

15. PORTS AND HARBOURS



Warrenpoint Harbour, Co. Down

Key messages

- Northern Ireland has a high dependence on its seaports.
- The ports play a crucial role for the Northern Ireland economy.
- Approximately 27 million tonnes of cargo were handled by our ports in 2009.
- 2.1 million domestic sea passengers went through our ports in 2009.
- There has been an increase in the number of cruise ships visiting our ports in recent years.

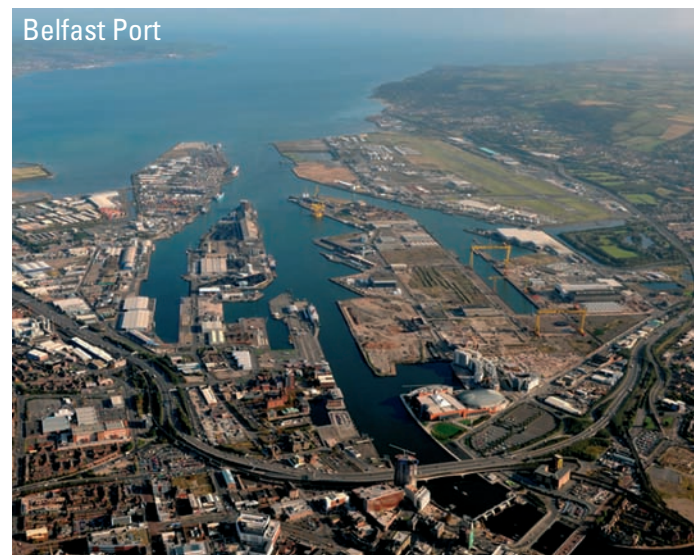
Being part of an island and having an open trading economy, Northern Ireland has always been dependent on the sea for our trade and our seaports as gateways to that trade.

Where are our main Ports?

There are 5 commercial ports in Northern Ireland – the 4 public trust ports of Belfast, Londonderry, Warrenpoint and Coleraine and 1 in private ownership (Larne). In addition, there are 3 main fishing ports at Portavogie, Ardglass and Kilkeel, which are managed by the Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority. The harbour authorities have a statutory duty to maintain and manage navigable channels for shipping within their harbour limits.

Why are our commercial ports important to the economy?

Northern Ireland's commercial ports play a crucial economic role, handling some 95% of Northern Ireland's external trade. They serve as vital gateways, not only for trade between the island of Ireland and Great Britain, mainland Europe and elsewhere but also for passenger and tourist traffic. The geographic spread of our main ports enhances their role of extending economic activity across Northern Ireland, acting as catalysts to improve our wider infrastructure and services.



Belfast Port

Route	Frequency*	Number of Passengers (thousands)
Belfast – Heysham (DFDS Seaways)	24 crossings weekly	3
Belfast – Liverpool (DFDS Seaways)	26 crossings weekly	190
Belfast – Stranraer (Stena Line)	14 crossings daily	1,104
Belfast - Douglas (IoM Steampacket)	2 crossings weekly+	21
Larne – Cairnryan (P&O Irish Sea)	14 crossings daily	628
Larne – Fleetwood (Stena Line)	1 to 3 crossings daily	58
Larne – Troon (P&O Irish Sea)	4 crossings daily++	206
Warrenpoint – Heysham (Sea Truck)	3 crossings daily	6

Table 15.1 Domestic Sea Passengers at Northern Ireland Ports 2009 Source: Maritime Statistics DfT; Information from individual ferry company websites.

*Frequency based on timetables 2010 + Operates April to September ++Operates March to October.

The quick, economic and reliable movement of goods to the marketplace is vital for our economic development, as is the safe and efficient navigation of vessels into our ports. Modern commerce and industry increasingly depends on logistical chains which deliver goods and services when they are needed.

How much cargo is handled by each major port?

In 2009 almost 58% of Northern Ireland's trade (15.7 million trade cargo tonnage) went through Belfast; 17% (4.3 million tonnes) went through Larne; with most of the rest being handled by the other main commercial ports in Warrenpoint (2.4 million tonnes) and Londonderry (1.6 million tonnes). Cargo tonnage handled by the ports is mainly in the form of unit loads (freight vehicles and containers) and bulk cargo (liquid, dry and break bulk cargo that must be loaded individually).

How much domestic passenger traffic goes through our ports?

In 2009, over 500,000 tourist vehicles and approximately 2.1 million passengers travelled through ports, primarily Belfast and Larne, on routes to Scotland, England and the Isle of Man (Table 15.1).

In addition, in 2009, 36 cruise ships brought more than 57,000 visitors to Belfast alone and this figure is set to grow further.

What are the future challenges?

Our main commercial ports at Belfast, Larne, Londonderry and Warrenpoint have been developing their capacity to ensure that future growth in trade can be handled efficiently. These developments are needed to cater for the operational requirements resulting from changes in shipping technology, including the move to larger container ships. They have also been capitalising on their potential to act as economic drivers through developing logistics, distribution facilities and diversifying into other value-added activities.

The port of Belfast provides a useful example of the economic role of ports and the shipping they handle. A report conducted by the Centre for Economics and Business Research in 2007 concluded that 13% of Northern Ireland's workforce is employed by businesses which trade through the port or are based in the Harbour Estate.

These businesses generate £3.8 billion of gross value added (or £4.2 billion worth of GDP gross domestic product) equivalent to 15.7% of the Northern Ireland total.

In managing our maritime area, we need to continue to manage port activities in the context of sustainable development.



Towing the MV Napoli into Belfast Port

Legislation

EC Directives

(full references and corresponding regulations – Appendix II)

Environmental Impact Assessment Directive	Requiring that all the potential impacts of specified projects within harbours are taken into consideration and mitigation measures are put in place where appropriate
Waste Framework Directive	Requiring ports to develop waste management plans and provide reception facilities for waste
Water Framework Directive (WFD)	Under the WFD, harbours can be classified as heavily modified water bodies, where development (for reasons of overriding public interest) has resulted in a significant move away from natural conditions. However, harbour areas are still required to meet specified quality objectives
International Agreements	
MARPOL Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships	Preventing pollution from oil, chemicals harmful substances in the packaged for, sewage and garbage. These are implemented in the UK by Merchant Shipping Regulations
National legislation	
Harbours Act (Northern Ireland), 1970	Primary legislation enabling the establishment of harbour authorities and harbour orders
Harbours (Northern Ireland) Order 2002	Enhancing public accountability of the ports and improving arrangements to safeguard public health
UK Food and Environment Protection Act, 1985	Controlling deposits in the sea. The licensing process and the conditions attached are designed to minimise the adverse impact of activities on the environment, human health and other legitimate uses of the sea
Harbour Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2003	Requiring port and harbour authorities to conduct an EIA on specified projects to ensure that environmental damage can be minimised