



MERCHANT NAVY WELFARE BOARD

**NOTES OF THE COVID-19 SEAFARERS' WELFARE WORKING GROUP (COVID-19 SWWG)
VIDEOCONFERENCE MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 8th April 2020**

PRESENT:	Mr Peter Tomlin (Chairman)	MNWB
	Revd Ijeoma Ajibade (IA)	Mission to Seafarers (MtS)
	Mr Neil Atkinson (NA)	Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)
	Ms Mary Barber (MB)	Fishermen's Mission (FM)
	Ms Rachel Brown (RB)	Department for Transport (DfT)
	Capt. Andrew Cassels (AC)	MNWB
	Mr Alex Campbell (AC)	Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest (QVSR)/Tilbury SC
	Valerie Coleman (VC)	Maritime Charities Group (MCG)
	Ms Lynette Crossley (LC)	Manchester Port Health Authority (MPHA)
	Cdre David Dickens (DD)	Fishermen's Mission (FM)
	Mr Phil Dreeling (PD)	Department for Transport (DfT)
	Mr Martin Foley (MF)	Stella Maris (SM)
	Mr Roger Harris (RH)	Int. Seafarers' Welfare Assistance Network (ISWAN)
	Mr Graham Hockley (GH)	MCG
	Mr Mick Howarth (MH)	Nautilus Welfare Fund (NWF)
	Mr John Lowry (JL)	Seamen's Christian Friend Society (SCFS)
	Mr Ken McLean (KM)	IMarEst Guild of Benevolence (IMarEst)
	Miss Victoria Muir (VM)	Trinity House (TH)
	Mr Justin Osmond (JO)	Shipwrecked Mariners' Society (SMS)
	Ms Carla Rockson (CR)	Marine Society (MS)
	Capt John Sail (JS)	Merchant Navy Association (MNA)
	Mr Tim Springett (TS)	UK Chamber of Shipping (UK CoS)
	Mrs Deanne Thomas (DT)	Sailors' Children's Society (SCS)
	Mr Stuart Ware (SW)	Restore Support Network)
	Ms Lysanne Wilson (LW)	Seafarers' Hospital Society (SHS)

The meeting opened at 11.00am. The Chairman reminded members that the working group provides a useful two-way communications route between government, industry, maritime charities and local Port Welfare Committees around the UK. Useful links and notes from the meetings would be posted on the MNWB COVID-19 Maritime Resources web page <https://www.mnwb.org/maritime-updates> Members provided COVID-19 specific updates on their respective organisations as follows:

TS, UK CoS – Main concern at the moment is facilitation of seafarer movement, becoming increasingly difficult with port closures and big reductions in availability of flights home. £75 million UK repatriation package, not specifically for seafarers but we are pushing for them, and seafarers abroad not to be forgotten. IMO circular has called on ILO members to treat all seafarers as key workers, keep ports open and allow seafarer movement. Singapore, Hong Kong and Dubai recently announced bans on crew changes which have now been partially lifted. Working on 'repatriation hubs' to achieve progressive re-opening of ports and means of transport for seafarers so that some major ports of the world re-establish commercial flights in sufficient numbers to allow ships to dock, crew changes and ensure adequate health screening available on site. If resources concentrated in certain ports to begin with then progressively other ports could re-open - discussions ongoing. ECSA (European Community Shipowners' Association) and ETF calling on member states to adopt co-ordinated approach to ensure seafarer movement. Useful initiatives for cross border workers, e.g. lorry drivers, include establishment of 'green lanes', suggestion of 'blue lanes' for seafarers'. Countries including Belgium, Netherlands and Germany possibly relaxing some restrictions to enable seafarers to

leave/rejoin ships. Seeking co-ordinated approach which will hopefully become more widespread. Restrictions in some countries much more severe than the UK where crew changes for short sea shipping generally able to take place without too much trouble. UK encouraging companies to ensure that seafarers have letters from their employers to show at check points. Initial advice from government that job retention scheme was available to UK businesses but vast majority of seafarers employed by offshore companies. CoS, Nautilus and RMT wrote joint letter to Chancellor of Exchequer and Shipping Minister. Revised advice published, reference to 'UK business' removed which implies that businesses based offshore could be eligible and stated for first time that foreign nationals could be furloughed. Also implies that seafarers could be part of scheme but not complete answer – watch this space. TS to liaise with LC outside of meeting TSpringett@ukchamberofshipping.com

RH, ISWAN – Meetings with ITF, ICS and WHO held weekly, main issue being crew changes. Beginning to use seafarers' emergency fund which has substantial funding from TK Foundation, ITF Seafarers' Trust and Seafarers UK. Update on group of 80-100 Indian seafarers (not cadets) who were furthering qualifications in the UK, now trying to get home – thanked members for offers of help last week, particularly Nautilus International whose welfare worker is in touch with the Southampton group. Still trying to work out their exact status and how we can support them; they don't have enough to pay rent, are being fed by local Indian community and landlord attempted to evict them. Indian High Commission in touch with them but may not fund them. Lots of calls on Seafarer Help helpline, concerns about families back home in India and Phillipines. Criteria to apply for emergency fund on website: <https://www.seafarerswelfare.org/relief-funds/seafarers-emergency-fund>

NA, MCA – Approx. 3,500 Indian seafarers on cruise ships in Southampton and Dover, some of those in Southampton have coronavirus. Trying to repatriate them but India has closed its borders. Lots of new guidance coming out, MLC covers what ship owners expected to be doing. ILO just produced info on Covid-19 this morning. Guidance for shipping and sea ports on Covid-19 on gov.uk covers pre-embarkation/disembarkation checks and processes. Meeting later today between DfT and Public Health England to discuss Covid-19 in general. Also, meeting about PPE for seafarers and port workers. Keeping pragmatic approach for vessel and crew certification. Seafarers designated in the UK as key workers but there are problems in the Aberdeen area with trips being extended on North Sea supply ships. Most cruise ships now laid up with majority of crew to be repatriated.

LC, MPH – Small ports receiving very little guidance and info, would welcome more advice. Arrangements for issuing sanitation certificates sorted out now. Ro-ro ships going into Hull, experiencing difficulties with crew changes as some crew are ill, taking up cabin space and leading to crew shortages – needs to be flagged up. Ferries coming into Hull last weekend with casinos and bars still open, causing concerns to crew. Concerns over ships not able to dock alongside, therefore unable to get provisions including disinfectant for deep cleaning. Some onboard medical supplies out of date, concerns over how to get these up to date. Also concerns on crew changes. Comments or advice would be gratefully received at lynnettecrossley@manchesterpha.org.uk

AC, QVSR/TSC – Trying to get the right PPE in place. Dealing with repatriation issue for Filipino resident injured onboard ship.

CR, MS – Happy to share any information on offers of support for seafarers from members. Have £20K available to work with another charity to offer support to seafarers undergoing hardship at this particular time (normally just support seafarers' education). Fund ideally for UK seafarers but could make exceptions. Please contact Carla crockson@ms-sc.org

DD, FM – A lot of FM load being passed to SAIL. Starting to see more and different cases coming forward, spreading beyond the smaller boats. The Scottish Hardship Fund for under 12s seems to be missing and the neediest. Very grateful for work done with SHS, SM and SCS in getting revised, streamlined arrangements in place, working well. Also grateful to bulk grants

from SM and Trinity House. Starting to see green shoots, could be due to demand for fish over Easter. Public health issue, people confined to very small and old fishing boats. Also migrant issues with visas, contracts and leave to remain status all remain unresolved. Public health is devolved, real problem is smaller ports, would be helpful if someone could go back into government and get some form of consistency of approach as far as public health restrictions on seafarers around the UK rather than it being left to individual port authorities. **Action: NA**

GH, MCG – MCG is wide ranging group, covers all seafaring issues. TK Foundation and ITF Seafarers' Trust recently joined the group. Key outputs from Monday's meeting: agreed to share procedures used between SM, SHS and SCS so that funding charities have confidence that proper processes being followed. Next meeting a week on Monday and will be putting out statement on behalf of the group highlighting what is being done and what is going to be done. The MCG has allowed better connectivity between funding charities in last few days which is planned to be continued.

DT, SCS – Provided support to 150 children of FF/MN families over last 3 weeks, over £30K spent out of total coronavirus response on 530 children and £87K. 3 applications for assistance on fishing side every day, providing as much support as we can and working with partners. Facebook page continues to be very well used – please note anyone can look at it for activities and advice for families across the UK. Will be launching emotional support private group through Facebook this week which will be monitored and run by two SCS family support officers who are trained in child protection, safeguarding, bereavement etc. Joint funding to applicants needs to keep moving forward. At this time we all need to chip in and help as much as we can.

IA, MtS – Still ship visiting by request, on gangways, observing safety requirements, masks etc, except in Felixstowe. Launching digital chaplaincy this week, seafarers will be able to make contact through MtS and ICMA websites. Other societies will be invited to get involved. Seafarers will be able to make contact using messenger, and can have conversation with a Chaplain through the website, will be 24 hour service and information will be on the website. Chaplains all around the world will be participating. Exploring possibility to furlough some part-time centre staff working on the bar or in admin as centres are closed.

(Members noted that ITF Seafarers' Trust and TK Foundation don't want to see seafarers' centres closed and not re-opening after the crisis, they are prepared to help as necessary).

JL, SCFS - Chaplains using iPads to interact with seafarers. If we are able to source funding to provide iPads to rest of our members across Europe and the Philippines we could do so much more. Has access to large laser cutter and could make Perspex element of face shields if provided with the Perspex.

JS, MNA – Cancelled all meetings and events until 2021, have advised all members, majority aged over 60. Branches making calls to members, they are all in our thoughts. Encouraged by Seafarers UK emergency £100k grant. Referenced Inmarsat discounting crew voice calls: <https://maritime-executive.com/corporate/inmarsat-supports-seafarers-with-free-covid-19-video-call-service?fbclid=IwAR3OqOD6tp-6w8FIYbbmlqHHs903jBlrWc7ytMbsxwSIFHzx8puanalSdnE>

JO, SM – Pace of applications picking up. Re. coverage for international seafarers trapped in the UK: need to understand whether a charity on the ground is taking that issue on or whether there is money available and arrangements need to be put in place for an individual grant making charity to administer such support to people caught in those situations. Between us we need to understand this. Funds are required to address the needs we see emerging, whether that is for UK or international seafarers. Another emerging, or not fully understood, issue is how we are going to manage people who fall through the net of not being entitled to any support – there is ongoing discussion between frontline charities making grants as to how we address that.

LW, SHS – Very busy but not overwhelmed at this stage, mainly from fishing families for urgent living costs. Process agreed between FM, SM, SCS and SHS in terms of process to speed up applications and grant donations. Happy to share if members want to see this, contact: lysannewilson@seahospital.org.uk Partnership meeting with SAIL and the funders this afternoon to discuss support that can be offered. They have a little bit more capacity, two staff members agreed to work an extra day each and new member of staff starting from Greenwich CAB, today or yesterday. Calls mainly from fishermen enquiring what benefits they could be eligible to apply for.

MF, SM – Carnival UK have approached SM to help support their crew on the South coast as the ships come in.

MH, NWF – Number of residents at Mariners Park showing potential symptoms of Covid-19. In full PPE mode, getting hold of supplies is problematic. Of particular concern is getting hold of face masks and eye protection. Last Friday, government shielding guidance for domiciliary care changed, now full PPE is needed for those visiting or providing care to those who have received shielding letter, potentially depleting supplies. Caseworking – small number of working seafarers contacting the service, using our skills and knowledge to assist in cases where we might not normally.

VM, TH - Applications for emergency funds being turned around quickly. Examining budget for this year to see where we may make savings elsewhere to move across to grant budget, looking at all options to address the need. There will be a statement going on the website.

PD/RB, DfT – For PPE issues and seafarers' welfare and rights during Covid-19 please contact Phil.Dreeling@dft.gov.uk or John.Cousley@dft.gov.uk

Information received from John Cousley on new guidance published Tuesday night:

Overall guidance on social distancing in the workplace (including use of flexi glass screens, shift patterns, staff canteens etc). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19#social-distancing-in-the-workplace---principles>

Sector specific guidance - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance>

SW, RSN – Announcing two Covid-19 Emergency helplines for the over-60s in prison and nearing release date. You can phone the following numbers for a chat if you are nearing your release date and worried about coronavirus. You can also call these numbers between 9.00 and 17.00 Monday to Friday when you get out and return to your local community:

0300 102 1032 – For the over 60s with health and social care needs.

0300 102 1033 – For former seafarers with health and social care needs (ex-Merchant Navy, fishing fleet and other commercial shipping) and older veterans (former armed forces)

Freephone numbers are for seafarers in the criminal justice system. They may have been released, be in prison, or coming up for release, both men and women returning to local communities. Some being released will be homeless, isolated and needing support. Many probation officers working in isolation from home. All the indications from my care and justice networks are that we are in for a long-haul, probably another year or two. This means we will need to apply for two years Covid-19 funding. Would be grateful if members can point me towards any grants that I might apply for the helpline to take us through to 2021/2022. I have already made three applications for six months emergency grants. Contact stuart.ware@restoresupportnetwork.org.uk

Post meeting update received from Chris Rankin re. Care Ashore (CA):

Everybody still healthy and well and compliant with the Covid-19 Risk assessment. New area outside for therapeutic project. Staff supervising and accompanying people to medical appointments is extra work but paying off as there is confidence that they are not straying whilst off site. Masks and gloves being worn off site. Chef providing hot meals to any resident who requires one and all beneficiaries have a form to fill in should they need shopping outside of their on-line deliveries. Grant secured for homeless fisherman taken in one month ago for clothes, shoes, clothes and a fridge for his room. He is doing well, being given lots of extra support and encouraged to take up activities. Grants from SHS and Trinity house towards additional recreation and a grant from ITF to use to renovate laundry.

PT, MNWB – MNWB seafarers' welfare conference scheduled for June and due to be attended by the Shipping Minister has been cancelled.

Closing Remark - Members to forward any links, extra information and note amendments to Celia celia@mnwb.org.uk Meeting format to remain flexible. Members content to continue meeting on a weekly basis. Apologies for any unintended inaccuracies. Members agreed that meeting notes could be centrally displayed on the MNWB website.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 15th April 2020 at 11:00