunities. **It would also demonstrate a business, economic and environmental case for dock restoration and open-up opportunities for international collaboration with other port cities.**

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