

Clerk to the Committee for Infrastructure**13th August 2026****Via Email: committee.infrastructure@niassembly.gov.uk**

Dear Clerk,

Re: Harbours Bill – NIFHA response

The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations is the representative body for NI's 19 registered housing associations. NIFHA works with government to develop housing policy which is best placed to support social and affordable housing, while promoting best practice and innovation right across the housing sector. Housing associations provide social and affordable housing across Northern Ireland, from family homes to supported living, as well as housing solutions for those who want to buy homes.

NIFHA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Committee for Infrastructure's consideration of the Harbours Bill and recognises the potential for the Bill to support long-term investment across Northern Ireland's Trust Ports.

Housing delivery is linked to the availability of land, infrastructure and long-term investment. NIFHA recognises the role that Northern Ireland's Trust Ports can play in supporting regeneration and creating the conditions for new housing and associated infrastructure.

Belfast Harbour's recent Masterplan provides one example of this potential, with an ambition to support the delivery of up to 3,500 homes across its Harbour Estate, which crucially includes social and affordable housing. At present we now have over 50,000 applicants on social housing waiting list with 27% (over 13,500) of those applicants in Belfast alone hence the added significance of Belfast Harbours masterplan. Affordability in Belfast is also another problem impacting thousands of people who are struggling to afford rent or purchase their own home. Housing Associations can provide co-ownership solutions and intermediate rent, solutions that can be part of the housing delivery within Belfast Harbours plan.

More broadly, investment in Trust Ports have the potential to support housing alongside employment, connectivity, public realm whilst creating communities that are attractive and sustainable places to live. A framework that enables Trust Ports to plan and invest over the longer term can therefore help create the conditions for these opportunities to come forward.

NIFHA recognises the importance of maintaining momentum on the Bill, particularly given the long lead times associated with major housing and infrastructure projects. NIFHA therefore welcomes the progress made to date and encourages the Committee to continue advancing the Bill through its legislative stages during the current mandate.

Yours sincerely,

Seamus Leheny

Chief Executive

Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations