

Press Release
9th March 2017

Community Empowerment

100,000 petitioners is a key milestone in this campaign to stop ship to ship transfers of crude oil in the Moray Firth. It is a high density area of bottlenose dolphins and an important part of our natural heritage which many businesses and communities depend upon.

Cromarty Rising would like to thank Highland Council for engaging with us this morning. It is also an important landmark for the very successful partnership Cromarty Rising has with 38 Degrees Scotland and London solicitors Bindmans LLP. The fantastic contributions of the Moray Coast Community Alliance and Marine Connection have been a vital part of this achievement.

Most of all however 100,000 signatures is an important step in recognising community empowerment and the need for community voices to be heard. Cromarty Rising fully endorses the recent Mair Commission study of Highland Democracy and the interim recommendations of increased community involvement in decision-making. Let the days of a few powerful persons deciding community issues, disconnected and hidden away in unseen rooms, come to an end. We must make our decisions by the standards of the Highland-wide Local Development Plans, Highland Biodiversity Action Plan and Highland Special Landscape Areas and of course the Habitats Regulations all of which must be applied.

Cromarty Rising has recently been made aware that Cromarty Firth Port Authority Solicitors see no legal impediment what-so-ever to the continued use on Nigg Terminal for ship to ship transfers. The Secretary of State Transport (Westminster) also confirmed, after a month long detailed review, that there is a perfectly valid ship to ship licence still in place for Nigg Terminal.

Nigg Terminal remains fully approved. The application submitted in December 2015 has been withdrawn. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency have no current involvement; there is no application to consider. This means any future decisions on submitting a new application are entirely down to the Cromarty Firth Port Authority as a Scottish Trust port and Scottish Ministers.

In discussions in recent weeks we are getting a clear message that at least one major tourist related business along the Moray coast has significant concerns over further investment. Rusting tankers which produce fumes and visibly damage the Moray Firth do absolutely nothing for investment confidence.

We urge Scottish Ministers to take heed of community empowerment and act to protect our natural resources and the regions wider business interests.

Note to editors:

A trust port is not controlled by a local authority, nor is it a private business. Instead it is

run by an independent Board, for the benefit of its stakeholders, and governed by its own local legislations. The port's mission is to improve, safeguard and develop the Cromarty Firth as a port for the benefit of all its stakeholders (Source - CFPA FAQ document)

The MCA regulate all ship to ship oil transfers in UK waters - this is matter is not devolved within Scotland. The Scottish Government/Marine Scotland [which previously expressed strong opposition to similar operations in the Firth of Forth] has a role in relation to protection of the coastal/marine environment. Highland Council, as the local authority, has a duty as a consultee to consider very carefully all the potential implications of an STS proposal for the communities, economy and environment of the Inner Moray Firth.

Cromarty Rising are a local community pressure group established to fight the CFPA application to undertake ship to ship oil transfers. www.cromartyrising.com

The Inner Moray Firth is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) due to its bottlenose dolphin population.

Representations, objections or concerns regarding 1st licence application have been made by

- [Scottish Wildlife Trust](#)
- [Scottish Environmental Protection Agency \(SEPA\)](#)
- [Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland](#)
- [Cromarty & District Community Council](#)
- [Highland Council](#)
- [Scottish Natural Heritage \(SNH\)](#)
- [Royal Society for the Protection of Birds \(RSPB\)](#)
- [Professor Paul Thompson](#)
- [Whale and Dolphin Conservation](#)
- [Fortrose and Rosemarkie Community Council](#)
- [Transition Black Isle](#)
- [National Trust for Scotland](#)
- [Marine Connection](#)
- [Nairn Community Council](#)

Authority for award of this licence rests with Chris Grayling, Secretary of State Transport, Westminster.

A petition against the transfers has now reached over 100,000 signatures and is growing daily: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/danger-to-sea-life-from-oil-spills>

www.cromartyrising.com

End of press statement.