



MERCHANT NAVY WELFARE BOARD

NOTES OF THE SEAFARERS' WELFARE – CRISIS WORKING GROUP VIDEOCONFERENCE MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 8TH JUNE 2022

PRESENT: Mr Stuart Rivers (Chair)	MNWB
Mr David Appleton (DA)	Nautilus International (NI)
Mrs Ruth Campbell (ACL)	QVSR/London Tilbury
Mr John Cousley (JC)	Department for Transport (DfT)
Mr Martin Foley (MF)	Stella Maris (SM)
Cllr Ian Hodge (IH)	Merchant Navy Association (MNA)
Ms Barbara Kidd (BK)	Sailors' Society (SaSo)
Ms Gwen Lancaster (GL)	Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)
Miss Victoria Muir (VM)	Trinity House (TH)
Ms Carla Rockson (CR)	Marine Society (MS)
Ms Laura Simons (LS)	Maritime Charities Group (MCG)
Mr Tim Springett (TS)	UK Chamber of Shipping (UK CoS)

The meeting opened at 11.00am. The Chair reported that the situation following the University of Nottingham Rights Lab report into the abuse of migrant fishers remained ongoing. MNWB planned to establish a WG focused on the fishing sector and the specific issues raised in the report. MNWB and The Fishermen's Mission (TFM) have produced a C188 Guide in consultation with TFM, MCA, NI and the Fishing Industry Safety Group (FISG) which would be available next week. The guide provides a summary of key elements of the UK legislation on the International Convention on Work in Fishing. The Chair was also pleased to report on the £2 million grant fund launched by the Board to support front-line welfare providers and to invest in skills in the maritime sector. The grants platform was now live: [Grants to Organisations : Merchant Navy Welfare Board \(mnwb.org\)](https://www.mnwb.org) To date, the Board has issued 5,456 SIM cards to be distributed to Ukrainian seafarers, with around 2,500 remaining. If more are needed, the Board will negotiate with Vodafone who are keen to support Ukrainian seafarers with this project. As the SIM cards have a six month validity, an initial surge in demand was expected which would then drop off. Front-line service providers are encouraged to contact Aiden Harvey, MNWB Projects & Welfare Co-ordinator aiden@mnwb.org.uk if they require additional SIMs.

JC, DfT – The main issue continues to be Ukraine and the impact of Russian sanctions on seafarers. The advice from the Department's lawyers is generally to take independent legal advice for each individual case as the way the sanctions are drafted is fairly broad. There has reportedly been an issue with seafarers accessing shore leave which has been connected to the Russia/Ukraine crisis. Border Force have reportedly been preventing access to shore leave to seafarers who do not have the correct documentation. JC would like to hear from members if this is still the case so that DfT can liaise with Border Force. Decisions are likely to be made by Border Force officials on a case by case basis, according to their interpretation of advice, rather than there being a national policy. Covid – There have been no further updates from DHSC on the certification of vaccinations for seafarers; DfT is continuing to work with them on this. There are now less people working on the DHSC Covid response team than previously. Still looking at the issue of the Gibraltar hub which is proving difficult due to logistics; unable to get indemnity from the vaccine providers until it is known how the vaccine will be transported to Gibraltar and arrangements for vaccines to be transported to Gibraltar cannot be made until there is indemnity. Trying to find a way around this issue with FCDO and DHSC.

GL, MCA – Surveys and inspections are continuing, still working through the P&O vessels. Ukraine – cases are being dealt with on an ad hoc basis. On the case of shore leave involving the ferry at Tyne, this has not been reported directly to MCA but has been discussed internally with DfT.

TS, UK CoS – Having spoken with Border Force and the company concerned, TS understands that the situation regarding shore leave for the Ukrainian ferry crew members has now eased. Border Force was looking for a consistent approach across the UK and one which was more in line with Aberdeen where Ukrainian seafarers were reportedly being allowed to take shore leave or voyage leave ashore in the UK. TS hopes that the information provided to members on which Russian banks were still functioning for payment of salaries to Russian seafarers was useful and was still applicable. Members were encouraged to let TS know if the information had changed and he would refer back to his contact who had initially provided this information. At the recent special tripartite committee in Geneva, 8 amends had been adopted to the MLC. As of last week, the ILO general conference has approved all of those amends which will take effect as scheduled in accordance with the standard ILO processes (probably in two and a half years' time). It is hoped that there will not be any objections raised by any ratifying States. TS understands from the ICS vaccination task group that the question of official certification of seafarers' vaccinations is moving slowly towards a resolution. It is hoped that there will be an internationally recognised document.

DA, NI – Main issue is how sanctions are affecting yacht members in terms of payment of wages and whether their employment by an agency is deemed to be providing a service.

VM, TH – Business as usual. Working closely with MS and MCG on the Redundancy & Retraining bursary and waiting to see if more funds need to be released for this.

LS, MCG – Applications are still coming in for the Redundancy & Retraining bursary. Applications picked up when the fund was extended at the end of March. In April there were 7 applications from ex-P&O workers, including one who was on a contract. The MCG conference is scheduled for 6th September. The Maritime Minister will open the conference and the overall topic will be about collaboration in a time of crisis.

CR, MS – The Redundancy & Retraining Fund has received 99 applications overall; 7 applications were approved for May. The numbers are steady but not the huge influx anticipated from P&O crew. Half of the applications received in May were from P&O and the other half from other organisations. The Coming Ashore programme continues to support seafarers who are interested in transitioning into a shore side role within the maritime sector. MS has been inundated with requests for funding for the Green Skills Bursary.

IH, MNA – The MNA are focusing on next Tuesday's Falkland's 40 event. A service for the MN will take place in the morning and the Remembrance Service will be held in the afternoon. This will include a live link to Port Stanley. The organisation for the MN Day celebrations in Trinity Gardens is well underway. Post Covid, new members are signing up for the MNA.

MF, SM – Work continues as usual.

BK, SaSo – Business as usual, ship visiting continues in all regions. The 3 Chaplains in Ukraine are working through a steady stream of small grant applications, predominantly from Odessa. Contacts and conversations over the helpline continue.

RC, Tilbury SC – Business as usual, visiting ships and supporting Ukrainian seafarers and others.

Post-meeting update from Simon Grainge, ISWAN - The Ukraine Crisis Support Fund remains paused to new applications. ISWAN has received further financial support from TSC and TK Foundation so should be able to process all the applications already received. The fund will only be opened up to new applicants if significant funding comes in so as to avoid raising expectations unnecessarily.

Post-meeting update from Tina Barnes, The Seafarers' Charity - On 1st June, TSC trustees agreed further funding of £136,700 to support the Ukraine Crisis Hardship Fund managed by

ISWAN. Of this amount £40,315 was awarded from the Seafarers International Relief Fund (SIRF) with TSC contributing £96,385 from its own grant funds to support seafarers and their families impacted by the Ukraine crisis.

Closing Remark – Members to forward any links, extra information and note amendments to Celia celia@mnwb.org.uk Notes from the meetings to be posted on the MNWB website [Ukraine and P&O Ferries : Merchant Navy Welfare Board \(mnwb.org\)](#) Meeting format to remain flexible.

Members agreed to change the frequency of the Crisis meetings to monthly.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 6th July at 11:00.

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