

Harbours Act to be Amended

Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2019

Most relevant to

- Shipping companies, harbor companies anyone shipping goods through major Irish ports



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As a general rule, ships of a particular size need to use "harbour pilots" supplied by the relevant harbour company to sail into, move within and leave major Irish ports. This is for reasons of safety.

However, some captains or masters on ships using ports regularly are very familiar with the ports and provided they pass certain examinations, those seafarers can be given 'pilotage exemption certificates' which enable them to operate their vessels without taking a pilot on board.

The system requires those seafarers to have various national certificates of competency and, in an Irish context, many of those certificates are issued by the UK. However, if the UK leaves the EU then there is a real concern about the validity on those UK certificates of competency

What does the Act say?

Part 9 of the Act would amend the Harbours Act 1996. In essence, the Act, if enacted:

- would allow for 'pilotage exemption certificates' to last for three years instead of the current one year;
- existing holders of these certificates could apply for new certificates up to the 29 March 2019; and
- harbour companies could amend their bye-laws to address the issue.

While the amendment is technical in nature, it has huge strategic significance in terms of keeping roll-on/roll-off vessels (the backbone of the west-to-east trade between Ireland and the UK) operating efficiently and without interruption.