

# Belfast Harbour to develop £90m deepwater quay for cruise and offshore wind as part of transformative five-year strategy

## Cruise expansion included in bold new vision to advance regional prosperity.

Belfast Harbour has unveiled a bold new strategy which will see its cruise offering enhanced with the development of a new £90m deepwater quay to accommodate some of the world's largest cruise vessels.

The investment – which will also expand the port's capacity and capabilities for offshore wind turbine assembly and installation – forms part of an ambitious programme to invest more than £300m in capital projects across the port and Harbour Estate over the next five years.

Details of the investment were revealed this week at the launch of Belfast Harbour's new five-year strategy. Entitled Advance Regional Prosperity 2025-2029, this outlines the organisation's plans to invest £208m in significant port improvements and £105m in the ongoing regeneration and development of the Harbour Estate and waterfront.

Stage one of the deepwater quay build, which will initially support cruise tourism, is expected to be delivered by 2027-28. Through the project, Belfast Harbour aims to boost cruise tourism to the region, currently worth an estimated £20-25m to the local economy annually.

This will also enable the port to further develop as a hub for 'turnaround' cruises from a state-of-the-art facility. As well as giving a boost to the local economy and providing greater convenience for passengers, this also helps cut down on the environmental impact of cruise. In 2023, Belfast Harbour welcomed for the first time a number of such itineraries by Ambassador Cruise Line.

Since 1996, Belfast Harbour has welcomed more than 1,400 cruise ships carrying almost 2.5 million international passengers and crew. In 2024, Belfast Harbour welcomed 60 ships from 35 different cruise lines, bringing almost 300,000 passengers and crew to Northern Ireland.

The new strategy has four key objectives: to enable economic growth; to develop and improve the port; to create vibrant places to live and work; and to innovate for a better tomorrow – with the overarching objective of accelerating to net zero embedded across all activities, including cruise operations.

This is underpinned by Belfast Harbour's already existing measures towards promoting greater sustainability in its cruise offering, including sourcing zero emissions shuttle buses, significantly reducing waste that is going to landfill from vessels and working with tourism business and cruise stakeholders to measure carbon emissions and develop city decarbonisation plans.

Other goals featured in the new Strategy include increasing engagement with local communities, and further investment in the development of office, retail, hospitality and exhibition space, as well as developing affordable housing within Belfast Harbour Estate. This strategic plan and investment programme follows on from the £374m of investments made by Belfast Harbour in the past decade, to ensure a competitive and resilient port, and developing a vibrant economic hub with connected and inclusive communities across Belfast Harbour Estate.

Gerry Lennon, Chief Executive of Visit Belfast said: "This transformative project strengthens Belfast's position as a world-class cruise destination, paving the way for the future of Cruise Belfast by

accommodating larger vessels and enhancing the visitor experience. The new strategy strengthens our shared commitment to innovation and sustainability and continues to showcase Belfast and the rest of Northern Ireland as a vibrant, forward-thinking place to live, work, visit, and invest, ensuring long-term growth and opportunity for tourism and the economy.”

Dr Theresa Donaldson, Chair of Belfast Harbour Commissioners, said: “Through this strategy Belfast Harbour will continue to contribute to the growth of the NI economy. By investing £313m, we will build on our strengths as the region’s leading port and a vital economic hub, delivering for our customers and tenants. We will continue our pioneering efforts to diversify and decarbonise, helping to reimagine and regenerate the city and bring additional prosperity to the region. Crucially, we will enhance our reputation as a leading port for cruise tourism and leverage our expertise as the only port on the island with offshore wind facilities.

“As a Trust Port, Belfast Harbour reinvests every penny of post-tax profits back into the business and the community, ensuring long-term value for the region. Our investment to date has created jobs, strengthened supply chains, raised sustainability standards and attracted major foreign investors to the city. Our 2025-29 strategy aims to continue this transformation and advance prosperity for the region.”

Joe O’Neill, Chief Executive of Belfast Harbour, said: “Belfast Harbour’s goal is to drive regional prosperity by developing the port and estate, so that everyone benefits. This strategy will see us optimise our strengths, innovate for growth, and invest in new opportunities that meet the needs of our customers, tenants and communities.

“The addition of a new deepwater quay will not only add to the c.300,000 cruise visitors welcomed by Belfast Harbour each year, it also gives us the opportunity to expand our capacity in the assembly and installation of offshore wind. This strategy will put Belfast Harbour at the forefront of the clean energy transition.”

Conor Murphy, Minister for the Economy, said: “I welcome the plans for investment in the Port and the Harbour Estate which Belfast Harbour has detailed in its new strategy. The proposed investments support my department’s strategic objectives of creating good jobs and reaching net zero by 2050 and will provide tangible benefits for the economy. Investment in new facilities that will advance the energy transition, as well as improving the attractiveness of the port as a cruise destination, shows Belfast Harbour’s commitment to generating a prosperous future for all.”