

The background of the page is a photograph of a large, dark industrial crane structure, possibly a gantry crane, silhouetted against a bright sky with scattered white clouds. The sun is visible as a bright, glowing orb behind the crane's upper section, creating a lens flare effect. The crane's lattice structure is intricate and extends vertically across the frame. In the lower left, the silhouettes of other smaller crane structures are visible.

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History & Development

The first quay in Belfast was established at the confluence of the Rivers Lagan and Farset, however, access in the early 1600s to and from the quay proved to be navigationally tortuous for nearly two centuries. The development of the Port of Belfast took a significant turn in 1785, when a new body was established to manage the affairs of the Port under the title of "The Corporation for preserving and improving the Port & Harbour of Belfast". The Corporation, mindful of the shortcomings of the existing Port, realised that bold steps were necessary for future development and embarked upon a comprehensive large-scale improvement of the Port.

For the next 30 years, attempts to open new channels were frustrated by lack of finances and appropriate powers. Despite the limitations of these early wharfs and quays, a secure economic platform for the Port of Belfast was created which enabled local industries such as linen and rope-making to flourish and attracted prosperous new industries such as shipbuilding.

The beginning of the year 1830 marked the dawn of a new era destined to elevate Belfast from a position of comparative insignificance to a point where it ranked as one of the best equipped Ports of the United Kingdom. In 1839, the long overdue cutting of a new channel was commenced using steam engines. Completed two years later, the new channel was opened with a depth of 3 metres; the spoil from the cutting was then used to create a 7-hectare island – 'Queen's Island' – which has become synonymous with Shipbuilding.

In 1847 a new Body was constituted to control the Port of Belfast – The Belfast Harbour Commissioners. The Harbour Commissioners remain today as the Custodians of the Port of Belfast, ensuring the continued growth of the Port's capabilities and underpinning the development of regional trade.