Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group
Marine and Fisheries Division

Department of
Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
An Roinn
Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe
Depairtment o'
Fairmin, Environment an' Kintra Matthers
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Our Reference: DAERA/26-66

[redacted]
Warrenpoint Harbour Authority

[redacted]

Marine Licensing Branch
Clare House
303 Airport Road West
Sydenham Intake
Belfast BT3 9ED

Tel: 02890569247
Email: MarineLicensingTeam@daera-ni.gov.uk

19th February 2026

Dear [redacted]

Freedom of Information Act 2000

With regard to your request for information received by the Department on 02 February 2026 which sought the following information:

'Has any other Northern Ireland port been required to undertake deep-core sampling for the purposes of routine maintenance dredging prior to the requirement being imposed on Warrenpoint Harbour Authority during 2023?'

I can advise that the Department has completed its search and can confirm that it holds the information you requested which is below;

By way of providing you with context, the **London Convention (1972)** and its successor, the **London Protocol**, regulate the disposal of wastes at sea and mandate a scientifically robust assessment process before permits may be issued.

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This framework ensures that disposal activities do not cause marine pollution and that sampling adequately reflects the vertical and horizontal characteristics of the dredged sediments.

DAERA applies the standards set out by the **London Protocol** and the **OSPAR guidelines (2014)** as part of its marine licensing process to ensure that dredged material assessments remain compliant with international obligations and regional guidelines.

Paragraph 5.3 of the OSPAR Guidelines recommends core sampling if the dredge depth is considered to be significant. A specific depth is not specified, however, it is commonly accepted that samples at depth should be taken when material to be dredged exceeds 1m in depth, this remains an informal threshold and when samples at depth should be taken is ultimately at the gift of the Department.

Each site is assessed on a case-by-case basis based on the information provided by the applicant at the application stage. This may include assessments carried out and provided by the applicant of historical sampling results, evidence that the sediment has been recently deposited or evidence to demonstrate there has been no pollution incidents or sources of contamination likely to raise concerns when disturbing the nearby sediment of the proposed works. Further information regarding this can be found here marine-licensing-guidance-dredging-disposal-and-aggregate-dredging-under-part-4-marine-and-coastal-access-act-2009-may-2016.pdf

To answer your question, our records would indicate that prior to 2023, there were 12 occasions across 7 harbours where sampling at depth was requested for Maintenance Dredge Licence applications.

The frameworks and guidelines referenced above allow the Department to ensure that sediment sampling, particularly at depth, provides a complete, representative, and scientifically robust dataset to assess environmental suitability for disposal. This has been the position of the Department prior to 2023 and will continue to be.

If you require any clarification, believe that any part of your request has been overlooked, misunderstood or misinterpreted, please contact me in the first instance to see if it is a matter that can be resolved.

If you are unhappy with the manner in which your request for information has been handled or the decision to release/withhold information, you have the right to request a formal review by the Department.

If you wish to do so, please contact The Review Section either by e-mailing daera.informationmanager@daera-ni.gov.uk or by post at The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Data Protection & Information Management Branch, Floor 2, Jubilee House, 111 Ballykelly Road, Ballykelly, Limavady BT49 9HP, within two months from the date of this letter.

If after such an internal review you are still unhappy with the response, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, CHESHIRE, SK9 5AF, who will undertake an independent review of the Department's decision.

Yours sincerely

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[redacted]
[redacted] **Marine and Fisheries Division**

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