

Strangford Lough Ferry Service
Strangford and Portaferry Harbour Byelaws
(Northern Ireland) 2026

STATUTORY RULES OF NORTHERN IRELAND

2026 No.....

STRANGFORD LOUGH FERRY SERVICE

Strangford Lough Ferry Service and Strangford and Portaferry Harbour Byelaws

(Northern Ireland) 2026

Made **2026**

Coming into operation **2026**

The Department for Infrastructure in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 102 of Roads (NI) Order 1993, S14-S15, S25 and S38 of the Harbours Act (Northern Ireland) 1970, S51-S53, S56-S58, S62-S65, S83 and S84 of the Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847 and of every other power enabling it in that behalf with the consent of the Secretary of State (c) and the Crown Estate Commissioners(d) insofar as such consents are required under section 9(2) of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1932(e) hereby makes the following Byelaws:-

Citation and commencement

These Byelaws may be cited as the Strangford Lough Ferry Service, Strangford and Portaferry Harbour Byelaws (Northern Ireland) 2026 and shall come into operation on xxxxxxx 2026

Part I Interpretation

In these byelaws the following words or expressions have the meanings hereby respectively assigned to them:

“the Department”	Department for Infrastructure
“Harbour Premises”	the docks, quays, wharfs, landing places and all other works, land and buildings for the time being vested in or occupied or administered by the Department as part of their undertaking
“Ferry vessel”	a vessel used for the purpose of providing a ferry service for conveying vehicles and people between Strangford Harbour and Portaferry Harbour
“Fairway”	the navigable channel between Strangford and Portaferry harbours marked and maintained by the Department for use of a road ferry service
“Harbour Master”	the person appointed as such pursuant to section 52 of The Harbour, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847, The Harbours Act (1970) and Article 106 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, and includes the Strangford Ferry Manager and assistants of a person so appointed;
“Master”	when used in relation to a vessel means any person having command, charge or management of the vessel for the time being
“Vessel”	a ship, boat, raft or water craft of any description and includes non-displacement craft, sea planes, jet craft and sailboards and any other thing constructed or adapted for floating on or being submerged in water (whether permanently or temporarily) and a hovercraft or any other amphibious vehicle.
“Vehicle”	includes motor cars, motor lorries, caravans, motorcycles, bicycles, omnibuses, horse drawn vehicles, carts, caravans, mobile homes and any other vehicle whether mechanically propelled or not and includes any trailer intended or adapted for use as an attachment to such a vehicle.
“Personal Watercraft”	any watercraft (not normally used in navigation and not being a structure which by reason of its concave shape provides buoyance for the carriage of persons or goods) propelled by a jet engine or other mechanical means of propulsion and steered either: (a) By means of a handlebar operated linkage system (with or without a rudder at the stem); or (b) By the person or persons riding the craft using their body weight for the purpose; or (c) By a combination of the methods referred to in (a) and (b) above

“Parking Bay” a space which is marked out in any part of the Harbour Premises for the leaving of a vehicle

Part II Navigation

Declaration of particulars of vessel

1. The master of a vessel arriving at the harbour shall if requested by the Harbour Master furnish them with a correct statement of –

- (a) The name, call sign and description of the vessel
- (b) Draught and gross tonnage
- (c) The name of the master and the name and address of the owner
- (d) The last port of call
- (e) The port or place to which the vessel belongs
- (f) The particulars of any cargo on board to be loaded or discharged

Vessels to navigate with care

2. A master shall navigate their vessel with such care and caution and at such speeds and in such a manner, as not to endanger the lives of or cause injury to persons or damage to property and as not to interfere with the navigation, manoeuvring, loading or discharging of Ferry Vessels or cause unnecessary damage to moorings, the sea bed, harbour walls or other Harbour Premises.

3. A vessel shall not be navigated or manoeuvred in any part of the Harbour Premises in a manner or at a speed so as to cause wash to be generated that may cause damage to or endanger the safety of other persons, vessels or property.

4. The master of a vessel shall navigate their vessel with due care and caution and at a speed and in such manner as not to cause injury to or endanger the lives of persons engaged in the laying or retrieving of moorings, navigational works, dredging, salvage, construction or underwater work.

5. The Master of a Vessel when underway in the harbour shall ensure that at least one competent person is constantly on board for the navigation and management thereof.

Speed of vessels

6. Except in an emergency, a person shall not, without the express permission of the Harbour Master, navigate a vessel entering, leaving or using the harbour at a speed greater than 5 knots through the water.

Vessels not to obstruct fairway

7. The master of a small vessel whether under power or sail which is not confined to the fairway shall not make use of the fairway so as to cause obstruction to the ferry vessels which can navigate only in the fairway and shall give the ferry vessels a clear course and as wide a berth as safe navigation requires.

8. A master shall not permit his vessel to enter or cross the fairway except when the fairway in the vicinity of the vessel is clear, nor in a manner, which may impede or endanger ferry vessels navigating the fairway

Vessels not to obstruct slipways

9. Slipways must be kept clear at all times, except when consent has been granted by the Harbour Master.

10. A master shall not allow a vessel to ebb out on the slipways or in any way obstruct the use of the slipways without the consent of the Harbour Master.

Vessels entering or leaving the harbour

11. The master of a vessel entering or leaving the harbour shall give way to the ferry vessel and shall observe any navigational signals indicating the arrival or departure of the ferry vessel.

Movement of vessels by persons under the influence of alcohol or drugs

12. A person shall not navigate any vessel in the harbour whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs to such an extent as to be incapable of taking proper control of the vessel.

Notification of collisions

13. The master of a vessel which –

- (a) Has been involved in a collision with any vessel or property, or has been sunk or grounded or become stranded in the harbour; or
- (b) By reason of accident, fire, defect or otherwise is in such a condition as to affect its safe navigation or to give rise to danger to other vessels or property; or
- (c) In any manner gives rise to an obstruction to the navigation of other vessels; shall report the occurrence to the Harbour Master and provide full details in writing.

Where the damage to the vessel is such as to affect or be likely to affect its seaworthiness the master shall not move the vessel except to clear the fairway or to moor or anchor in safety, otherwise than with the permission and in accordance with the directions of the Harbour Master.

Lost anchor, cables or propellers

14. The master of a vessel which has slipped or parted from or lost any anchor, chain, cable or propeller shall forthwith give to the Harbour Master notice thereof, and if possible, of the position of the anchor, chain, cable or propeller and, if the Harbour Master so directs shall cause it to be recovered as soon as practicable.

15. The master of a vessel slipping or parting from an anchor or propeller shall leave a buoy and light (as necessary) to mark the position thereof.

16. If the owner of the vessel which has slipped or parted from or lost any anchor, chain, cable or propeller fails to comply with an instruction from the Harbour Master to recover the anchor, chain, cable or propeller the Harbour Master may arrange for its removal at the risk of the owner and the cost thereof shall be charged against the master or owner of the vessel. The costs incurred as aforesaid may be recovered from the owner by the Department as a simple contract debt. Any such action taken by the Harbour Master shall not affect the consequences of any contravention by the master or owner of this Bye-Law.

Bright Lights

17. A person shall not exhibit in the harbour, searchlights, floodlights, lasers or other bright lights other than those for indicating emergency or distress, in such a manner which causes nuisance to or affects safe navigation, unless the consent of the Harbour Master has been obtained.

Pyrotechnics

18. Except in instances of distress or safety of proper navigation, pyrotechnics shall not be used within the harbour without the consent of the Harbour Master, for which application must be made in writing not less than fourteen days before the intended occasion.

Vessels not to obstruct Steps

19. A master shall not allow any vessel to obstruct any steps or to lie at any steps without the permission of the Harbour Master.

Part III Berthing and Mooring**Mooring**

20. No person shall place, lay down, maintain or use any mooring, pontoon or other structure in the harbour without a licence or prior consent granted by the Department. The placing, laying down, maintenance or use of any agreed mooring by the Department shall be in compliance with the conditions attached to that licence. In the absence of such licence or consent, or if the conditions attached thereto are not complied with, any such mooring shall be removed forthwith by the owner as the Department so requires. If it is not removed the Department may do so, having given notice to the owner or possessor accordingly. Any costs reasonably incurred in removing and disposing of the mooring shall be payable by the owner. The costs incurred as aforesaid may be recovered from the owner by the Department as a simple contract debt. Any such action taken by the Harbour Master shall not affect the consequences of any contravention by the master or owner of this Bye-Law.

21. Any person using a licensed mooring must have permission from both the Harbour Master and the licensee and have insurance in accordance with the terms of the licence.

22. The Harbour Master shall have the power to set aside reserved berths, when deemed necessary, at their discretion. The use of any such berth will be subject to the consent of the Harbour Master.

23. The Harbour Master may at any time deemed appropriate give preference of berth to one vessel over another.

24. A mooring, buoy, or similar tackle shall forthwith be removed by its owner or the owner's representative if the Harbour Master so directs.

25. No vessel shall tie up alongside or use the Ferry Vessel to access the ferry landing place without permission from the Harbour Master.

Responsibility to securely moor

26. The master of a vessel remaining at a mooring within the harbour shall cause it to be properly and effectively moored and fendered, such that it is not only secure but also is not liable to cause any damage to any other vessel or property (including any pontoon, mooring or quay).

Vessels not to make fast to unauthorised objects

27. The master of a vessel shall not make fast their vessel to, or lie against any navigational buoy, light, beacon, fender or tide board within the Harbour Premises.

Vessels to be kept in a movable condition

28. The master of a vessel shall not, except when their vessel is lying aground, take any steps to render their vessel incapable of movement without first seeking permission of the Harbour Master and, shall at all times keep the vessel so loaded and ballasted and in such a condition that it is capable of being safely moved.

29. Where a vessel is at any time not capable of being safely moved by means of its own propulsion machinery, the master or owner shall inform the Harbour Master as soon as is reasonably practicable and give to them any further information which they may reasonably require.

Repair or Maintenance of vessels

30. A vessel shall not be repaired, maintained, dismantled or broken up in the harbour except in such position as the Harbour Master may appoint for that purpose and subject to such terms and conditions as they shall impose.

Use of engines whilst moored or berthed

31. The master of a vessel moored or berthed within the harbour shall not permit the engines to be worked in such a manner to cause damage to the quay or to the bed or walls of the Harbour Premises or to any other vessel or property.

Fouling of moorings etc

32. If at any time an anchor of a vessel fouls any moorings, pipes or cables within the Harbour Premises, the master of the vessel shall as soon as is reasonably practicable give notice to the Harbour Master.

Access to and egress from vessels

33. The master of a vessel alongside a quay or alongside any vessel berthed within the harbour shall, if required so to do by the Harbour Master, give free access across the deck of their vessel for persons and goods to and from vessels berthed alongside.

Vessels adrift

34. The master of a vessel, which parts from its moorings, shall as soon as practicable report details to the Harbour Master.

Part IV Road Traffic

Obstruction of Harbour Premises

35. A person shall not, except with the permission of the Harbour Master, deposit or place on any part of the Harbour Premises any goods or park any vehicle so as to obstruct free access to and egress from buildings, ferry vessels, slipways, moorings or pontoons.

Ferry Embarkation, disembarkation,

36. A person shall not obstruct or cause to be obstructed the area designated for the marshalling of vehicles awaiting embarkation on the ferry or the passageways for vehicles approaching or disembarking from the ferry vessel.

37. A person having charge of a vehicle on board the ferry vessel or within the Harbour Premises shall at all times comply with any directions of the Harbour Master or other employee of the Department, with respect to embarkation, disembarkation, loading, discharging, manoeuvring or removal thereof.

Safe driving of vehicles

38. A person shall not drive or otherwise operate a vehicle in the Harbour Premises without due care and attention or without consideration for other persons using the Harbour Premises.

39. A person when driving or propelling a vehicle must obey the directions of the Harbour Master or other employee of the Department engaged in regulating traffic with the Harbour Premises.

Barriers

40. A person while on Harbour Premises shall not without permission of the Harbour Master or other employee of the Department pass beyond or across any fence, chain or other barrier for preventing or restricting access.

Parking of vehicles

41. A person shall not park or leave a vehicle in any place where it is likely to obstruct or interfere with the use of the Harbour Premises or in any part of the Harbour Premises where the parking of vehicles is prohibited and notice of such prohibition has been erected.

42. If the Harbour Master or other employee of the Department so directs a vehicle left in contravention of this byelaw, and if the owner cannot be found or fails to comply the Harbour Master may have the vehicle removed.

43. Vehicle parking bays at Harbour Premises are not to be used for overnight stays

44. A person shall not use any parking bay or any other part of the Harbour Premises for sleeping or camping purposes.

45. A person shall not drive or park any vehicle on any road, quay, pier or other place in contravention of any notice that may be posted in a conspicuous place at the entrance or approach to such place specifying or limiting the class, size or weight of the vehicle allowed to enter or pass over that place.

Loads not to spill or drop

46. The owner, driver or other person having charge of a vehicle on the ferry vessel or on the Harbour Premises shall not permit any substance to leak, spill or drop from the vehicle.

Accidents to be reported

47. Any person driving or otherwise operating a vehicle involved in an accident in the Harbour Premises whereby any injury is caused to any person or damage is caused to any property shall stop the vehicle and report the accident to the Harbour Master immediately and in writing.

Part V Health, Safety and Amenity

48. A person shall not without prior consent from the Harbour Master do any of the following within any part of the Harbour Premises:

- (a) Play or take part in any game, read or deliver any public speech, lecture, prayer, sermon or address of any kind or cause or take part in any public assemblage or meeting;
- (b) Make sounds on or use or permit to be used any radio or other sound reproducing equipment, musical or mechanical instrument or broadcast on any loudspeaker, amplifier or similar means of public address, likely to cause disruption to other harbour users
- (c) Fix, display, exhibit or paint any placard, poster, notice, banner, flag, decoration, emblem or sign whatsoever on or in Harbour Premises
- (d) Engage by way of trade in buying or selling of any goods, services or property within the Harbour Premises.
- (e) Lift a vessel from the water and temporarily store at a location within the Harbour Premises without prior approval from the Harbour Master

Unauthorised entry

49. No person shall enter any Harbour Premises building or ferry vessel unless they have a lawful and legitimate reason to do so.

Harbour safety equipment

50. A person shall not remove any life buoy, lifeline or other lifesaving apparatus from its place without permission of Harbour Master, unless for legitimate purpose. No person shall remove or interfere with safety equipment which has been placed on Harbour Premises. Under the Criminal Damage (Northern Ireland) Order 1977), any person found tampering with this equipment may receive up to a £5000 fine and/or imprisonment.

Stranded or Sunken Vessels

51. The Master or owner of a vessel which has sunk or stranded in the Harbour Premises shall immediately give notice of this occurrence to the Harbour Master and shall carry out his instructions as to the lighting and buoying of the vessel forthwith. Any vessel so sunk or stranded shall be removed by the Master or owner as soon as possible and in any event within fourteen days of the day on which the vessel sank or became stranded or within such greater or lesser period as the Harbour Master may by notice in writing permit or require.

52. If the Master or owner of a vessel which has sunk or stranded in the Harbour Premises fails to obey such instructions without delay the Harbour Master may arrange for the lighting and

buoying of the vessel at the risk of the owner and the cost thereof shall be charged against the Master or owner of the vessel. The costs incurred as aforesaid may be recovered from the owner by the Department as a simple contract debt. Any such action taken by the Harbour Master shall not affect the consequences of any contravention by the master or owner of this Bye-Law.

53. No person shall abandon a vessel in the Harbour Premises and for the purposes of this byelaw, a person who leaves a vessel in the Harbour Premises in such circumstances or for such a period that he may reasonably be assumed to have abandoned it shall be deemed to have abandoned it there unless the contrary intention is shown.

54. The Harbour Master may serve notice on the owner of any vessel which has been abandoned, sunk, stranded or is, in his reasonable opinion, causing an obstruction or interfering with the operation of the harbour, requiring him to remove the vessel from the harbour as soon as possible and in any event within 14 days. If the vessel is not removed within the time specified herein, the Harbour Master may arrange for removal of the vessel at the risk of the owner and the cost thereof may be charged against the owner of the vessel. The costs incurred may be recovered from the owner by the Department as a simple contract debt. Any such action taken by the Harbour Master shall not affect the consequences of any contravention by the Master or owner of these Bye-Laws.

55. Whenever a Master of a vessel within the Harbour Premises is not on board, any notice required or authorised by these Bye-Laws to be served on or given to him, may be served or given by affixing it to a mast or some other conspicuous part of such vessel, and if any person is on board, calling his attention thereto. Alternatively, such notice may be served by sending it by prepaid registered post in an envelope addressed to the Master or owner at his last known address and in that event the notice shall be deemed to have been delivered in the normal course of post.

Obstruction of Departmental Staff

56. A person shall not intentionally obstruct any officer or employee of the Department in the execution of their duties.

57. The Harbour Master may at any time, either alone or with other employees of the Department, board any vessel within the Harbour Premises to inspect it in the execution of his authorised duties. Any person preventing the Harbour Master or other employee of the Department from boarding will be in contravention of this Bye-Law.

Interference with notices

58. A person shall not deface, destroy or remove any notice displayed by the Department within the Harbour Premises.

Cranes and lifting Equipment

59. A person shall not, without the consent of the Harbour Master use a crane or other mechanical or hydraulic lifting equipment on Harbour Premises.

60. A person shall not use a crane or other mechanical or hydraulic lifting equipment on Harbour Premises –

- (a) To lift articles of a weight heavier or of a different nature from those which was declared to the Harbour Master
- (b) For a purpose other than so declared and approved by the Harbour Master.

Discharges on or into the harbour

61. A person shall not throw, discharge, put or permit the discharge or escape of any waste, rubbish or other material thing, whether solid or liquid, into the waters of the harbour premises from the quays, any part of the shores of the harbour or from any vessel lying within the harbour.

62. The master of a vessel shall take all reasonable precautions to prevent articles or things falling from their vessel into the waters of the harbour.

Precaution against fire on vessels

63. The master of a vessel in the harbour shall take all due precautions for the prevention of accident by fire, and shall not permit flammable materials or liquids to be loaded into or discharged from the vessel unless all reasonable measures have been taken to eliminate the risk.

Refuelling

64. When a vessel is taking on liquid fuel of any description, a person shall not smoke or use a naked flame either on board or in the immediate vicinity and the master of such vessel shall provide suitable and efficient fire extinguishers on board ready for immediate use.

Welding or cutting plant

65. Except with the consent of the Harbour Master and subject to such conditions as they may prescribe, a person shall not use any electric welding plant or oxyacetylene cutting or welding plant within or on the Harbour Premises or on a vessel in the harbour premises.

Vessels and machinery to be effectually silenced

66. A person shall not operate within the harbour a power driven vessel propelled by an engine unless the engine is fitted with a silencer or suitable arrangement for reducing as far as may be reasonable the noise caused by the escape of the exhaust gases from the engine.

Inspection facilities to be made available to the Harbour Master

67. The master of a vessel shall so far as may be required by the Harbour Master in the exercise of their duties, afford the Harbour Master access to any part of the vessel and provide all reasonable facilities for inspection.

Part VI Water Sports and Recreation

Vessels employed in sub-aqua diving

68. A person shall not undertake underwater operations or diving activities of any kind within the harbour premises without the prior consent of the Harbour Master.

69. A person shall not dive from a vessel within the Harbour Premises unless there is a lookout in the vessel at all times while the diver is in the water.

Use of personal watercraft

70. No person shall engage or take part in any activity involving personal watercraft within the harbour premises without the consent of the Harbour Master given either specifically or generally and only in such areas as may be designated by the Department and in accordance with such reasonable conditions as they may impose.

71. No person shall engage or take part in water skiing, aquaplaning, paragliding, power boat racing, para kiting or parachute towing or any other similar activity within the Harbour Premises without the consent of the Harbour Master given either specifically or generally and only in such areas as may be designated by the Department and in accordance with such reasonable conditions as they may impose.

Boat races, regattas, triathlons etc

72. The organisers of any boat race, regatta, triathlon, public procession or other public event, when a number of vessels or people are expected to assemble on the waters of the harbour shall obtain the permission not less than 14 days prior to the event from the Harbour Master.

73. Every boat race, regatta, triathlon, procession or other public event shall be conducted on recognised courses in accordance with conditions and times previously approved by the Harbour Master.

74. The Harbour Master may cancel or alter any condition of such approval giving, where reasonably practicable, seven days' notice to the organiser.

75. The Harbour Master may delay, postpone or cancel any event in consultation with the organiser in the case of bad weather or other conditions that may affect the safety of the participants and the safe navigation of craft.

Recreational swimming

76. No person shall bathe or swim or attempt to bathe or swim anywhere within the main fairway or its approaches and in any areas around mooring or berthing facilities.

77. No person shall jump or dive into the water from any structure, pile, pontoon, quay, pier, buoy or ferry vessel within the Harbour Premises.

Part VII General Matters

78. Notwithstanding anything contained in these Bye-Laws, every person in the Harbour Premises shall comply with any directions received from the Harbour Master or other employee of the Department, failure to do so could result in damage, injury or even death.

79. No person shall obstruct, impede, molest or interrupt the Harbour Master or any Department employee during the execution of their duties.

80. Notwithstanding any other provision hereof, failure to comply with any directions, instructions or permission given orally or in writing by the Harbour Master or other employee of the Department shall constitute a contravention of the Bye-law under which such notice was given as extended by this Bye-law.

81. The Harbour Master or other employee of the Department, if of the opinion that any contravention of these Bye-Laws has occurred, is entitled to request the name and address of those involved. Failure to supply the details requested is deemed to be an offence under these Bye-Laws.

82. A person shall not cast any net, creel, or other tackle in the waters of the Harbour Premises so as to interfere with the operation of the Ferry Vessel.

83. A person shall not deposit refuse of any kind whether solid or liquid anywhere on Harbour Premises other than suitable receptacles provided or as approved by the Harbour Master.

84. A person shall not remove rocks, stones, sand, gravel or other material from the harbour without the consent of the Harbour Master.

85. A person shall not without written permission from the Harbour Master in any manner write upon, soil, cut, injure, deface, mark or otherwise interfere with any of the buildings, docks, quays, roadways or other property of the road ferry undertaking.

Saving for Crown

Nothing contained in any of the foregoing Bye-laws shall be deemed to be or shall operate as a grant by or on behalf of the Crown as owner of the tidal lands below mean high water of any estates and interest in or right over such lands or any part thereof, nor shall anything contained in or done under any of the provisions of the foregoing Bye-laws in any respect prejudice or injuriously affect any right, power or privilege legally exercisable by any person in, over and in respect of such lands.

Penalty

The fine prescribed under Article 102 (2) of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 for failing to comply with or otherwise knowingly contravening any provisions of these Byelaws shall be a fine not exceeding level 2 on the standard scale

Sealed with the Official Seal of the Department for Infrastructure on xx 2026.

(L.S.)

Permanent Secretary xxxxxxxx

The Minister for the Department for Infrastructure hereby consents to the foregoing Byelaws insofar as such consent is required under section 9(2) of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1932.

Signed on behalf of the Minister
for the Department for Infrastructure on xx 2026.

xxxxxxx

and Permanent Secretary of the
Department for Infrastructure
authorised by the Minister for DfI.

The Crown Estate Commissioners hereby consent to the foregoing Byelaws insofar as such consent is required under section 9(2) of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1932.

The Official Seal of the Crown Estate Commissioners hereunto affixed on the xx 2026 was authenticated by

xxxxxxx

Authorised by the Crown Estate
Commissioners

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Bye-laws)

These Bye-laws relate to the embarkation and disembarkation of vehicles and passengers on and from the Strangford Lough Ferry Service and the conduct of passengers and drivers of vehicles. They also relate to the requirements to be observed by vessels using the Harbour Premises at Portaferry and Strangford and prohibit certain activities.

Any person who fails to comply with or otherwise knowingly contravenes a Bye-law shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £100 for each offence.