



White Cliffs Christmas Festival, Port of Dover

## Port of Dover shortlisted for ESPO award

**The ESPO Award 2019 will go to the port authority that has developed a successful strategy to reach out to the local community and is succeeding in directly communicating with the port citizens.**

Using social media as a new way of communicating and demonstrating a high level of transparency about operational achievements, future strategies and environmental challenges and performance is becoming increasingly important for European ports who can only function and further develop if they receive the licence to operate from the local citizens.

The four projects that are shortlisted for this year's Award are the projects of Port of Dover, Dublin Port Company, Ports of Stockholm, and Union des Ports de France (UPF).

ESPO is proud to present the shortlisted projects before the winner is announced during the official Award Ceremony at the Albert Hall in Brussels on 13 November 2019.

### **Port of Dover**

#### **Transparen-SEA (Socially Engaged Accountability)**

**ESPO: Congratulations! You have been shortlisted for the ESPO Award 2019! Could you briefly describe your project?**

The Transparen-SEA project was designed to reconnect the Port of Dover and its local community in a way that fosters trust, openness and transparency by covering all aspects of the Port's community engagement. More specifically, the project aimed to create a comprehensive and meaningful programme of consultative and social community engagement events alongside the cultivation of an internal network of port ambassadors whose advocacy ultimately permeates back into the local community where many live. This was all supported with a social media overlay that connects directly with the community and reinforces the aims of the project.

**ESPO: How does your project contribute to improving your relationship with the port citizens and does it succeed in directly reaching out to the local community?**

The Port's comprehensive programme of community engagement included the creation of a Port & Community Forum (PCF) chaired by a local representative elected by the Forum, which aims to promote positive community engagement on a wide range of port issues. The Port has also held large-scale community workshops on future development plans so that the general public can directly help shape them. Beyond consultation, major public events are being held regularly on the port estate, such as the Port of Dover Community Regatta and the White Cliffs Christmas Festival. Furthermore, the Port of Dover Community Fund, established in 2015, provides significant financial support to local charities and community groups – now 50 in total.

A network of internal ambassadors is being cultivated through the launch of a new app for port employees to communicate on port news and to celebrate successes linked to the strategic direction of the port. Giving staff their own social media platform has helped to enhance communication, transparency, engagement and pride, which then permeates back into the local community where many live. This supports the wider social media overlay that started with the launch of the campaign "Deliver for Dover" through Facebook, Twitter and a microsite designed to engage people with the Port's vision and to enhance community interaction and attendance at port events.



**ESPO: Could you describe the original and innovative character of your project?**

The project has not just been focused on one particular aspect of engagement, it has been a wholesale immersion in the community and the community in the port. What is equally important is that the social media has not just been a faceless arm's length engagement tool, but has been used to create the end result of much more face to face engagement so that the people of the port community and the people of the local community recognise each other, and do so as part of the same overall community, importantly all buying in to the same shared vision and giving everyone a sense of ownership of that process. The project also recognises how the people who work at the port, many locals, are a critical element of successful societal integration and by increasing their sense of engagement and increased pride, it filters back with them to their homes.



**ESPO: Why do you think your project deserves to win the ESPO Award 2019?**

The project has successfully reconnected the port and town of Dover both physically – thousands of people use and enjoy the port estate through the various activities that take place on it as an extension of the wider Dover community space – and emotionally by collaborating on creating a future for the port that supports opportunity for local people and pride in working towards that future. Supported by an expanding team of internal and external port ambassadors and through social media, there is now a strong dialogue that means the local community has a strong sense of integration with the Port whilst giving the Port a sense of confidence in delivering its main function as an international gateway.

Transparen-SEA is ultimately about how the Port of Dover conducts its business, maximising its ability to fulfil its obligations in the best possible way that, at the same time, creates opportunity for the local community – and that is a self-perpetuating model for societal integration.



**ESPO: Do you measure or assess the impact that your project has made on improving the**

**transparency towards the local community and the understanding of port activity and added value? Could you tell us more?**

The Port assesses the impact of its project in a number of ways. Firstly, it is about maintaining a consistently high, dynamic and diverse level of community engagement in its consultative forums and the feedback received at them. It is also about people wanting to receive and engage with updates on the Port via its social media channels too, including the tracking of sentiment towards the Port. Importantly in these areas it is also about being seen to openly respond to feedback and demonstrating that the views of the community count. The Port's community fund is tracked to assess how many local people will benefit from each of the projects that receive grant funding.

Finally, it is about the scale of attendance at events the Port organises on its estate. Who wants to come and give their ideas on future development or wants to socialise with us? For example, in 2018 the White Cliffs Christmas festival attracted a fantastic 75,000 members of the public over a four week period in the Port's historic Cruise Terminal 1 building. That was supported by social media activity to encourage participation as well as conversations being had on social media by participants about the events and encouraging others to attend.

*"By choosing to run our business in a way that connects, supports, values and creates opportunity for our community, we are actually creating a business model that makes it easier to fulfil our obligations and succeed. It is self-perpetuating."*

Doug Bannister, Chief Executive of the Port of Dover