



Department
for Transport

National Policy Statement for Ports:

Response to the Transport Committee and
to Consultation



Department for Transport

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Ports:
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and to Consultation**

Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 9(5) of the Planning Act 2008



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ISBN 978-1-5286-6710-4

E03641109 07/26

Printed on paper containing 40% recycled fibre content minimum

Printed in the UK by HH Associates Ltd. on behalf of the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office

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Executive summary

National Policy Statements (NPSs) are documents prepared pursuant to the Planning Act 2008 and set out the government's policy for the delivery of infrastructure and provide the legal framework for planning decisions.

The first National Policy Statement for Ports (NPSP) was designated in 2012 and since then has set the statutory framework for applications for nationally significant developments in the ports sector.

In March 2023 the then Government launched a review of the NPSP, in accordance with the criteria in s.6 Planning Act 2008. The present Government resumed work on a review, and on 4 June 2025 launched a public consultation, which closed on 29 July.

In parallel, the Commons Transport Select Committee invited written memoranda by 1 August and held public evidence sessions on 10 and 16 September. Its Report was published on 14 November, at the end of the relevant period stipulated under the Act.

S.9(5) Planning Act requires the Secretary of State to lay before Parliament a statement setting out her response to the Committee's recommendations. This document encompasses that response.

The Government is pleased that the Committee has broadly welcomed the proposed revision of the NPSP, and its direction of travel which continues to give the applicant primacy in determining commercial need, while stressing the need for a resilient ports sector that can facilitate the Government's growth and clean energy Missions.

The Committee has made recommendations in relation to each of the main themes of the NPSP and the Government's responses to each of these are set out in the same order here.

1. Introduction

Summary

- 1.1 This document sets out the Secretary of State for Transport's response to the Transport Committee's report on its scrutiny of the propose National Policy Statement for Ports (Fourth Report of Session 2024-26, HC 1028).
- 1.2 The Government welcomes the Committee's general welcome for the review and revision of the NPSP and has considered the Committee's recommendations, along with other points highlighted in the report, as well as responses to the Department's own consultation (which in many cases overlapped with evidence taken by the Committee).
- 1.3 The Department is making further detailed amendments to the NPSP in line with the response set out below, and having verified [and updated] the Appraisal of Sustainability and Habitats Regulations Assessment previously provided, will lay the revised and proposed final version of the NPSP in Parliament for 21 sitting days as the Planning Act prescribes. In line with the Committee's overall view, the broad thrust of the NPSP will, however, be unchanged.

Document structure

The rest of this document follows the structure of the Committee's report as follows:

- **Chapter 2** covers port forecasting.
- **Chapter 3** covers interaction with wider Planning policy.
- **Chapter 4** discusses policy on good design.
- **Chapter 5** discusses decarbonising ports.
- **Chapter 6** discusses environmental obligations.
- **Chapter 7** presents conclusions and next steps.

- The **Appendix** gives further detail of responses to the Department's consultation.

2. Port Freight Demand Forecasts

Recommendation

2.1 Committee's recommendation:

Port freight demand forecasts are best used as a guide to inform planning and investment decisions, rather than as rigid constraints. The Government must also ensure that future port demand forecasts incorporate non-freight activity.

Response

- 2.2 The Government agrees that port freight demand forecasts are best used as a guide. The forecasts are deliberately made in aggregate for the United Kingdom as a whole, whereas the NPSP applies only to England and Milford Haven. They have been produced as a benchmark indication of basic national need for capacity, looking ahead to 2050, but it is normal that individual port operators and applicants should take their own views on the overall market outlook in the relevant sub-sectors, and on their potential to win greater market share.
- 2.3 We will actively consider, for the next round of port demand forecasts, including forecasts for passenger ferry and cruise traffic. Although there are currently no passenger traffic thresholds in s.24 Planning Act 2008, passenger traffic can be linked closely with freight, in the case of combined freight and passenger roll-on roll-off (ro-pax) services.
- 2.4 We will also consider producing forecasts for innovative forms of traffic, such as floating offshore wind, or carbon capture use and storage, where for the 2025 forecasts the view was taken that the baseline for forecasting was not yet sufficiently developed, and/or the market likely to be shaped by forthcoming government interventions, for such forecasts at national level to be sufficiently meaningful. As the Government's clean energy Mission proceeds, a stronger foundation for forecasting will develop.
- 2.5 We will consider whether special forecasting methodologies are required for commodities of this sort, for example offshore wind supply, operations and

maintenance, where volume of goods across the quay is not necessarily the best indicator of value to the wider economy.

3. Interaction with wider Planning policy

Ports in the economy

- 3.1 We welcome the Committee's appreciation of the vital importance of ports to the economy and agree that this importance is not always well appreciated by decision-makers at various levels in the examination and consenting processes, not limited to development consent orders (DCOs).
- 3.2 The Department for Transport intends to do more to promote such awareness, including with local authorities.

Relationship to other spatial planning frameworks

- 3.3 Ports are elements in global supply chains. Within the UK, and specifically England, most of their business is intertwined with inland connectivity, offshore energy-related and other activities, or both.
- 3.4 There are consequently important interfaces of the policy set out in the NPSP with a range of spatial planning frameworks and consenting regimes, including the National Policy Statement for National Networks and each of the National Policy Statements for Energy Infrastructure.
- 3.5 Port developments which are not submitted for development consent orders will typically require works harbour revision or empowerment orders, which confer deemed planning permission. Inland works on or near port estates may also be granted planning permission under the Town & Country Planning Act, while related linear transport development may seek Transport & Works Act Orders (TWAOs) rather than, for example, being treated as associated development within the scope of the DCO.

Safeguarding port development

- 3.6 It was suggested in evidence to the Committee, and in consultation, that the NPSP should do more to avoid interference with ports and navigation by other forms of development including Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

Developments of concern can include offshore energy projects, and cabling for energy or telecommunications purposes.

- 3.7 The Government strongly agrees on the need for protection of ports and navigation, including anchorages and pilotage facilities, especially (but not limited to) those that are in frequent use for scheduled services, and not least as part of a holistic approach to Marine Spatial Prioritisation (MSPri).
- 3.8 However, where NSIPs are concerned, the natural place for guidance in this respect is in the NPS applicable to that form of development.
- 3.9 For example, paras 2.8.111 and 2.8.178ff. in the NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure, EN-3, contain strong policy steers on the need to design offshore wind farms, and their connecting infrastructure, in such a way as to avoid interference with navigation so far as possible.
- 3.10 In general, offshore developers need good port connections to build and maintain their facilities. To this extent, it is also strongly in their own interests to ensure compatibility with navigation and to avoid interference with port approaches.
- 3.11 However, in order to ensure that all interested parties are fully aware of the issue, we will strengthen reference to this need in the final draft NPSP.

Critical National Priority Status

Recommendation

- 3.12 Committee's recommendation:

By the Government's own admission, the ports sector is a "foundational industry." The Government should grant ports Critical National Priority status to reinforce the primacy of port infrastructure and its essential function in the supply chain, and in enabling energy developments.

Response

- 3.13 We note the Committee's recommendation on this point. However, the Government does not intend to accord ports Critical National Priority (CNP) status at this juncture.
- 3.14 This is not, however, to underplay ports' importance. We agree with the point that ports play an essential role in the supply chain and in enabling energy developments. But for that very reason, the advancement of CNP projects will necessarily stimulate ports to compete to meet that demand. In practice therefore, CNP projects are very likely to bring about a demonstrable need for port capacity, and in conjunction with the strong weight attached to the need to service such demand in the NPSP itself, will acquire a degree of weighting and priority comparable with that of CNP.
- 3.15 We have reviewed the NPSP text with this in mind and strengthened the expression of the needs case in relation to CNP infrastructure.

Section 35 of the Planning Act

Recommendation

3.16 Committee's recommendation:

To remove scope for ambiguity, the Department should amend the wording of the draft revised National Policy Statement for Ports to explicitly confirm its applicability to projects directed into the Development Consent Order process under section 35 of the Planning Act 2008.

Response

3.17 The Government accepts this recommendation and will clarify this point in the final revised NPSP.

3.18 Up to now, no ports applications have been directed into the DCO process under s.35, nor has any applicant requested it, but the possibility continues to exist – particularly in view of the fact that offshore wind developments are unlikely, viewed for that purpose alone, to exceed the current thresholds at s.24 of the Act, and as there is currently no specified threshold for passenger traffic.

3.19 We have noted views expressed in consultation, and to the Committee, about the coverage of the current thresholds in s.24. The mechanism for potential change of, or addition to, these thresholds would be a statutory instrument, rather than any reference in the NPSP – which, however, must and does stress the need for port capacity to support the clean energy Mission.

3.20 We will separately review the s.24 thresholds and, if the Secretary of State deems it appropriate, consider amending them through the SI process as prescribed.

3.21 The judgment¹ held, in the context of particular applications relating to energy from waste schemes, that an application that had been directed into the DCO process under s.35 as a “project of national significance”, nevertheless should be considered under s.105 rather than s.104 PA08. This asserted a distinction from a “nationally significant infrastructure project”. Unless and until the Planning Act is amended in relation to this judgment, applicants and examining authorities will need to take account of it where the capacity of the project in question falls below the applicable s.24 thresholds at the time.

3.22 The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 has introduced a new section 35B under which, in specified circumstances, the Secretary of State may give a direction that development consent is not required for development in question, but that it should instead be considered under an alternative consenting regime. We do not know whether any requests for such a direction will arise in the case of port applications. If it does, the likeliest (but not the only possible) alternative regime would be a harbour

¹ EFW Group v Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, [2021] EWHC 2697 (Admin).

revision or empowerment order coupled with one or more marine licences and possibly other ancillary processes.

4. Design policy

Recommendation

4.1 Committee's recommendation:

Ports are functional environments, where safety must remain the paramount consideration. We understand the desirability of aesthetic quality, especially for landscapes and surrounding communities, but we share the concern of stakeholders that there are limits to what can be reasonably achieved in this respect in port developments. The National Policy Statement for Ports must be clear that good design in this context is primarily in support of functionality, safety, and minimising environmental impact.

Response

4.2 The Government accepts this recommendation.

4.3 S.5(6) Planning Act 2008 expressly requires a NPS to set out criteria to be taken into account in the design of that description of development.

4.4 The primary concern for design of port facilities has to be functional, including design for safety and minimising direct environmental impacts. We will make this clear in the final version of the NPSP.

4.5 At the same time, of course, even if form largely follows function, this does not preclude attention to good aesthetics, landscape and seascape views. Guidance on the latter will also be provided separately in the final revised NPSP, updated from previous drafting.

4.6 The final draft amended NPS will take greater account of the National Infrastructure Commission's (successor body: National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority, NISTA) recommendations for good design in the context of functional infrastructure. This, we believe, is consonant with the Committee's recommendation on this matter.

5. Decarbonising ports

Promoting modal shift

Recommendation

5.1 Committee's recommendation:

The Government should revise the draft National Policy Statement for Ports to articulate more clearly how ports interface with other freight modes, ensuring that planning authorities actively consider modal shift in their decision-making. This should reflect the strategic role of ports in enabling integrated, low-emission freight networks and support the Government's wider priorities on modal shift and achieving net zero.

Response

- 5.2 The Government recognises that ports' interface with freight operators is at the core of their operations. While some cargo enters and leaves by sea, and this will be increasingly a feature in the years to come, and some is transported onwards by pipeline, in most cases road and rail connections are, and will remain, vital. The Department recognises its own complementary role in this respect.
- 5.3 In view of the Committee's recommendation, we are amending the NPS text to draw out further the importance of co-ordination with inland transport modes.
- 5.4 The Department's Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG) will continue to guide and facilitate modelling to optimise modal shift, so that transport requirements, conditions and/or obligations can be assessed on a clear and consistent basis from the earliest stages of project planning.

Electricity requirements of ports

Recommendation

5.5 Committee's recommendation:

The Government should strengthen the National Policy Statement for Ports to better support the provision of shore power and electric vessel charging infrastructure as decarbonisation options, recognising the critical interface between ports and the energy grid. It would also assist in reducing pollution from ships which affects nearby communities. The NPS should clearly set out expectations for planning authorities to facilitate grid upgrades and substation development where these would enable decarbonisation of shipping and port activity.

Response

5.6 The Government strongly supports the provision of shore power and charging infrastructure and the revised NPSP will strengthen the guidance on advance provision for shore power already present in the 2012 document.

5.7 At the same time, we recognise the challenges that many ports currently face in securing sufficient Grid capacity; and once secured, pricing terms that are competitive with the use of ships' generators. Work on this continues in liaison with DESNZ. But the NPSP will make clear the importance of new facilities being designed with shore power and sufficient charging infrastructure firmly in mind.

6. Environmental obligations

Carbon budgets and the *Finch* judgment

Recommendation

6.1 Committee's recommendation:

The Government must undertake a thorough assessment of the implications of the *Finch* judgment for the National Policy Statement for Ports and, where necessary, amends the draft revised NPS to ensure it is legally robust and fit for purpose in reducing the potential for judicial review. Clear guidance must be inserted in the revised NPS on the implications of the ruling, and on how emissions should be assessed for the purposes of Environmental Impact Assessments.

Response

- 6.2 The Government has noted the significance of the *Finch* judgment, which bears on 'Scope 3' downstream emissions. We agree with the Committee's view that the NPSP should include specific guidance in this regard and are providing further guidance in the final revised text.
- 6.3 It is important to bear in mind that the characteristics of port development are, in the great majority of cases, very different from the fossil fuel production case that was the subject-matter of *Finch*. Ports do not themselves produce such fuels, and any responsibilities for assessing Scope 3 emissions in the case of new energy sources would normally lie with the producers themselves.
- 6.4 In most cases, the Scope 3 impacts of new port facilities are likely to be both very complex and uncertain to estimate, and at the same time minimal in terms of global impact. It is therefore appropriate to consider the matter carefully at screening and scoping stages, but without an automatic presumption that a full Scope 3 analysis will necessarily be required.
- 6.5 The Department for Transport's Maritime Decarbonisation Strategy intends the expansion of the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) to encompass offshore

shipping by 2027, subject to certain exemptions. In this sense, the downstream emissions impacts resulting from changes to voyage patterns attributable to UK port development will be addressed by measures bearing directly on ship operators, information available to applicants when considering their internal business case.

- 6.6 We note that the *Nuclear Regulatory Review 2025* has addressed the issue of *Finch* in the context of nuclear and other low-carbon infrastructure (see recommendation 15). The Government will consider the *Review* in due course and our response here, and in the revised wording in the NPSP itself, is without prejudice to assessment of that recommendation.

Regulatory frameworks for ports

- 6.7 The Committee rightly points to the complexities of sometimes-overlapping national and supra-national environmental regulations. One function of the NPSP is to bring together references to these regulations in the special context of the ports sector, characterised by spanning the inland, intertidal and estuarial/marine zones.
- 6.8 Regulations must be complied with, but where possible we have sought to attribute weight to environmental considerations that are not regulatory absolutes.
- 6.9 The Committee notes evidence it received recommending that environmental regulation should, in essence, be more of a 'one-stop shop', and cites recommendation 14 of the Corry Review (published 2 April 2025) in this regard.
- 6.10 The Government has welcomed the Corry Review and has already begun to implement several of its recommendations. For example, the Port of Falmouth is one of the first applicants to engage with a lead environmental regulator, and we expect this practice to become more widespread, as those involved learn from experience in implementation.
- 6.11 This will require regulatory agencies to work more closely in order to deliver efficiencies in the sequencing of work and avoidance of duplication. It will also require applicants themselves to contribute by responding promptly when the regulators revert to them with points for clarification or other requests for additional relevant information. Prior engagement with regulators through a master-planning or other pre-application process can help, especially in following through the mitigation hierarchy from the early stages of project development.
- 6.12 While this programme of work does not require substantive amendment to the draft revised NPSP itself, the Government hopes that it will complement clearer and more up-to-date guidance in the NPSP to the benefit of everyone engaged in the Planning and consenting systems for ports.

Deemed marine licences

- 6.13 We note the points relayed by the Committee in relation to the co-ordination of marine licences with harbour revision and empowerment orders.

- 6.14 We agree that every effort should be made to avoid duplication of effort in the production of environmental statements for marine licences and harbour orders, or deemed marine licences and development consent orders. In practice, this is to a large extent within the control of the applicant and its advisers, and in the case of harbour orders is facilitated by the dual role of the Marine Management Organisation as examining body for both.
- 6.15 The suggestion of adopting the deemed (rather than separate) marine licence approach for harbour orders as well as for DCOs is also noted, as a point separate (at least for the time being) from the drafting of the NPSP.
- 6.16 This is a matter for DEFRA to consider further, but in the meantime we do again note that the dual role of the MMO in harbour order casework renders this proposal perhaps less compelling or pressing than it might otherwise have been.
- 6.17 DEFRA is currently considering responses to its consultation, earlier this year, on proposals for marine licensing (including fees and exemptions) and the dredge disposal levy.

Dredging

- 6.18 The evidence to the Committee (and consultation responses to the Department) on dredging were to some extent mixed. We note the British Ports Association's (BPA's) suggestion that dredging should be somewhat downplayed from the treatment proposed in the consultation draft.

Recommendation

- 6.19 Committee's overall recommendation:

The Development Consent Order process is meant to streamline the planning approval process for nationally significant infrastructure. To achieve this and to reduce duplication of regulatory burdens, the National Policy Statement for Ports should contain similar provisions on deemed marine licences to those in the NPS for renewable energy infrastructure. The provisions about dredging should also be made less onerous, given its strict regulation through other mechanisms.

Response

- 6.20 The suggestion of adopting the deemed (rather than separate) marine licence approach for harbour orders as well as for DCOs is also noted, as a point separate (at least for the time being) from the drafting of the NPSP.
- 6.21 This is a matter for DEFRA to consider further, but in the meantime we do again note that the dual role of the MMO in harbour order casework renders this proposal perhaps less compelling or pressing than it might otherwise have been.
- 6.22 Having considered this point, we intend to keep a separate section on dredging in the final proposed NPSP. Dredging is a unique feature of port applications across the

range of NSIP and DCO development, and does involve regulatory features not present elsewhere. On balance we still think highlighting it in this way is justified in order to draw out its potential importance, but the overall regulation of dredging will indeed continue including in the context of wider marine licensing requirements and the dredge disposal levy, as noted above.

7. Conclusions and next steps

- 7.1 The Government is grateful to the Transport Committee for its careful consideration of the proposed amended NPSP, and to all those who contributed written and oral evidence. We are similarly grateful
- 7.2 The NPSP will be amended in accordance with the responses to recommendations and to other points made set out above.
- 7.3 The NPSs will be laid in Parliament for a 21-sitting day consideration period, before being published on GOV.UK. Once published, the updated 2025 NPSP will have effect in relation to applications for development consent accepted for examination. For any applications that have been accepted for examination before publication of the updated NPS, the 2012 version will underpin planning decisions.
- 7.4 The Department for Transport will follow up the review of the NPSP to broaden awareness of its role in the planning and consenting processes, including with local authorities.

Department for Transport

July 2026

Appendix: summary of consultation

A1 This Appendix to the response to the Transport Committee, complementing it, summarises the responses to the Department for Transport's consultation and also the 'take note' debate held by the House of Lords in Grand Committee on 14 October 2025.

A2 The National Policy Statement for Ports (NPSP) sets out the planning framework for port-related development under the Planning Act 2008. In light of evolving policy priorities, environmental imperatives, and extensive stakeholder engagement, a comprehensive update to the NPSP is necessary to ensure it remains robust, relevant, and fit for purpose. The Department launched its consultation on 4 June and it closed on 29 July.

A3 38 responses were received from a range of stakeholders including from the ports sector, non-governmental organisations and others with an interest in the sector. There was significant overlap with respondents to the Committee's call for evidence.

Market-led

Some disagreement with market led approach

A4 Within their responses to the consultation on the NPSP, 8 individuals directly disagreed with the market led approach and 13 of the 20 respondents who agreed acknowledged the risk of market failure. Those who explicitly disagreed did so as they had concerns about relying solely on market and commercial considerations could undermine sustainable and inclusive development. Here there was the recommendation for the NPSP to explicitly recognise the need for government intervention where market failure or strategic national interest justifies it, in particular to support decarbonisation, freight resilience, and regional development.

Ownership structures

A5 In the Grand Committee debate it was argued that not all ports covered by the NPSP operate on the same statutory or capital structure, meaning that a completely market-led approach is not as it seems in policy as it fails to recognize that trust ports, lacking equity funding as they do, are constrained in their ability to borrow and therefore expand.

Strategic Alignment and Policy Coherence

Clarifying Interactions with Other Policy Frameworks

A6 Several consultees argued that the NPSP should more clearly articulate its relationship with other National Policy Statements (e.g. EN-1, EN-3, NNNPS) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). While cross-referencing exists, these consultees recommend a disclaimer noting that other NPSs may contain relevant provisions. This would aid navigation without creating unintended legal obligations. One suggestion was to include an appendix summarising port-relevant provisions in other NPSs.

Spatial Planning and Local Relevance

A7 Some TSC and consultation respondents saw a need for stronger links to local development frameworks and marine plans. Respondents noted that local authorities often lack familiarity with port operations, and recommended better education and clearer guidance to avoid under-recognition in planning decisions.

Integrated National Transport Strategy

A8 Although the Integrated National Transport Strategy is still under development, the NPSP should acknowledge its future relevance. The British Ports Association (BPA) suggested that the NPSP might lay the groundwork for integrated freight corridors and modal shift goals.

Reference to masterplans

A9 The role of port masterplans was strongly supported, with stakeholders advocating their formal recognition in the NPSP to help reduce planning risk and support long-term infrastructure development. DfT has guidance which encourages ports to masterplan, and DfT is currently working on reviewing and updating this guidance.

A10 Masterplanning and the role of port masterplans were raised eight times as well. Respondents strongly support the use of masterplans as strategic tools for aligning port development with local and national priorities. They argue that masterplans should be given greater weight in planning decisions and formally recognised in the NPSP. These documents are seen as essential for reducing planning risk, unlocking investment, and supporting long-term infrastructure planning.

A11 Planning Inspectorate (PINS) guidance emphasises the importance of site-specific planning, integration with other policies, and providing a clear framework for investment and planning decisions. These are principles that often could lead to the use of masterplans at the project level, especially for complex developments. Local authorities have published planning documents stating that masterplans are used to guide development on key sites; these are distinct from design codes and local plans, and they ensure developments are well-designed, sustainable, and connected.

A12 Masterplans are often implicitly strongly supported or referenced through expectations around comprehensive site planning, layout and integration with broader policy goals. In sectors such as energy and water infrastructure, as well as ports, masterplans often form part of the supporting documentation for DCO applications. If we are very strongly to encourage ports to create masterplans, having reference to them in other planning documents could help ensure that they are given the consideration that they deserve.

‘Ecosystem of multipliers’

A13 Some who spoke in the Lords and some consultation respondents highlighted the need to reflect the full ‘ecosystem’ of ports. In part, comments in the Lords suggested that that the policy had missed the distinction between conservancy ports, other statutory harbour authorities, terminal operators and other parts of this ecosystem. To target this, it was suggested that the preamble should include these as well as some recasting of the policy to reflect this.

Environmental Protection and Biodiversity

Mitigation Hierarchy and Biodiversity Net Gain

A14 Several argued that the NPSP should consistently apply the mitigation hierarchy—avoid, minimise, mitigate, compensate—across all relevant sections. Stakeholders also called for clearer definitions and implementation pathways for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), particularly in marine and intertidal zones. The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) requested clarification on whether BNG applies to intertidal areas [it does] and recommended referencing the mandatory 10% gain expected to apply to NSIPs (though still not necessarily to harbour orders conferring deemed permission) from May 2026.

Marine Net Gain and Ecosystem Services

A15 Policy on Marine Net Gain (MNG) remains immature for now, but some argued that the NPSP should acknowledge its potential future relevance. Stakeholders also highlighted the need to address ecosystem service loss, ‘blue carbon’ impacts, and cumulative effects of dredging, sedimentation, and underwater noise. There were calls here for clearer guidance on blue carbon and nature-based solutions.

Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs)

A16 Natural England recommended strengthening guidance on MCZs under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. This includes requiring dedicated MCZ assessments and integrating statutory tests into decision-making. Respondents to the consultation recommended having a section for MCZ in the NPSP.

Planning policy hindering competition

A17 Within the Lords as well as the consultation, the extent of planning policy requirements and the burden that they placed on ports were discussed and it was highlighted how this could act as a disincentive to economic growth and competition. Here there was the recommendation to balance planning acceleration, clarity and certainty with community consultation and any adverse impacts on coastal ecosystems and residents. They thought that the NPSP should do more in order to create clarity to guide applicants and decision makers through the interplay of environmental plans and designations. Here, some in the Lords recommended having a “single playbook” across many designations to cut duplication and delay.

Infrastructure, Design, and Development

Associated Developments and Existing Capacity

A18 Some wished to see the definition of “associated developments” expanded to include logistics hubs, maintenance facilities, and alternative fuel infrastructure. The NPSP’s emphasis on “new” infrastructure risks overlooking incremental upgrades and sub-threshold improvements. The Port of London Authority (PLA) and others stressed the importance of protecting existing infrastructure and applying the ‘agent of change principle’ (this is a forward-looking principle in which the party introducing the new land use must be identified and will be held responsible for mitigating negative impacts of this change, so for example, if a housing developer decides to build near an existing port, the housing developer would be responsible for managing its impact on the port’s operations so as not to impose unreasonable restrictions on ports existing and future operation).

Design Principles

A19 Stakeholders, including the UKMPG, called for a proportionate approach to design that prioritises functionality, safety, and operational efficiency over aesthetics. References to NIC/NISTA principles and the Design Council would support this shift. Nature-inclusive and climate-resilient design should also be encouraged, it was argued. There were calls to embed design earlier in the document. Transport Committee discussions brought out the distinction between aesthetic aspects of design and the others, suggesting much greater emphasis on the latter.

Land Contamination and Stability

A20 A new section was suggested, drawing from the National Networks NPS, to address contamination risks at ports. This recommends early engagement with the Environment Agency and sustainable remediation strategies.

National Resilience

A21 NPSP welcomed as boosting growth but also for directionally boosting national resilience, but the policy should do more actively to support port developments that address wider non-volume, non-traditional cargo activities.

Transport and Connectivity

Strategic Road Network (SRN)

A22 Where port development affects the SRN, applicants should (some argued) assess impacts against the National Networks NPS (NNNPS). A simplified reminder to consult the NNNPS may suffice, but some stakeholders recommended more explicit guidance.

Modal Shift and Active Travel

A23 Several thought the NPSP should do more to promote modal shift to rail, inland waterways, and coastal shipping. The BPA and others highlighted inland capacity constraints and the need for integrated freight strategies. References to Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) would support active travel goals. Baroness Pidgeon and Lady Scott wanted to see decarbonisation and the modal shift advanced through the NPSP, they stated that the NPSP considered ports in isolation from the supply chain, even though they are one of the largest generators of freight traffic; therefore the NPSP could drive substantial change through greater focus on transport connectivity and onward rail links.

Road and Rail Connections

A24 Respondents to the consultation, as well as the TSC and House of Lords Grand Committee raised the issue of port connectivity. Stating that this should be strengthened recommending that the NPSP puts a stronger emphasis on transport connectivity, primarily road and rail connections. Rail traffic was raised as particularly relevant here.

Forecasting and Economic Modelling

Advisory Nature of Forecasts

A25 The UK Chamber of Shipping and UKMPG stressed that forecasts should be positioned as indicative, not prescriptive. This allows for promoter-led demand assessments and accommodates emerging sectors. This point was further stressed by the Lords, who stated that, “ports should be given a major role in telling everyone what their forecast is” (Lord Berkeley).

Emerging Sectors and Passenger Traffic

A26 There were suggestions that forecasting should better reflect offshore wind, clean energy, and cruise/passenger traffic. Associated British Ports (ABP) noted that current forecasts only cover traditional freight sectors and do not, in their view, extend far enough (with their current 2050 horizon) to support long-term investment.

National vs Regional Scope

A27 The Chamber of Shipping raised concerns about a disconnect between the NPSP's geographic scope (England and Milford Haven) and the UK-wide nature of shipping operations. While sub-national forecasting is not recommended, regional sensitivities should, they argued, be acknowledged.

Regulatory Clarity and Legal Risks

Marine Licensing and GHG Emissions

A28 Several thought clearer guidance was needed on marine licensing and greenhouse gas emissions, particularly in light of the *Finch* case. Legal advice might be required to manage risks around indirect emissions. Legal clarity was needed to mitigate judicial review risk.

Alternatives Assessment

A29 The NPSP should clarify standards for alternatives analysis across all consenting routes, including harbour orders. The TSC recommended that the NPSP ensure consistency in how alternatives are assessed under different regimes.

Monitoring and Implementation

Monitoring Framework

A30 The sustainability monitoring framework should include clear indicators, responsibilities, and regional sensitivity. Findings from the Appraisal of Sustainability (AoS) should inform Harbour Order thresholds. Some respondents to the consultation thought that current monitoring lacks clarity and may defer too much to project level assessments.

Masterplans and Government Signalling

A31 While masterplans are encouraged, their formal weight is limited. Some stakeholders suggested mechanisms for government signalling — such as inclusion in the National Infrastructure Pipeline — to support strategic port development. Masterplans should, some considered, be given formal weight.

Social and Equality Considerations

Equality Impacts

A32 While mandatory Equality Impact Assessments may be disproportionate, some trade unions and regional transport bodies argued that the NPSP should acknowledge equality impacts and promote inclusive access to jobs and services. Respondents highlighted the importance of social cohesion and transport equity, especially for Northern communities.

Visual and Amenity Impacts

A33 Additional vehicle movements and lighting can affect landscape character and amenity. These impacts should be recognised and mitigated, particularly in sensitive coastal areas. Respondents recommended referencing health guidance and mitigating cumulative impacts.

Energy Transition and Clean Infrastructure

Offshore Wind and Clean Energy

A34 The NPSP should explicitly reference ports' role in supporting offshore renewables, CCUS, hydrogen, and sustainable fuels. The UK Chamber of Shipping noted that successful decarbonisation of the shipping sector depends on port infrastructure such as shore power, grid capacity, and alternative fuel bunkering. The Lords echoed this observation, drawing attention to the lack of measures to support alternative fuels, along with necessary shore power for vessels as well as the essential grid upgrades needed. The Lords expended on this and recommended further alignment with proposed international measures such as the IMO net-zero framework and the FuelEU maritime regulation.

Strategic Intervention – Industrial Strategy and ports as a “foundational sector” and “Critical National Priority” status

A35 Stakeholders suggested that ports supporting clean energy may require government intervention due to market failures. While direct locational prioritisation is not recommended, the NPSP could acknowledge the foundational role of ports in the Industrial Strategy. This could help resolve something called the “FLOW gap”, while offshore wind in the NPS EN-3 treats energy infrastructure as a high priority, the ports needed to supply it are not afforded the same designation in the ports NPS. Ports, it is noted, have intensive upgrade demands in order to accommodate this. Here, there was the argument that ports who directly support strategic national priority energy schemes should be afforded the same status as the energy schemes that they support. Both the TSC and the House of Lords Grand Committee felt that the requirements of the offshore wind industry should be accorded higher priority.

Summary

A36 The proposed changes to the draft revised NPSP appeared to reflect a broad consensus: ports are foundational to the UK's economic, environmental, and energy future. Updating the NPSP to reflect these priorities would improve planning certainty, reduce regulatory friction, and support sustainable development. Incorporating the recommendations of the Transport Select Committee and other consultees would ensure the NPSP remains robust, responsive, and aligned with national goals.

Potential recommendations that may not fit the remit of the NPSP

A37 A need was perceived by some for better communication and education for local authorities and smaller ports about the relevant and application of the NPSP, to avoid under-recognition in local planning decisions.

A38 There was a suggested need to look at the way the NPSP relates to transport generally rather than focusing mainly on large infrastructure.

A39 The criticality of connectivity of ports and the NPSP should be emphasised more.

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978-1-5286-6710-4