

## Coronavirus Implications: People and Crew

With the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, the Chamber's policy team has undergone a temporary change in its structure. It has been divided into five specific areas to deal with the key issues relating to the outbreak which need to be represented by the Chamber to the Government and others as appropriate.

Tim Springett and Robert Carington are dealing with all matters relating to People and Crew.

The Chamber, through its contacts with members, other stakeholders and Government, has identified the following key issues affecting this area, actions taken by Government and has highlighted areas where it can work with other organisations to lobby on relevant issues.

The list of these items can be found below:

### Key issues

<b>Facilitation of seafarer travel, crew changes and shore leave</b>	
16.03.2020	Member company reports that Polish crew members of an offshore vessel who are due to be relieved and repatriated can in theory go home, but their replacements cannot leave Poland to join the ship. Hence the crew that is currently on the ship are being kept on board, whilst their replacements are being denied the opportunity to work and earn a living.
16.03.2020	Philippines' Government announces domestic travel restrictions but measures to facilitate movement of seafarers
	Government of Australia is requiring all seafarers leaving their ships in Australian ports to be quarantined for 14 days on arrival and preventing them from leaving Australia until this period has elapsed. This applies irrespective of whether a seafarer is showing Coronavirus symptoms. If the seafarer has self-isolated on board since the preceding port call, the quarantine period may be reduced by the number of days spent in self isolation on board.
23.03.2020	Shipping Minister writes to Secretaries-General of IMO, ILO and WHO stating that the UK is committed to keeping its ports open, facilitating seafarer movement and crew changes, permitting any sick seafarers on ships calling at UK ports access to medical treatment and providing access to shore leave for ships' crews. Letter also calls upon the three organisations to encourage other states to follow suit.
25.03.2020	Meeting of European transport ministers
26.03.2020	European Commission has issued a recommendation to Member States – which include the UK during the transition period – that they take action to ensure the free movement within the EU of all workers involved in international transport in all transport modes, including seafarers. In particular, rules such as travel restrictions and mandatory quarantine of transport workers not displaying symptoms should be waived. Norway has already introduced procedures to enable the movement of seafarers.
27.03.2020	Singapore and Hong Kong announced bans on crew changes – Hong Kong for an initial period of 14 days, Singapore indefinitely

27.03.2020	IMO issues Circular Letter 4204/Add.6 containing a preliminary list of recommendations for governments and relevant national authorities on the facilitation of maritime trade during the Covid-19 pandemic. Amongst its recommendations are measures to facilitate crew changes in ports, including: designate professional seafarers and marine personnel, regardless of nationality, when in their jurisdiction, as "key workers" providing an essential service; grant professional seafarers and marine personnel with exemptions from national travel or movement restrictions in order to let them join/leave ships; and implement appropriate approval and screening protocols for seafarers seeking to disembark ships for the purposes of crew changes and repatriation
29.03.2020	Singapore announces partial lifting of ban on crew changes
08.04.2020	European Commission publishes communication entitled "Guidelines on protection of health, repatriation and travel arrangements for seafarers, passengers and other persons on board ships" which is warmly welcomed by the Chamber, other shipowner association and the trade unions and will be used to lobby EU Member States.

<b>Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme</b>	
21.03.2020	Announcement of scheme by Chancellor of the Exchequer. Purpose is to enable UK employers to furlough employees who would otherwise be made redundant, so that they remain as employees. Government will pay 80% of a furloughed employee's employment costs, subject to a max of £2,500 pcm.
22.03.2020	First enquiry from a member whether UK seafarers who are employed offshore – which is the overwhelming majority – will benefit from it.
26.03.2020	Chamber sends a joint letter with the unions Nautilus International and RMT to Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Shipping Minister requesting confirmation that UK seafarers employed by offshore employers will be eligible to have their employment and earnings protected under the Job Retention Scheme.
26.03.2020	Government issues further details of the JRS, confirming that it will be open to any UK organisation with employees can apply if they have a PAYE payroll scheme that was operational on or before 28 February 2020 as well as a UK bank account.
30.03.2020	Government announces that scheme will additionally cover the associated employer National Insurance contributions and minimum automatic enrolment employer pension contributions on subsidised wages
31.03.2020	DfT advises Chamber that it is prioritising the matter and its officials are liaising with HMT to gain clarification
04.04.2020	New Government advice makes no reference to any requirement for an employer to be based in the UK to be eligible. The only requirements are that the employer created and started a PAYE payroll scheme on or before 28 February 2020, are enrolled for PAYE online and have a UK bank account. The advice also states for the first time that overseas nationals are eligible for support.
08.04.2020	Discussions continuing with DfT on how to cover seafarers employed by offshore companies that don't have PAYE payroll schemes.

<b>Inclusion of seafarers in the Key Worker classification for attending school</b>	
	Seafarers, in common with all transport workers were included in the key worker definition for the purposes of continuing to attend school, following discussions with the Chamber. The definition covers all maritime and all roles, whether they are working for UK companies or non-UK companies. However it is apparent that in some parts of the UK, schools are claiming that both parents must be key workers for their children to be permitted to attend school.

<b>Seafarers' Earnings Deduction</b>	
18.03.2020	The Chamber is aware of seafarers who are being prevented from joining their ships or have been issued with notices of redundancy and who will not now clear the 183 day threshold for SED. HMRC has so far been less than helpful, telling seafarers that the rules will be rigidly enforced. There is no sliding scale for SED – a seafarer either qualifies for a full rebate or no rebate at all. The Chamber is considering the best means of raising this issue with the Government. It must do so carefully as it is essential that we do not lose the scheme.

<b>Poaching of crew</b>	
	The Chamber has received some reports of poaching of their crew members by operators in different sectors from their own, as seafarers have been stranded by travel restrictions and operators have resorted to desperate measures to find replacements.
06.04.2020	Consideration being given to establishing a “jobs board” to put companies who are unable to source their regular crew members in touch with seafarers who are unemployed, have been made redundant or have been scheduled to join ships but are prevented from doing so by travel restrictions.

<b>Statutory sick pay</b>	
19.03.2020	Government's Coronavirus Bill contains a provision under which the Government funding of employers' liabilities by Government. This should apply in respect of seafarers engaged in home trades and UK shore-based personnel of shipping companies.

<b>Training and cadets</b>	
	Completing Sea time is currently impossible, except for cadets or ratings who are prevented from disembarking by current port restrictions, or company decisions to suspend crew changes. Those waiting to join vessels will have difficulty getting their training back on track over the coming 6-12 months. The impact of delaying training on companies will be huge financially and will likely have an impact on the number of cadets recruited 2020/21. Companies will be required to extend

	their training commitment for many of their cadets well past the original finish date to ensure their cadets achieve the correct amount of sea time and complete their underpinning knowledge.
26.03.2020	Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) wrote to the Government asking for some of the funding set aside for SMarT Plus placements to be reallocated to assist trainees and their sponsoring companies and to extend the time available for the completion of training.

<b>Statutory Annual Leave</b>	
	MCA consulted the Chamber and the unions on whether the rule requiring that the 38 days' statutory annual leave to which seafarers are entitled be taken in the year that it accrues should continue to be enforced. MCA is aware that some seafarers have had to remain on board because of restrictions on crew changes etc. as a result of the pandemic. The Chamber responded stating that it should not be enforced whilst restrictions on crew changes continued to apply. However the unions requested that MCA put safeguards in place to ensure that the relaxation of the requirement was not abused. A response from MCA is awaited.
08.04.2020	MCA issued draft statement for consultation, permitting statutory leave to be exceptionally carried over until the following year.

<b>Seafarers to be allowed to continue to serve on board even if their certificates of competency/proficiency or medical certificates have expired</b>	
	A circular from IMO, calling on governments to relax their requirements in order to keep ships moving, is expected imminently
12.03.2020	MCA issues not extending validity of certificates and accepting alternative means of revalidating.

<b>New EU restrictions on exports of medical supplies</b>	
19.03.2020	It was noted that the EU had introduced a ban on exports of medical supplies and equipment. Initially it was feared that it might prevent ships from obtaining their required medical stores.
20.03.2020	Following enquiries, the European Commission confirmed that ships' medical supplies are exempted from the new restrictions

<b>Reduced cost or free internet access for crews on ships</b>	
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23.03.2020	International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) wrote to Inmarsat and KVH to ask that they provide seafarers serving on board ships with the ability to communicate with their family members free of charge or at reduced costs, particularly where crew have had to remain on board for longer than they had expected.
24.03.2020	KVH responded that they would ensure that calls to the ISWAN helpline could be made free of charge, but did not offer any other concessions.

<b>Ship Sanitation Control Certificates</b>	
20.03.2020	Chamber, through ECSA and ICS, is lobbying the World Health Organisation to permit the validity period of Ship Sanitation Control and Exemption Certificates to be extended beyond the current maximum of six months. It has pointed out that the number of visitors to ships must be kept to a minimum and the risk of coronavirus being brought on board reduced as much as possible
24.03.2020	EU-funded Health Gateways publishes draft guidance on Ship Sanitation Certificates. ECSA persuades Healthy Gateways to await official statement from WHO.
09.04.2020	ECSA reports that Healthy Gateways expects WHO statement to be issued in week following Easter

<b>Restricted access to port services for seafarers and for ship visitors/Chaplains/Reps</b>	
	Port welfare workers are reporting that their services are increasingly less available to seafarers as a result of Government policies in different countries to close establishments and apply social distancing measures
	Port welfare providers are undertaking virtual ship visits using remote communications where they have been unable to meet seafarers in person. The virtual visits have been well received and greatly appreciated by seafarers.

<b>Advice for seafarers returning home with symptoms following sea service</b>	
	Any travellers returning to the UK who feel unwell with either a high temperature or new continuous cough are required to self-isolate for seven days if they live alone. If they live with others, the whole household is requested to isolate for 14 days. These procedures apply equally to seafarers. However, there is no mandatory quarantining of seafarers, unlike in some countries where this is being applied.
07.04.2020	Haukeland University Hospital Norway publishes tool for management of Covid-19 cases on board ships <a href="https://helsebergen.youwell.no/public/1c04449c-efd4-4e54-e322-08d7ca7f5a17/module/1/task/0">https://helsebergen.youwell.no/public/1c04449c-efd4-4e54-e322-08d7ca7f5a17/module/1/task/0</a>

### **Interaction with other organisations and countries**

- 1) Working through BROA liaising with OGUK on the ports access for rigs and offshore vessels in Scotland, with OGUK leading on HSE stuff and representing COS to improve efficiency.
- 2) Working with Ports on Key Worker definition
- 3) Working with the unions on the Job Retention Scheme and whether it covers UK seafarers employed offshore.

**If members have any questions relating to the foregoing, or if there are any other areas which members wish to raise, please contact either [TSpringett@ukchamberofshipping.com](mailto:TSpringett@ukchamberofshipping.com) or [RCarington@ukchamberofshipping.com](mailto:RCarington@ukchamberofshipping.com)**