The United Kingdom Maritime Pilots’ Association has drawn the Transport Committee’s attention to several issues relating to navigational safety in UK ports, which potentially give us cause for concern.

Firstly, it has said that the training regime for pilots at the port of Londonderry is being relaxed, with reliance now being placed on a three-month intensive simulator course rather than experience of navigating vessels in and out of the port. The UKMPA argues that the new training scheme is not adequate and will have a significant impact on navigational, environmental and industrial safety.

Secondly, we have received complaints about the use of inadequately trained pilots at Barrow-in-Furness.

Thirdly, we understand that Peel Ports is replacing its harbour masters with local deputies responsible to a chief harbour master based in north-west England. The UKMPA states that this has already led to one port being left without full harbour master coverage.

The Transport Committee has a longstanding interest in navigational safety and I am very concerned about the matters raised by the UKMPA, which all suggest that the vital role played by marine pilots in protecting maritime safety is being undermined. We would be very interested to hear your observations on these issues.

Yours sincerely,

Louise Ellman MP
Chair of the Transport Committee