Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Room 285
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont

From: **Dr Janice Thompson, Clerk to the Committee**

Date: **20 October 2026**

To: **Dr Michael Potter, Clerk to the Committee for Infrastructure**

Subject: **Harbours Bill**

Dear Michael

The AERA Committee met on 20 October 2026 and considered your memo, dated 7 October, regarding the Harbours Bill which is currently at Committee Stage.

The Committee heard that the Bill is primarily concerned with harbour governance and operations. Its primary purpose being to modernise the legislative and governance framework for the Trust Ports of Belfast, Coleraine, Londonderry, and Warrenpoint to ensure the ports can operate more independently; provide enhanced commercial powers; and maintain the financial health of the port.

The Committee noted that Clause 4 engages DAERA's remit by making it the responsible Department for authorising harbour directions in fishery harbours, with implications for marine safety, environmental protection, and the operation of fishing vessels.

The Committee agreed to respond and encourage the Committee for Infrastructure to consider, during its Committee Stage, any potential implications for environmental protection, fishing interests, and rural coastal economies, and also any connections to the Fisheries, Aquaculture and Water Environment Bill.

Regards,

Dr Janice Thompson, Committee Clerk