

GR/MB/IR
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PETERHEAD FISH MARKET – ELECTRONIC AUCTION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - UPDATED

The following frequently asked questions (FAQs) have been updated from those published in late 2024, as we progress with the implementation project.

Q. What is E-Auction?

A. E-Auction is a digital solution to replace the traditional shout auction process. The E-Auction system consists of a clock sales module and an online bidding module selling the lots in a catalogue to the highest bidder. It also has a report module generating reports for each type of user such as buyer, supplier, auction staff and auction management.

The E-Auction system allows users to use a smartphone, tablet, laptop or PC to follow the sale, purchase or consult sales and statistical information.

It also has an app which allows buyers to buy on the clocks and request information in a very user-friendly way by using their Android phone or iPhone. It is also possible to use the app on a tablet. In other words, it allows mobile working.

Q. What will change in the market?

A. Although the desire of the Board of PPA is that only essential changes are made in the fish market to support E- Auction, it is inevitable that systems and processes will have to be changed to accommodate an electronic solution. Changes will include:

- Weighing of fish, grading, laying out of product by species, grade, and quality.
- Upgrades to the Fish Market IT infrastructure to provide redundancy and a superior internet provision.
- The installation of an auctioneer's room and alterations to the market meeting room adding large monitors to view the auction and to provide a facility where buyers can comfortably make purchases on site if they wish.
- The existing chemical store will be repurposed to house a user workstation and our ticketing printers. Our ticketing printers will be trolley mounted, battery and Wi-Fi enabled meaning they can be brought to the market floor and follow the sale process. The chemical store has been relocated to the old market area.

Q. How many “clocks” will there be?

A. There will be 4 digital clocks to replace the 4 traditional shout auctions. Should demand increases, we can add further clocks in the future.



Q. Will I still be able to view and purchase the products on the market floor?

A. Yes – the market will be open for viewing / taking part in the auction as is the case presently.

Q. Where will the auctioneers be based?

A. The auctioneers will not be based on the market floor. They will instead be based in a new room located in the Fish Market building. Each auctioneer will be responsible for the operation of one of the four clock auctions.

Q. Who will manage the auction on a daily basis?

A. The Don Fishing Company Ltd, and Peter & J. Johnstone Ltd (Sales Companies) have been licenced by Peterhead Port Authority to sell product at the Fish Market via E-Auction. Note that the E-Auction software will be interfaced directly with both Sales Companies such that the respective sales data will automatically flow to each company.

Q. Who will undertake the Weighing, Grading and Digital Cataloguing ahead of each auction?

A. Peterhead Port Authority staff will be responsible for sample weighing in order to comply with the marine directorate requirements of 6%. To aid this scope, the port authority has procured a number of new scales that digitally interface with the E-Auction software.

Our staff will also be responsible for grading according to a grading table that has been agreed following our stakeholder meetings, dialogue with a number of Producer Organisations and approved by the Marine Directorate. Note that bespoke quality training has been specified for our team with oversight from a number of Producer Organisations. Digital Cataloguing before the sale commences will also be managed by our staff. As the Sales Companies are responsible for selling the product, the auctioneers will check and validate the catalogue before the auction commences each morning.

Q. What happens if vessels don't comply with an agreed future grading structure?

A. A key element for the E-Auction to be successful is the accuracy of grading (and weighing). Should the grading system that has been agreed not be followed then fish would most likely be sold as “ungraded” which would in most cases attract a poorer price compared with “graded” fish. This has certainly been the experience of many other E-Auction fish markets.

Q. Can I start amending my grading practices according to the revised grading table?

A. Yes. Some vessels have already started to review and change as a result of the new grading table. PPA would encourage this and are very pleased to assist in this process, therefore, please get in touch if you would like more information.



Q. Will there be an opportunity to receive training and guidance on the use of the technology employed?

A. Yes – The system is expected to be up and running in advance of an official launch date to allow training and experience of using the systems by the software provider and PPA ahead of the first E-Auction. There are many buyers that already utilise E-Auction in other fish markets and therefore will already be familiar with the technology.

In addition to training for stakeholders, Peterhead Port Authority intends to simulate normal sales using the new systems and software to build familiarity with the new environment ahead of the official launch date. The software provider and PPA will be on hand thereafter to assist with any further training and guidance requirements.

Q. Will there be an additional cost to stakeholders for E-Auction?

A. The Sales Companies and Peterhead Port Authority do not propose to adjust our respective fee structures in order to implement E-Auction. There will however be a very small fee applied to each “user” licence for E-Auction. This fee will be £150/year and will provide the user appropriate access to the auction software – whether from the buying or a selling perspective. Note that this fee covers our direct licence costs and our administration effort as part of a registration process. This is an annual charge and will be fixed for the first 5 years.

Q. Will the E-Auction be slower than traditional shout auction?

A. PPA has undertaken a considerable amount of analysis on the time our current shout auction takes for every purchase. We have received time data from a number of other E-Auctions and the results of our analysis shows that the E-Auction can be quicker. We acknowledge however that in the early phase of launch, time might not be optimal as companies become more efficient in using the technology.

There are a number of time-based settings built into the E-Auction software that we may wish to be set longer initially to allow familiarity of the system to be gained. In time we can adjust down these settings to speed the auction. We therefore may examine options for starting the auction earlier in the early phase of launch.

Q. Will fish market rules be changed?

A. Yes – it is inevitable that the rules for our fish market will have to adapt to cater for the new technology being utilised. Further details of changes shall be communicated nearer our official launch date.

Q. Who will put tickets (“tallies”) on fish sold?

A. Currently, ticketing of fish is undertaken “live” as the auction sale process proceeds. The act of ticketing is the buyer placing tickets on fish directly as the bid is accepted. This ticket is then utilised by logistics services for removal and onward delivery to the buyer.

At present, however, no pre-grading or freshness assessment is carried out. As a result, all fish from a vessel are typically sold species by species, regardless of quality. This often



leads to the practice of “picking,” where buyers select the freshest boxes from a vessel’s catch – even if the catch has been landed over several days.

The new e-auction process will be fundamentally different. Fish will be laid out and catalogued according to quality and freshness grades. Each lot sold will represent a batch of fish of the same grade, rather than a single vessel’s full landing. This means buyers will know the quality/freshness of the fish before bidding, and more saleable lots will be available overall.

Buyers will no longer be able to sort through boxes after purchase, because lots are pre-defined by quality and freshness, and the time-constrained bidding system does not allow for that practice.

The ticketing process for E-auction will therefore be straightforward. Tickets will be generated automatically after a short, pre-set delay (to allow for correction of errors) and placed on the first boxes in sequence for that lot on the market floor. This ensures fairness, consistency and speed.

Allowing buyers to ticket their own purchases in this new model risks creating confusion, duplication and inequality - particularly disadvantaging remote buyers. Experience from other markets adopting e-auction shows that as confidence in grading and quality grows, the number of on-site buyers will naturally fall, reinforcing the need for a standardised, centralised ticketing process. For these reasons, PPA, supported by the Sales Companies, will carry out ticketing.

For those local buyers that wish to label their purchases for the purposes of specific or variable onward logistics, this will be permitted. It should be noted that the E-Auction system provides this functionality therefore buyers can purchase for “subcategories” for example, different customers, and the labels can differentiate accordingly.

Q. After purchase, will I be allowed to “pick” my boxes of fish?

A. No. Please refer to the question - Who will put tickets of sold fish?

Q. Is there an opportunity to get involved in helping with detailed design of the E-Auction?

A. Yes – Many have already helped especially with the subjects of weighing and grading and we are grateful for your support. The E-Auction software is a relatively standard off-the-shelf solution however has many user configuration settings that alter the parameters of how the system behaves and operates. We will be working closely with the Sales Companies and the software provider to further understand these settings and how they best suit the application at Peterhead Fish Market. We are confident there will be a lot of dialogue with relevant stakeholder groups in this regard.



Q. What happens if the buyer has an issue with quality of product?

A. Should the buyer have a quality issue then this would be managed by the respective sales office as is currently the case.

Q. What IT changes are being made to the Fish Market?

A. There are a number of changes that have already been implemented or are due to be implemented in the very near future. These include:

- The existing network infrastructure at the market has been redesigned to provide for a high level of redundancy of equipment and services in mind. This has resulted in replacement of most of the network components.
- A second fibre line has been procured to provide dual redundancy and backup of the primary internet connection.
- Starlink is scheduled to be installed towards the end of the year to provide a further redundancy of internet connection.
- The entire Wi-Fi system has been replaced throughout the Fish Market and Market quayside areas – this included the Wi-Fi transmitters, and all cabling directly back to the main network switches.
- All user IT equipment has been upgraded to the latest available.

This work complements a Port wide IT upgrade that, on completion, will allow the adoption of Cyber Essentials Accreditation. We anticipate accreditation late 2025.

Q. What the timescales for the project?

A. We hope to have the system up and running in a test environment at the end of 2025. Thereafter, we have a training schedule involving the different stakeholder groups and, as part of this training, we intend to simulate normal sales using the new systems and software to build familiarity with the new environment ahead of the official launch date.

We anticipate official launch to be towards the end of Q1 2026 however appropriate notice will be provided to all parties in advance.

Q. If I purchase from overseas, how are the logistics managed?

A. There are a number of possible options however two options are detailed below:

1. Purchase may be made with the assistance of a local buyer with services / logistics agreed between parties. It should be noted that many remote buyers have expressed that they would wish to have local buyers involved in the process.
2. Purchases can be made without the assistance of local buyers but with support from local handling companies for the purposes of repackaging for onward distribution using arranged logistics companies.



Q. Do I still require a guarantee to purchase products on the market?

A. Yes. The guarantee system is unchanged and the Sales Companies can advise the process of registration of a guarantee. It should be noted that the guarantee level can be utilised within the E-Auction Software to advise the seller and buyer that a guarantee level is being reached. This can also be used to create a purchase limit preventing further purchases.

Q. Will there be a landing cut off time?

A. Yes. However, one advantage of PPA staff undertaking the cataloguing process is that this work can commence as soon as product is landed on the market thus avoiding a pinch point of effort near to the commencement of the auction. We do however require to close the catalogue such that it can be verified by the Sales Companies ahead of auction commencement.

This remains a point of discussion internally and we will communicate more information in due course. We will of course aim to be accommodating in extenuating circumstances.

Q. Do I need to provide advance notice of landing volumes and species?

A. Yes. This information will inform our requirements for weighing, grading and cataloguing and ensure that landings can be processed in time and ahead of a landing cut off. Note that this information will only be made available to the buying community at the point that the digital catalogue has been produced, verified by the sales companies and is published prior to the morning auction. The port will confirm the advance notice timing and requirements in due course.

Q. Will I be able to place a pre-bid before the auction starts?

A. Yes. Once the digital catalogue is published ahead of the sale, buyers will be able to place pre-bids on as many lots as they wish. Training will be provided on this functionality early in 2026.

Q. Will there be an opportunity to hear more about the E-Auction implementation?

A. Yes – As well as further communications we will host an open day in Peterhead to allow stakeholders to drop in and see demos of the system in action and meet the team and ask questions. Please look out for further communications on the date / time.