

Title of Report:	Bio-Secure Ports: Setting the Standard for Small Harbour Protection
Committee Report Submitted To:	Environmental Services Committee
Date of Meeting:	14th October 2025
For Decision or For Information	For Information
To be discussed In Committee YES/NO	No

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Climate Change and our Environment
Outcome	Bio-secure Ports at Ballycastle & Rathlin
Lead Officer	Head of Infrastructure

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	March 2027

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	£173,789 Grant Aid plus £33,080
Included in Current Year Estimates	Yes
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	
Staffing Costs	Included.

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the successful grant application to provide Bio-Security at Ports: Setting the Standard for Small Harbour Protection.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Council have been working closely with the RAFT project on Rathlin to eradicate the invasive species of rats and ferrets from Rathlin to protect and grow the declining bird population on the Island. To do so, it is critical to make sure that these invasive species do not return to the island once the RAFT project is complete. Council in partnership with RAFT, RSPB and RDCA agreed to apply for grant aid to assist with the delivery of Bio-security at our Ports in Ballycastle and Rathlin.

An application was submitted to DAERA Environment Fund Challenge Competition on 7th March 2025 for a total project cost of £238,750 over a 3year period. This would entail a contribution from Council of £33,270 from the Harbour and Marina maintenance budget. Significant work went into the funding application from the Funding Development Officer with assistance from the Harbour Master and representatives from the partner organisations.

3.0 Project Details

- 3.1 The project will establish a comprehensive bio-security programme to prevent the reintroduction of invasive species (brown rats and feral ferrets) at Ballycastle and Rathlin Harbours. This will be achieved through the following key actions: Infrastructure & Physical Bio-security Measures (Appendix A)
- Install monitoring stations and digital tracking technology at key entry points.
 - Apply surface repellents in high-risk areas (cargo zones, ferry loading areas).
 - Seal gaps and entry points in harbour infrastructure to prevent rodent access.
 - Implement rodent-proof waste storage and disposal solutions.
 - Maintain invasive species arrivals by 100% within 12 months.
- 3.2 This project strengthens habitat protection and species recovery, aligning with Northern Ireland's 30x30 commitment by: Preventing habitat degradation, protecting and expanding seabird nesting sites, and ensuring long-term ecosystem resilience. By proactively controlling invasive species, the project ensures sustainable conservation, safeguarding Rathlin's biodiversity and meeting the funding targets.

4.0 Timescales

Months 1-2

- Project initiation and engagement.
- Appoint biosecurity team, develop training resources, procure equipment.

Month 3

- Planning application to be prepared, estimated for works in year 2.
- Monitoring & Surveillance
 - Conduct routine inspections of vessels, cargo, and ferry storage.
 - Implement rodent-proof waste management at both harbours by Month 6-9 (storage bins, establish regular waste checks)
 - Establish a rapid response protocol in case of rodent sightings.
 - Deploy motion-triggered cameras to track potential incursions.

Months 3-6

- Procure & install monitoring stations, tracking systems, and apply repellents Public Awareness & Community Engagement (education).
- Host 2 community information sessions per annum with local schools/community groups to include baseline and progress surveys.
- Deliver biosecurity training to minimum 5-10 people within these use groups: ferry operators, harbour staff, and local businesses.

5.0 Outcome

On the 18th September 2025 Council received a letter of offer from DEARA stating they were successful with a total Grant offer of £173,789 over 2 years -

- 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026: Up to £128,789 at up to 86.1% of eligible costs; and
- 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2027: Up to £45,000 at up to 78.55% of eligible costs.

A total Council contribution to the works will be 20,792 + 12,288 = £33,080 which will come out of the Harbour and Marina maintenance budget.

Work will commence as soon as possible.

6.0 Recommendation(s)

- 6.1 It is recommended that Committee notes the report.

Ballycastle Harbour



- Lighting
- Bins
- ⬡ Signage
- Rat Proof Fence
- Waiting for Boarding Parking
- Launching Trailers
- Fences
- Heavy Goods Setdown Area
- Bus Parking
- ▨ Risk Areas

