



**NOTES OF THE SEAFARERS' WELFARE – CRISIS WORKING GROUP  
VIDEOCONFERENCE MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 30<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2022**

**PRESENT:** Ms Sharon Coveney (Chair) MNWB  
Ms Tina Barnes (TB) The Seafarers' Charity (SC)  
Mr Alexander Campbell (AC) Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest (QVSR)  
Prof. James Crabbe (JC) Guild of Benevolence of the IMarEST  
Ms Barbara Kidd (BK) Sailors' Society (SaSo)  
Ms Gwen Lancaster (GL) Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCGA)  
Ms Vikki Muir (VM) Trinity House (TH)  
Mr Danny Yarker Seamen's Christian Friend Society

The meeting opened at 11.00am and the Chair thanked all for attending, in particular JC whose first meeting this was. Susan Atkinson (MNWB) was invited to give an update on issues discussed at the last round of PWC meetings. She reported there were no issues with mixed Russian/Ukrainian crews getting on, although there were reports of Russian seafarers not receiving their wages and requesting extensions of their contracts as they are fearful of returning home and being conscripted. Access to shore leave is also still reported as being difficult, with Portsmouth Harbour Master sending out emails to all visiting ship owners stating the UK's position on shore leave, which is having some effect.

Members were then invited to give crisis specific updates from their respective organisations as follows:

**GL, MCA** – Nothing significant to report with regards to P&O and the Russian/Ukrainian situation. Covid cases increasing. Work is going on to extend Russian certificates until June 2023, although she was not sure if (the IMO circular) had been published yet. The MCA are trying to resolve any shore leave issues brought to their attention on a case-by-case basis. GL also raised the issue of an extension to the offshore wind workers immigration rules concession, an article has been published that may have a knock on effect, see link here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/offshore-wind-workers-immigration-rules-concession-2017/offshore-wind-workers-immigration-rules-concession-2017-july-2021-update>  
TB asked if this was a permanent concession, GL thought it was time-limited to April 2023.

**DY, SCFS** – Concern was raised about a Russian Master of a vessel in Portsmouth who was denying ship visitors access. GL mentioned if there is concern, they could contact Southampton Marine Office who could go on and inspect if they felt necessary.

**BK, SaSo** – Nothing really to report. Originally 5 port chaplains were in Ukraine. Two of them have now emigrated to Canada and Spain, two remain in the country, and one has just relocated and has arrived in the UK; they are continuing to provide support for seafarers in Ukraine both on the ground and on-line through their virtual services. Three thousand Christmas parcels have been packed ready to be distributed to ships throughout the UK. Carol service in London on 14/12 being impacted by rail strikes but they are proceeding with it.

**VM, TH** – Following on from the cost-of-living meeting held recently with the Seafarers' Charity & MNWB, their Board is looking at what support can be given, but probably will not be until the new financial year.

**AC, QVSR** – Feels that now QVSR are involved in four different areas there is a noticeable difference in accessibility of seafarers being able to get off of ships. AC believes some of this is to do with the pro-activeness of port management in awareness of shore leave and the rights of seafarers. He feels there needs to be a more consistent effort amongst ports here in the UK and worldwide. They are aware of the emotional support needed for Ukrainian & Russian seafarers who feel conflicted about returning home. Mentioned the importance of parcels at Christmas and how it makes seafarers feel valued at this time of year; would like to see more corporate support to fund these. SC reported a survey had been completed and from memory around 96,000 presents were given out annually; the matter has been discussed with our Chief Exec and is on our radar to approach companies for corporate sponsorship. AC felt the gifts may appear like a luxury but they should actually be looked at in terms of how they have a positive impact on seafarers' mental health. DY felt the local communities should also be involved, and TB suggested companies were contacted much earlier in the year.

**TB, TSC** – There is a meeting 1/12 of the Seafarers International Relief Fund Stakeholders Group, who are currently overseeing their fund-raising and delivery of monies to support seafarers impacted by the conflict in Ukraine, to hopefully agree another fund-raising campaign. There is a lot of societal pressure to join the army rather than go to sea. Spoke of cost-of-living and fuel cost increases and shared a link - <https://www.fuelbankfoundation.org/> that may be of help. DY asked whether the stakeholder's group was just for assisting Ukrainians, TB confirmed it was for any seafarers impacted by war in Ukraine, although Mortrans, being for the Marine Transport Workers' Trade Union of Ukraine, will only assist Ukrainians. She is hoping that more grants can be awarded to ISWAN for their hardship grant programme which is for all seafarers. SC reminded all that on the Seafarers' Support website there is a specific section on the cost-of-living crisis.

**JC, IMarEST** – They have an emergency relief committee, if anyone knows of any Engineers, Scientists or Technologists in difficulty and needing support, please let them know. They also have a Christmas box for regular beneficiaries.

**Closing Remark** – The Chair thanked everyone for attending and wished all a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

She advised that as the attendance of this meeting has reduced considerably, MNWB would be reviewing the working group objectives. Nicky will be contacting all those invited to the meeting to get their feedback as to whether they would like this working group to continue next year.

In the meantime, members are to forward any links, extra information and note amendments to Nicky Cantello at [nicky@mnwb.org.uk](mailto:nicky@mnwb.org.uk). Notes from the meeting will be uploaded on the MNWB website: <https://www.mnwb.org/working-groups/>.

The meeting closed at 11:40am.