



Department  
for Transport

# MARITIME SAFETY ACTION PLAN



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Northern  
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Commissioners of  
**IRISH LIGHTS**  
*Navigation and Maritime Services*

# MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

As Minister for Maritime, I have come to understand the harsh realities of the marine environment where there is ever-present risk and potential for loss of life. However, I am also proud of the UK maritime sector's safety record and continue to be impressed by the professionalism and dedication of those who have worked so hard to ensure that we continue to set the standard.

Much of that work occurs behind the scenes and is rarely noticed until there is an accident, despite it being fundamental to the wellbeing of so many people.

When I launched the inaugural Maritime Safety Week in July 2018 it was, in part, to change that position by highlighting the quality and range of safety activity across the UK. The expertise, commitment and passion of those who took part, and with whom I spoke during the week, was truly staggering.

This, our first ever Maritime Safety Action Plan, builds on what I learned during Maritime Safety Week and is part of the continued implementation of the Safety recommendations from the Department's Maritime 2050 strategy. It sets out the Department's approach to maritime safety and what I see as the priority areas for action to be taken forward.

Some relate to on-going activities such as the survey of our international domestic passenger and fishing vessel fleet and investigations made by the Marine Accident Investigation Branch. This ongoing work is crucial for the delivery of our core safety function and those who work in these areas should be given the credit they deserve. Without them, UK's maritime industry would quickly cease to function.

“ WE HAVE SET OUT HERE AN AMBITIOUS AND FORWARD-LOOKING SAFETY AGENDA WHICH REQUIRES PROACTIVE AND ONGOING PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE. OUR MARITIME 2050 STRATEGY WILL ALLOW US TO BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF DOING JUST THAT. ”

I am delighted to be launching this Maritime Safety Action Plan and announcing new initiatives, such as an awareness campaign aimed towards recreational boaters, at such an important time. Demonstrating the comprehensive range of work already being undertaken and mapping out the passage plan for the future, this document shows how we will deliver continuous and meaningful safety improvements.

None of this can be achieved in isolation. Close partnership working between government and the sector will be vital if we are to meet these challenges successfully and reap the benefits of a safer industry.

I look forward to seeing our progress during Maritime Safety Week 2019 and beyond.



**Nusrat Ghani MP**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1 WHY A MARITIME SAFETY ACTION PLAN

Maritime safety is fundamental to the success of the United Kingdom (UK). As an island nation, we rely on the maritime industry to deliver up to 95 per cent of our imports and exports and much of the food, fuel and materials we need not only to prosper and drive economic growth, but for our basic daily needs.

Britain has a proud maritime history and has always offered the world outstanding services, expertise and legislation in accordance with the very highest international standards. In a sector where the number of accidents and incidents still lags significantly behind other safety-critical industries, the UK continues to be held in high regard by the international maritime industry as a safe place in which to operate.

However, we must never become complacent and it is still too often the case that safety is rarely prioritised with its importance only becoming clear following a serious accident or incident. This must change if we are to realise the revolution in performance that everyone desires.

To deliver that revolution will require everyone who works within the sector, from large shipping conglomerates, owners and operators of our domestic fleets, those in the fishing industry, recreational mariners and government to further enhance the robust working relationships already in place.

This inaugural Maritime Safety Action Plan (the Plan) has been developed to explain the significant work that the Department for Transport (DfT), its agencies and partners are already doing, both domestically and in international fora, to drive that improvement. It identifies the significant challenges that remain and articulates the government's key priorities and ambitions for maritime safety going forward. For the first time, it also defines the specific actions we are committed to taking to realise that vision.

The Plan complements and underpins Maritime 2050<sup>1</sup>, which sets out the government's long-term vision for the maritime sector. Maritime 2050 includes a number of short, medium and long-term safety recommendations and this Plan plays a significant part in setting out a route map for their future delivery and implementation.

## 2 OUR ROLE

The DfT's role in maritime safety is fulfilled by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB), the three General Lighthouse Authorities (GLAs) and a small team within the Department. All have essential functions in developing, co-ordinating, implementing and enforcing maritime safety.

<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/maritime-2050-navigating-the-future](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/maritime-2050-navigating-the-future)

# WORKING WITH PARTNERS

DfT works closely with a wide range of partners in the sector, including volunteers, when developing and implementing safety policy to ensure that it is proportionate and meets the needs of industry without being unnecessarily burdensome. In line with guidance from the Government's Better Regulation Executive, policies are developed in two stages: identifying the rationale for government intervention and appraisal of the options to deliver the intended outcome. A wide range of policy tools are considered and delivery can be achieved through both administrative and regulatory measures and can include industry-led approaches.

An example is the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) and related Guide to Good Practice. This voluntary guidance was, and continues to be, developed in partnership with the industry. It is used by all marine facilities in the UK but its quality and effectiveness has also been recognised internationally with a number of countries having adopted it for their own purposes.

This Plan also sets out new initiatives being taken forward between the sector and government, such as the development of a joint awareness campaign about the potential dangers of drinking while using the water recreationally

RAISING THE PROFILE OF WHY AND HOW THE DfT FAMILY WORKS WITH ITS PARTNERS IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT IN ENSURING THAT CHANGES IN SAFETY POLICY, MESSAGES AND CAMPAIGNS REACH THOSE WHO NEED TO TAKE ACTION.

**This can be difficult and is one of the reasons why Ministers have introduced Maritime Safety Week to ensure that the excellent work which is already being done is highlighted. Maritime Safety Week also creates a focal point for the promotion of the importance of safety and facilitates wider discussion and sharing of best practice.**

Similarly, Maritime 2050 sets out the strong linkages that already exist between government and the maritime sector across its seven key themes. The importance of safety to the wide spectrum of maritime users is woven throughout the document but it also includes specific material on emerging challenges and the actions that are, and will, be taken to meet them. **Implementation of the Maritime 2050 safety recommendations** will further enhance partnership working between the DfT family and industry.

There are many examples of initiatives where government and the sector work in close partnership to deliver a common objective. This powerful approach brings all those who have an interest to the table to deliver an effective solution. Some of the key areas where this method has been applied, with significant dividends for all involved, are explained below.



## 4 STRATEGIC APPROACH TO DROWNING PREVENTION

The National Drowning Prevention Strategy<sup>2</sup> clearly demonstrates the collaborative approach to policy-making and implementation that permeates all of DfT's safety work.

As part of the **National Water Safety Forum (NWSF)**, the MCA has contributed to the development of a **National Drowning Prevention Strategy** which is addressing the risks that all water users face when interacting with the water. It has set out clear actions designed to **reduce accidental drowning fatalities in the UK by 50 per cent by 2026 and reduce risk amongst the highest risk populations, groups and communities.**

IT HAS SET OUT CLEAR ACTIONS DESIGNED TO REDUCE ACCIDENTAL DROWNING FATALITIES IN THE UK BY **50% BY 2026**

**A bi-annual review<sup>3</sup> has shown that significant strides have been made in taking forward the ambitious programme of work put forward in the original strategy. Major successes have been achieved, such as building on the** valuable Water Accident and Incident Database (WAID) reporting platform to enable wider use of data in understanding causes and types of water incidents as well as informing work on how to prevent them. The NWSF also lead the response to a Transport Select Committee inquiry into drowning prevention, playing a valuable role in ensuring legislators are informed about the issues and what is already being done in this area. However, there remains much more to do and the bi-annual review has set out where the new priority actions lie to maintain the momentum of the first two years. These **include publishing a framework for water safety communities, and developing funding proposals and a review of the business case for a new WAID.**



<sup>2</sup> [www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk/strategy/](http://www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk/strategy/)

<sup>3</sup> [www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk/media/1004/uk-drowning-prevention-strategy-year-two-review.pdf](http://www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk/media/1004/uk-drowning-prevention-strategy-year-two-review.pdf)





# FISHING VESSEL SAFETY

Fishing remains the most dangerous industry in the UK. Since 2012, there have been a total of 45 deaths while fishing in the UK, and 103 since 2006. Commercial fishing is 5 times more hazardous than the UK's next most hazardous industry, with an average of 54 fatalities per 100,000 full or part-time workers between 2012 and 2018.

As part of the **Fishing Industry Safety Group (FISG)**, the MCA has worked in collaboration with the FISG membership to develop **a strategy to tackle fishing vessel safety**. Looking forward, the FISG will actively promote fishing vessel safety and the welfare of those working onboard. The underlying theme for promoting the FISG Strategy will be based on “tangible demonstration of consequence”.

The FISG strategy takes a comprehensive view of fishing vessel safety and has identified specific actions relating to **man overboard prevention, use of personal locator beacons and personal flotation devices, stability and hull survey requirements, codes of practice, safety management systems and crew qualifications**.

Crucially, the strategy also emphasises the value of the UK's implementation of the ILO Work in Fishing Convention (ILO 188) which, for the first time, sets a benchmark for living and working conditions for fishermen and will apply health and safety legislation to all fishermen regardless of employment status. As part of the implementation process, all fishermen will be required to wear Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) on open decks in order to reduce the number of drownings as a result of man overboard situations.

THE FISG STRATEGY HAS ALSO SET A CLEAR AND AMBITIOUS TARGET OF **ELIMINATING ALL PREVENTABLE DEATHS IN THE INDUSTRY BY 2027**



## 6 SEAFARER SAFETY AND HEALTH

The success of any industry is inextricably linked to the people employed in it. Making sure seafarers are safe and healthy at work is, therefore, a fundamental component of supporting positive outcomes for seafarers and the sector.

That is why the MCA is actively taking forward work to further improve seafarer wellbeing; understand and address mental health issues; and tackle persistent behavioural and cultural tendencies that can sometimes lead to unnecessary risks.

**Creating a health and safety environment which is as good as that in shore-based safety-critical industries is both a guiding principle and an ambitious target for the MCA's policies. When combined with participation in innovative research into human element principles and continued leadership in international fora, we will continue to make professional users of UK waters safer and healthier than ever before.**

# RESCUE BOAT GRANT FUND

The UK has a remarkable, and unique, history of independent charities who work closely with HM Coastguard to deliver a significant, and highly effective, search and rescue capacity on the ground. Bringing together the best combination of centralised co-ordination, rapid deployment and detailed local knowledge, these charities are staffed and run by dedicated volunteers who risk their lives on a daily basis to save others.

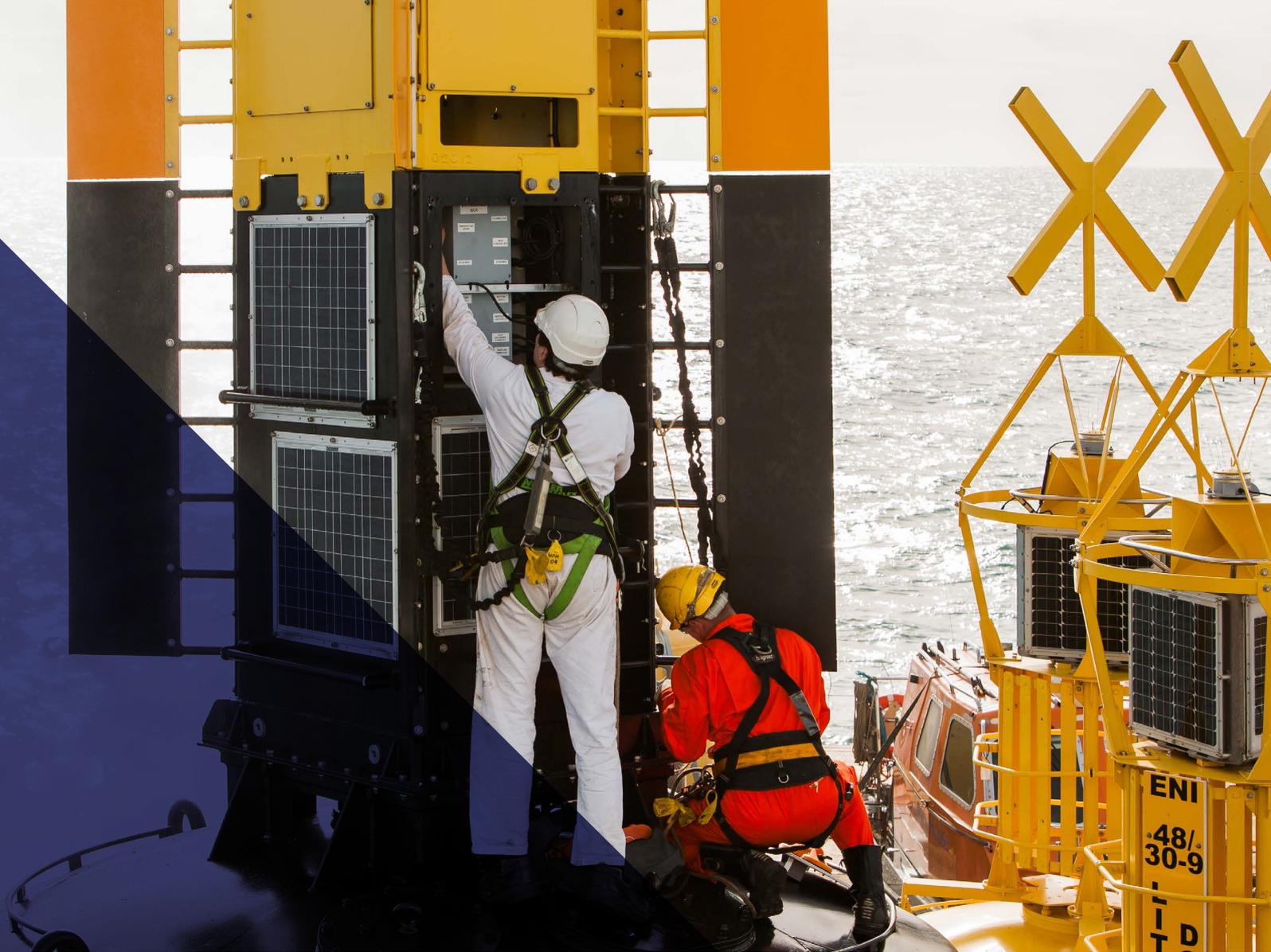
These charities often rely on public donations as the assets and equipment they require to maintain their operations and ensure their volunteers have the best possible kit to deal with dangerous environments are extremely expensive. Raising and maintaining sufficient capital, particularly for those organisations based in remoter locations, can be a constant battle which makes saving for larger capital purchases that are vital to their continued operation, such as rescue boats, particularly burdensome.

To ensure that this critical resource is not lost, the **DfT introduced the Rescue Boat Grant Fund (the Fund) in 2014**. The Fund provides £1 million a year in challenge grants which independent (non-RNLI) inshore and inland charities operating a rescue boat can apply for to assist them with major purchases. New assets must be available nationally to further enhance resilience in times of emergency such as flooding and other disasters.

To date the Fund has **awarded over £4.6 million to over 100 different charities** and facilitated the purchase of over 80 new rescue boats and thousands of other pieces of vital equipment.

MINISTERS HAVE ANNOUNCED  
A FURTHER **£1 MILLION** FOR  
THE FUND OVER **2019-20**





## 8 IMPLEMENTING AND INNOVATING SAFETY

A safer maritime network will have an enormously positive ripple effect on the rest of the maritime sector, its users and local communities. It will boost economic growth and opportunity, improve journeys and promote a culture of efficiency that delivers both immediate and associated benefits to a diverse range of people and water users. These objectives can only be achieved through effective implementation alongside an on-going consideration of the innovation needed to meet the needs of a rapidly evolving sector.

The DfT's key role is in ensuring that the necessary policy and legislative framework is in place to not only save lives but also to support UK maritime growth and maintain international competitiveness. As well as its domestic policy function, it is actively involved in fora for making maritime legislation at the international level, including the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Labour Organization (ILO). The UK's activity at the IMO strives to make the most of the UK's opportunity to inform and influence international legislation, giving the UK even greater scope to adapt how we regulate and work with industry to deliver improved safety for workers, the public and the environment.

In a changing world it will be increasingly important for the **UK to continue to act as a leader in international fora** to allow us to take advantage of opportunities to influence global rules.

The MCA leads on engagement within the international fora. To ensure that it continues to deliver the high-quality policy, guidance and implementation work it is recognised for, the MCA **will undertake an internal review of policy-making and continue to embrace findings and recommendations resulting from MAIB investigations.**

The UK is already a hot bed of safety innovation with a large number of small firms producing world-leading and state of the art products. **The General Lighthouse Authorities' Research and Development team (GRAD)<sup>4</sup> take forward ground-breaking work with physical and radio marine aids to navigation, support systems and their integration to support the GLA's mission to deliver a reliable, efficient and cost-effective aids to navigation service for the benefit and safety of all mariners.**

Research and innovation will be even more critical in the future to ensure that the UK remains at the forefront of developments in maritime safety.

4 See [www.gla-rad.org](http://www.gla-rad.org) for more information

## MARINE NAVIGATIONAL SAFETY

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Rivers, coastal waters and seas are inherently dangerous places in which to operate a vessel. They are a changing and dynamic environment which demand a high level of skill, attentiveness and adaptability of their users.

While that will always be the case, the aids to navigation and guidance in place in the UK ensure that our waters are some of the safest in the world and the UK's long-term vision is, ultimately, to eliminate preventable accidents. The MCA has proven its effectiveness in minimising navigational risk and enabling safe and effective decision-making through providing evidence-based navigational guidance, standards and services to a technologically evolving maritime industry.

Examples include the **MCA's continued delivery of work such as its Civil Hydrography Programme (CHP) in association with the UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO), Maritime Safety Information (MSI), Maritime Surveillance and Navigational and Radiocommunications Policy.**



Collaboration with industry allows for more bespoke navigational safety policy development and an enhanced ability to share lessons learned and best practice. That is why DfT seeks to create navigational safety policy in conjunction with industry wherever possible. The Port Marine Safety Code sets a high standard for what can be achieved through effective partnership between industry and government and has been effective in helping to maintain and enhance the already high safety standards at ports, harbours and other marine facilities across the UK.

As well as the spectrum of ongoing work that is crucial for safe navigation of mariners every day, the **MCA aims to enhance and improve its navigation safety business delivery** through actions such as the technological improvements to the Civil Hydrography Programme and identifying new products around the outputs of the UK Marine Weather Service.

The MCA's navigational safety work also looks to the future. Technology is rapidly changing the landscape of how ships and people navigate on the water.

THE UK HAS A CLEAR AMBITION TO BE AN ENABLER FOR EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES. DfT HAS ACTED ON THIS AMBITION BY DEVELOPING THE **MARITIME 2050 STRATEGY** ALONG SEVEN DIFFERENT THEMES AND, USING A ROUTE MAP APPROACH, SETTING OUT THE **TANGIBLE ACTIONS WHICH NEED TO BE TAKEN TO DELIVER THAT VISION.**

## 10 GENERAL LIGHTHOUSE AUTHORITIES

As DfT Non-Departmental Public Bodies, the three General Lighthouse Authorities (GLAs) underpin the UK's maritime safety infrastructure. Trinity House, the Northern Lighthouse Board, and Irish Lights not only maintain and operate aids to navigation, such as lighthouses and buoys, around the UK's coast, but they also provide a rapid response to new dangers to navigation safety such as wrecks. Their fleet of vessels are equipped to the highest technical standards and are manned by experienced officers and crew.

With a shared mission to **deliver a reliable, efficient and cost-effective aids to navigation service for the benefit and safety of all mariners**, the GLAs have statutory duties under the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 and fulfil the UK and Irish Government's responsibilities under the IMO Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention.

The GLAs have published an aspirational and forward-looking strategy that has highlighted the key challenges ahead, including overreliance on navigational technology, increasing vessel size and traffic density as well as the emergence of autonomous vessels. The strategy, **"2030 - Navigating the Future"**<sup>5</sup> will allow the GLAs to prepare for, and adapt to, these changes bringing them into even closer collaboration while working towards their shared mission.



# THE COMPLETE SAFETY PICTURE

The Plan not only provides important context around the range of maritime safety issues that the DfT family is involved in but also outlines the targeted action we, and our sector partners, are taking across each area. This document sets out an ambitious path forward to make the UK's waters even safer and to **ensure the UK remains firmly established in its role as a world-leader** in maritime safety. The Plan also aligns with the strategic, forward-looking nature of **Maritime 2050**.

While the inherently dangerous nature of the marine environment means that significant risk will always exist, the quality of the UK's regulatory framework and targeted intervention provide reasons for optimism. The work already underway is a tangible demonstration of how the UK is already taking steps towards further improving its maritime safety record in the coming years. Taken together with the actions outlined below, they will form a comprehensive approach to ensure that all users of our seas and coasts are as safe as they can be.

This Plan will be a living document. The specific actions, as well as the broader ambitions they support, will be revisited on a regular basis to ensure progress against them can be monitored. We will ensure that, where necessary, delivery is appropriately resourced and funded.

## THE GOVERNMENT'S PRIORITIES FOR MARITIME SAFETY

- 1 Deliver a successful Maritime Safety Week 2019** which reaches a wide audience with a variety of targeted safety messages and continue to implement the Safety recommendations of Maritime 2050.
- 2 Internally review our policy-making and evidence base**, ensuring we have the skills and knowledge to better deliver the necessary changes to improve safety standards and promote industry growth while embracing new and emerging technology.
- 3 Meet the ambitious target of eliminating preventable deaths in the fishing industry by 2027** through the continued implementation of the Fishing Industry Safety Group (FISG) strategy developed collaboratively between government and industry.
- 4 Achieve a 50% reduction in UK drowning fatalities by 2026** through the continued implementation of the National Drowning Prevention Strategy.
- 5 Develop guidance on seafarer wellbeing**, to be published in 2019, by working in strategic partnership with industry, alongside embedding human element principles in MCA practice.



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