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Ports plan a critical step towards region's growth

A master plan looking at the region's two major ports of Thevenard and Port Lincoln is about to get under way.

The Eyre Regional Development Board announced earlier this week that company Parsons Brinckerhoff have been appointed to develop the plan.

Eyre Regional Development Board executive officer Mark Cant said: "the development of an integrated Master Plan for both ports is critical for the region's long term economic growth particularly in relation to our key industry sectors of grain production, aquaculture, fishing and mining."

It has long been recognised that the biggest challenges exist within the present supply chain and issues including the current standard of the infrastructure, port cost differential charges, access by road, rail and sea, channel depths, wharf congestion and storage and handling capacities have created impediments within the Eyre Peninsula ports transport system.

Mr Cant pointed out that the intention of the Ports Master Plan is to directly address these challenges by establishing a strategic long term proposal for both ports with all of key stakeholders.

"At the same time we will be investigating the ports infrastructure, future industry needs and opportunities for growth and the social and economic impacts that both Ports have on our communities in the region."

Industry and government stakeholders including **Flinders Ports**, ABB Grain, the District Council of Ceduna, City of Port Lincoln, the Australian Rail Group, Flinders Region Area Consultative Committee, the Office of Infrastructure and Development and Primary Industries and Resources SA have all agreed to join the Board in backing the development of the plan.

The District Council of Ceduna is excited at the development of the Master Plan.

"The Council has lobbied the Board for this project and are delighted that it has now become a reality for our communities on Eyre Peninsula," chief executive officer Tony Irvine said.

"A lot is hingeing on the outcomes of this Master Plan, particularly the future planning for the transportation of grain from this region, unloading facilities for the fishing industry in both ports, and perhaps most importantly, the current and future potential mineral developments in and around Ceduna."

Mayor Ken McCarthy agrees, saying the port needed the capability to service existing trawl fisheries in the Great Australian Bight as well as those that are still virtually untapped.

He said the Raptis fishing company's trawlers came into Thevenard last week, rather than using the port of Esperance.

While in port around 20 local people are employed in the unloading process, with other economic benefits to Ceduna, including fuel and food purchases.

Mr McCarthy said the commercial fishing sector needed the assurance that they would have access to unloading facilities without larger ships taking precedence.

An upgrade would also assure transportation of grain and other exports through Thevenard.

Mining ventures that are expected to happen on a large scale will also place significant demands on the local transport system.