



MERCHANT NAVY WELFARE BOARD

NOTES OF THE COVID-19 SEAFARERS' WELFARE WORKING GROUP (COVID-19 SWWG) VIDEOCONFERENCE MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 13th May 2020

PRESENT: Mr Peter Tomlin (Chairman)	MNWB
Mr David Appleton (DA)	Nautilus International (NI)
Mr Neil Atkinson (NA)	Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)
Mr Ben Bailey (BB)	Mission to Seafarers (MtS)
Mr Vincent Bick (VB)	Care Ashore (CA)
Mr Alex Campbell (ACL)	Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest (QVSR)/Tilbury SC
Ms Lynette Crossley (LC)	Manchester Port Health Authority (MPHA)
Cdre David Dickens (DD)	Fishermen's Mission (FM)
Mr Martin Foley (MF)	Stella Maris (SM)
Mr Roger Harris (RH)	Int. Seafarers' Welfare Assistance Network (ISWAN)
Mr Mick Howarth (MH)	Nautilus Welfare Fund (NWF)
Ms Deborah Layde (DL)	Seafarers UK (SfUK)
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)
Mr Andrew Pitcher (AP)	Sailors' Society (SaSo)
Mrs Christine Rankin (CR)	The Watch Ashore (WA)
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)

The meeting membership and Chair expressed their condolences and sadness over the passing of The Revd Canon Ken Peters who many members knew and worked with for many years.

The meeting opened at 11.00am. The Chairman reminded members that the working group provided 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 – Concerned about possible quarantine requirements for seafarers arriving into the UK. Expecting special arrangements for seafarers although it is not yet clear whether there will be an outright exception or other procedure in place. Once there is an announcement, it will be publicised and the CoS will engage with the Home Office to agree what evidence a seafarer arriving in the UK will need to provide to confirm their status as such so that they are not included in any quarantine requirements. The CoS has been actively involved in the job retention scheme along with the trade unions. When the scheme was initially announced a joint letter was written calling for seafarers who are employed in offshore companies to be included in the scheme. However, there are still many seafarers, possibly thousands, who are not covered by either the job retention scheme or the self-employed income support scheme. The CoS and the unions have written jointly to the Chancellor and the Maritime Minister asking for this to be looked at to ensure that seafarers are not left without any support. Awaiting further

action on this. Internationally, looking to make progress with the IMO protocols that were drafted by ICS and other stakeholders calling for governments worldwide to re-establish transport links to enable crew changes to take place. Seeing some progress on this within Europe, dependent on willingness of member states to co-operate but seeing increasing signs that they are prepared to do so.

DA, NI – Would expect there to be exemption regarding facilitation of seafarer travel but awaiting more detail and confirmation on this. Over the weekend an article on the BBC website estimated that 2,000 UK seafarers are currently stuck at sea awaiting repatriation. Mark Dickinson was quoted, very positive that the maritime industry is now receiving mainstream public attention and that the plight of seafarers is becoming headline news. The CoS and the unions have urged the UK to sign up and publicly state that they will implement the protocols referred to by TS. ITF and shipowners have agreed a further extension to seafarers' contracts from 15th May to 15th June, as an implementation period for the protocols rather than an extension to the contracts. Still receiving lots of enquiries.

ACL, QVSR/TSC – No further major incidents to report, awaiting second wave of testing results for 150 residents. Public health tactic is to test on a fortnightly basis. TSC – Concerns about the welfare of cruise ship crews, a large number have been laid up in Tilbury and are unable to get home. Crew no longer receiving tips through their work onboard. Would be helpful to know more about the situation in Southampton and other similar experiences.

IA advised that John Attenborough is assisting cruise ships in Southampton and can advise ACL what he is doing.

AP, SaSo – Slight easing in restrictions at some overseas ports although passes and police permission are required for entry. Arranging port access to enable Southampton Centre Manager to resume his work.

BB, MtS – Some Indian seafarers repatriated over the weekend, thanks to ISWAN for their work on this. 38 in the UK that MtS have been assisting with rent and board, there will be an application to the Seafarers' Emergency Fund later today for this. Looking at guidelines and best management practices for our teams for PPE and use of vehicles, considering what life might look like post-lockdown, what changes might need to be made to seafarers' centres and minivans. Many MtS volunteers are in the vulnerable category, looking at how this might affect work going forward. Working closely internationally with all regions to produce guidelines. As part of ICMA there will be guidelines produced also.

RH, ISWAN – Trains are beginning to resume service in India, many Indian seafarers are beginning to return from the UK: 64 have returned already, 3 returning today and 25 in the next couple of days. Manila remains in lockdown, there are still issues for travel to the provinces and seafarers are required to be tested. 'Champions league' table of repatriation set up by InterManager on their website detailing all companies who have been able to get seafarers repatriated. At yesterday's ITF/ICS videoconference it was discussed that unions, shipowners and welfare organisations are all working together and how best to promote this messaging. 'Help get me home' website has been set up which appears to be UK focused and is asking for seafarers to get in touch. Would be helpful to know who has set this up. ITF has produced information on where seafarers can access medications and prescriptions around the world. Continuing to receive a high number of calls on Seafarer Help.

CR, MS – A number of Learn@Sea licences have been released for distribution to port staff.

CR, WA – All is well at Care Ashore, the residents enjoyed the in-house VE celebrations and are enjoying working in the gardens. Preparing for a small centenary celebration this year for the residents. New trustees have joined and accommodation is available if needed. Concerns for seafarers stuck onboard cruise ships in Weymouth Bay.

VB, CA – Maintaining isolation barrier at CA, nobody showing symptoms, anyone who goes outside the barrier is automatically quarantined on return. One beneficiary is in hospital, but not due to Covid – uncertain if he will return or go into a hospice. One major breach of the quarantine barrier occurred this week by an outsider but the police intervened effectively. Survey was sent to all staff and beneficiaries to find out their thoughts on the recent quarantine measures taken at CA. Responses were positive with most asking for an extension beyond the government's restrictions until they could be certain it was safe to relax measures.

NA, MCA – The International Association of Classification Societies (IACS) is meeting with various flag states including the UK to discuss how to return to surveys and certification of vessels. Surveys and certifications have now ceased, a number of ship certificates are expiring and the MCA is issuing short-term certificates for three months. Carnival is making 3,000 shore side redundancies. P&O Ventura is in the process of repatriating Indian seafarers. Members should be guided by the ship's procedures on wearing PPE onboard.

DD, FM – Thanked the MCA in Aberdeen for their help with four Ghanaian fishermen who may have been abandoned. Have decided to follow Nicola Sturgeon's stringent 'stay at home' policy across the devolved authorities. Staff continue to work from home, delivering 85%+ of what they did previously. Saw slight reduction in referrals during the week up to the bank holiday but numbers have increased once again. Already seeing people from within the fishing communities asking for repeat support and discussing how this might be managed. Aiming to start signposting families for debt counselling to SAIL and considering whether a level of support can be considered to reduce future needs when we start emerging from Covid-19. Grateful to John Cousley for proactively taking the lead on dealing with the Ghanaian fishermen who were left onboard without support. Requirements for PPE are unclear – could centralised guidance on standard of PPE for ship visitors and for routine interaction with beneficiaries be made available? Ship visiting Chaplains are considered key workers but how does this affect FM staff who are not recognised as Port Chaplains? Guidance from MNWB would be useful for members. **Action: MNWB**

DT, SCS – No reduction in applications for assistance, continuing as a small team to get funds out to families. Received a few MN applications from SSAFA this week, still work to be done on publicity for MN. Support given to those who are being helped only for Covid-19 was initially to cover a three month period, but this will be until the end of May for some. Trustees meeting next week to consider alternative ways to continue to support those families. Covid-19 families may be allocated the usual support whilst the schools are closed and provided with £10 per week per child for food and electricity for the children. Staff continue to work from home, offering flexibility for staff with children.

DL, SfUK – Working closely with British Ports Association with regards fishing ports and putting forward their key issues to Defra. Ports are suffering from a loss of income due to fishing vessels being tied up and unable to pay dues. Calls with Defra are ongoing, endeavouring to translate government guidance on coronavirus specifically to seafarers. Focus tends to be more on fishers in these calls but also about self-employment aspects that can be accessed by share fishermen. SAIL, SHS, FM, SfUK, The Animation Project and Fishmongers put together a joint bid to Defra for funding for FM emergency fund, mental health work and additional advisors for SAIL, also to leverage additional comms to let people know about what welfare aspects were available to fishers around the coast. This resulted in a bid from Defra to DCMS which was unfortunately knocked out at Star Chamber but the information will be put forward to submit a grant on behalf of that same work to the National Lottery. Reminded members to submit any MN specific case studies to help SfUK publicise the MN Fund. From the £2 million Covid-19 fund announced, £1.4 million remains, most already spent on fish, focus is now on the MN internationally. Supporting a lot of organisations who have six weeks reserves or less, grants are also available to ensure that maritime welfare charities can survive through this crisis. More details on this to follow. Contact DL or Tina Barnes for assistance deborah.layde@seafarers.uk tina.barnes@seafarers.uk

GH, MCG – Looking ahead to see how best to put across the message on response from maritime charities during the crisis. Part of the process will be co-ordinating information from the charities including cash flow issues so that this information is ready for when the time is appropriate to let people know what work has been done. A questionnaire is being compiled which will be sent to members in the next few weeks to make a combined statement of the impact of all the maritime charities. Next MCG meeting scheduled for Monday. At last meeting it was agreed to consider the situation in care homes and what could be done.

JL, SCFS – Chaplains continuing to communicate with seafarers. Considering as an organisation how to get everybody safely back into the ports to resume their work. Major issue is trying to get quality PPE. Please contact JL if you are able to recommend a good PPE supplier. John.Lowry@scfs.org

BB advised that MtS have been using Catering 24 for gloves and hand sanitiser. They do have 3ply face masks which aren't N95, but it is unclear at present exactly what type of mask is required for ship visitors: <https://www.catering24.co.uk/catering-disposables/cleaning-janitorial/hand-sanitiser-disinfectant-spray.html>

JS, MNA – No further reported loss of life. Most members receiving family support, food deliveries and maintaining regular contact with other branch MNA members. Asked members to recommend any seafarers who may be isolated to join the MNA and asked for members to promote the MNA on their website. The MNA can continue to make a difference with even more members. The MNA is at the heart of seafaring communities, provides support and parochial care through family contacts.

LC, MPHA – Have some face masks, will be going onboard ships to complete sanitation certificates and will be taking water samples from now on for any ships coming in that need them. Have written an extensive procedure about this and willing to share with other port health authorities if needed.

MF, SM – Through the Carnival wellbeing team, SM is in touch with crew onboard ships off the south coast including Weymouth, which are in lockdown. The local Bishop was due to visit cruise ships alongside in Southampton last week but this was postponed as Carnival is restricting access. The crew are in isolation in their cabins. SM is providing remote support to the crew including a weekly video message sent from the local SM team in Southampton to the Carnival ships.

VM, TH – Increase in applications from individuals and organisations over the last week. Thanked those who were providing support. Board meeting tomorrow, will review the support given already and the way forward.

MH, NWF – ‘Care Workforce’ app has been launched this week, all staff have been encouraged to download this. This is a government based app, is free and provides a lot of detail on PPE. Care homes in MP continue to be Covid free, no new cases in the last week. Can now explore how to re-allocate some empty properties due to guidance change on home moving. Holding emergency framework discussion with CQC today which is a review on performance during the pandemic. Caseworker service continues to be fairly quiet.

MNWB – The Board has allocated grants to certain care homes/accommodation for PPE during the crisis and also to SCS for home computers to impoverished MN and fishing fleet families. MNWB is also in the process of rebuilding the Seafarer Support referral service which will signpost individuals directly to maritime charities best suited to help. The website will be going live in a fortnight. Members will be contacted individually to review information about their charity to be included on the site.

Post meeting note received from LW, SHS: Sandra Welch is now officially the CEO of SHS.

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 20th May 2020 at 11:00

DRAFT