

Harbour Bill: Call for Evidence

2 September 2026

Summary

- Logistics UK supports the Harbours Bill and its objective of modernising the legislative and governance framework for Northern Ireland's Trust Ports.
- We welcome measures that provide Northern Ireland's Trust Ports with greater operational flexibility, commercial agility and autonomy, helping them to compete effectively and attract investment.
- Logistics UK supports the principle that Northern Ireland's Trust Ports should be able to operate on a footing comparable with ports elsewhere in the United Kingdom.
- We welcome the introduction of a statutory harbour directions regime, including the requirement to consult port users before new directions are introduced.
- The Committee may wish to consider whether the framework established by the Bill provides sufficient flexibility to accommodate future developments in trade, technology, decarbonisation and port operations, ensuring Northern Ireland's ports remain competitive over the long term.

About Logistics UK

Logistics UK is one of the country's largest business groups, representing the entire logistics industry and supporting, shaping and standing up for safe and efficient logistics. Our membership of more than 20,000 includes global, national and regional businesses and SMEs spanning road, rail, inland waterways, sea and air as well as the buyers of freight services, such as retailers and manufacturers. As an organisation, we deliver services, representation and thought leadership, helping members and policy makers to seize new opportunities for the sector and the economy as a whole, right across the country.

Introduction

Logistics UK welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Committee for Infrastructure's scrutiny of the Harbours Bill.

Ports are critical to the movement of goods into and out of Northern Ireland and play a vital role in supporting economic growth, international trade and supply chain resilience. For Logistics UK's members, efficient, commercially agile and well-governed ports are essential to maintaining the smooth flow of freight and ensuring that businesses can respond effectively to changing market conditions.

Logistics UK supports the overall objectives of the Bill and welcomes the Committee's consideration of legislation intended to modernise the legislative and governance framework for Northern Ireland's Trust Ports. In particular, Logistics UK believes that Northern Ireland's Trust Ports should be able to operate on a footing that is comparable with ports elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The logistics sector benefits when ports have the flexibility to make timely operational and commercial decisions and respond to new opportunities in a rapidly changing trading environment. We therefore welcome measures that seek to place Northern Ireland's Trust Ports on a more equivalent footing to their counterparts elsewhere in the UK while maintaining appropriate governance and accountability arrangements. The objective of enabling ports to operate more efficiently, attract investment and compete effectively is one that Logistics UK supports.

Logistics UK also recognises that the Bill may help provide a framework that supports future investment in Northern Ireland's port infrastructure. Investment in ports is essential to accommodate future trade growth, improve supply chain resilience and ensure that freight gateways have the capacity to meet changing

economic and trading needs. A legislative framework that supports long-term commercial planning and investment can provide benefits for businesses across the logistics sector and the wider economy.

As the logistics sector continues to evolve through technological change, decarbonisation and changing trade patterns, Logistics UK also encourages the Committee to consider whether the framework established by the Bill provides sufficient flexibility to support future developments and ensure that Northern Ireland's ports remain competitive over the longer term.

Response to Clauses and Schedules

Clause 1: Limitation of Power to Initiate Transfer of Harbour Authorities

Logistics UK supports measures that provide certainty and stability in relation to the governance arrangements of Northern Ireland's Trust Ports. The ports affected by this provision play an important role in supporting regional and national supply chains. A stable governance framework can support long-term planning, investment and infrastructure development, all of which ultimately benefit businesses that rely on the efficient movement of freight through Northern Ireland's ports.

Logistics UK therefore supports the intention of this clause and has no specific concerns regarding its provisions.

Clause 2: Limitation of Power to Issue Directions to Harbour Authorities

Logistics UK recognises the rationale for providing Trust Ports with greater operational independence and flexibility. Ports operate in a highly commercial and competitive environment, and decisions relating to operations, investment and development are often best taken by those with direct responsibility for managing port facilities and services.

Provided that appropriate governance and accountability arrangements remain in place, Logistics UK supports the principle underpinning this clause.

Clause 3: Power of Harbour Authorities to Acquire Businesses

Logistics UK welcomes the broader commercial powers proposed in Clause 3. Modern ports increasingly function as integrated logistics hubs rather than solely as providers of maritime infrastructure. The ability to engage in a wider range of harbour-related activities may support investment, innovation and the development of services that improve the efficiency of freight movements and supply chains.

From a logistics perspective, port operators should have the flexibility to respond to changing commercial opportunities and customer requirements. Logistics UK therefore considers this provision to be a positive development that will support innovation, investment and the continued evolution of modern port operations.

Greater commercial flexibility may also help harbour authorities secure investment and develop the infrastructure and services needed to support future growth in trade and freight activity. From a logistics perspective, the ability of ports to invest and evolve alongside changing customer and supply chain requirements is an important factor in maintaining competitiveness and resilience.

Clause 4: Power of Harbour Authorities to Give Harbour Directions

Logistics UK supports the introduction of a statutory harbour directions regime.

Harbour directions are a well-established feature of the regulatory framework at many ports elsewhere in the UK and can provide a practical and efficient mechanism for managing navigation, safety and operational matters. The introduction of similar powers in Northern Ireland will contribute to greater consistency across UK ports and provide harbour authorities with an important operational tool.

We welcome the requirement for consultation and publication before harbour directions are introduced. Meaningful engagement with port users is essential where operational requirements may affect shipping operators, ferry services, freight carriers and other supply chain stakeholders.

Logistics UK considers it important that harbour directions are exercised in a manner which is proportionate, transparent and informed by engagement with affected users. Continued collaboration between harbour authorities and their users will help ensure that these powers support both safe operations and efficient freight movement.

Clause 5: Purposes for Which Harbour Orders May Be Made

Logistics UK supports the intention of providing harbour authorities with greater flexibility in relation to their functions and operations.

In particular, Logistics UK welcomes the pragmatic broader enabling power allowing harbour orders to be made where they are conducive to the efficient functioning of a harbour. This has the potential to reduce unnecessary constraints and support the effective operation and development of ports.

Contact details:

Bethany Windsor

Head of Multimodal Policy

bwindsor@logistics.org.uk