



Clerk to the Committee for Infrastructure
Room 410
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast BT4 3XX

Via Email: committee.infrastructure@niassembly.gov.uk

20th August 2026

Dear Sir/Madam

Call for Evidence on the Harbours Bill

The Housing Executive welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Committee for Infrastructure's Call for Evidence on the Harbours Bill.

Northern Ireland's four Trust Ports, Belfast Harbour, Coleraine Harbour, Foyle Port and Warrenpoint Harbour, are autonomous statutory bodies that play a significant role in supporting regional economic activity, facilitating trade, enabling investment and supporting local communities. The Housing Executive recognises the important contribution these ports make to the economic and social wellbeing of Northern Ireland.

We understand that the Bill seeks to modernise the legislative and governance framework for Trust Ports in Northern Ireland, reflecting recommendations arising from the Department for Infrastructure's review of the sector. The proposed changes are intended to provide Trust Ports with greater operational flexibility, updated governance arrangements and enhanced powers to support their long-term sustainability, competitiveness and contribution to economic development. The Bill also seeks to facilitate a potential reclassification by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which could enable greater access to borrow and investment opportunities while retaining the existing Trust Port model.

As Northern Ireland's Strategic Housing Authority and landlord to approximately 83,000 homes, the Housing Executive is committed to improving outcomes for people and places through housing, regeneration and community development. Through our statutory roles in Community Planning, Place Shaping, the Local Development Plan process and housing-led regeneration, we work with partners across the public, private and community sectors to support sustainable development and thriving communities.

The Housing Executive supports the overall intent of the Bill and recognises the opportunities it may create for future investment, regeneration and sustainable development across Northern Ireland. We believe that modernising the legislative framework for Trust Ports can help strengthen their contribution

to the regional economy, facilitate infrastructure improvements and support wider public policy objectives, including housing delivery, community wellbeing and decarbonisation.

While supporting the proposed reforms, the Housing Executive considers it important that any increased commercial freedoms and future development opportunities continue to deliver clear public benefits and contribute positively to local communities. Future investment and regeneration initiatives should seek to maximise social value, support sustainable placemaking and help address identified housing need where appropriate.

The Housing Executive has previously supported Belfast Harbour's Strategy 2025-2029 and Belfast Harbour's 2050 Masterplan, which identify significant opportunities for regeneration and residential development within the Harbour Estate. Working with partners, Belfast Harbour has set out ambitions to deliver new homes and create sustainable mixed-use communities as part of the wider regeneration of the city. These proposals have the potential to make a meaningful contribution to meeting housing need, supporting city centre living and creating attractive, connected communities.

The Housing Executive has already successfully collaborated with Belfast Harbour and other partners, including Belfast City Council, to support the delivery of affordable housing within regeneration schemes, including the provision of social housing at Pilot Street. We have also supported major residential development proposals across the Harbour Estate. Such partnership working demonstrates how strategic regeneration projects can contribute to wider social, economic and environmental objectives.

The Housing Executive also recognises that opportunities for regeneration and development may emerge across all Trust Port locations. We would welcome opportunities to work collaboratively with Trust Ports, local councils, government departments and other stakeholders throughout Northern Ireland to maximise housing, regeneration and community benefits arising from future development proposals.

In particular, the Housing Executive would encourage significant residential development opportunities associated with Trust Port regeneration initiatives to incorporate appropriate levels of social and intermediate housing in line with planning policy, identified housing need and mixed-tenure placemaking principles. Increasing housing supply, including affordable housing, is critical to achieving the Programme for Government commitment to provide more social, affordable and sustainable housing and supporting the objectives of the Department for Communities' Housing Supply Strategy.

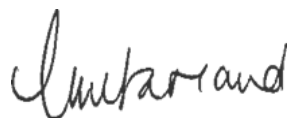
The Housing Executive is also committed to supporting the transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient future. We therefore welcome the opportunities the Bill may create to facilitate investment in clean energy infrastructure, sustainable transport and decarbonisation initiatives within the maritime sector. These ambitions align closely with our vision that everyone should have access to an affordable, sustainable and decent home in a safe, attractive and climate-resilient place.

Overall, the Housing Executive welcomes the proposed modernisation of the legislative framework governing Northern Ireland's Trust Ports. We believe the Bill has the potential to support economic growth, regeneration, infrastructure investment and environmental sustainability while creating opportunities for housing delivery and community development.

We would welcome continued engagement between the Department for Infrastructure, Trust Ports, local authorities and key stakeholders to ensure that future investment and regeneration opportunities arising

from the Bill maximise social value, support sustainable placemaking and help meet Northern Ireland's housing needs.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. McFarland', written in a cursive style.

Catherine McFarland
Interim Chief Executive