

UK SHIP REGISTER AFTERNOON TEA RECEPTION EVENT: WEDNESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2015

Alan Massey's Speech

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and the members of your independent panel for the work you have done, in preparing your Report and recommendations that have fed into the wider Maritime Growth Study Report published this week.

Your diligence and wise counsel are exactly what we hoped to get when we set you on your way last year.

And as the Minister so generously said earlier, I think it is important to stress that it was the MCA itself that called for this work and the Panel's Report.

We recognised ourselves that something needed to change.

In recent years the number of ships and the amount of gross tonnage on the UK Ship Register has fallen compared to the previous decade of growth.

Something was stopping ship owners and operators joining us and we could not go on ignoring the problem.

The Panel's findings and recommendations were published on the 17th July as part of the evidence base for the wider Maritime Growth Study published this week with the full backing of the Department for Transport and our Minister we saw immediately that we could get on with meeting the spirit of the Panel's recommendations within our existing structures.

I completely understand the Panel's view that we need to give more senior time and attention to our engagement with the shipping industry.

That is why we have created a new Senior Civil Service role of Director of the UK Ship Register which is now being widely advertised.

The post-holder's primary role will be to attract the owners of quality ships to the UK Flag, meeting their requirements for registration, ship surveys, audits and certification and securing the long-term commercial success of the UK Ship Register (UKSR) through sustained excellence and responsiveness.

A commitment and passion to world-class standards of customer service is essential.

That means the ability to build strong, constructive relationships with those in the maritime industries and the international shipping community.

In line with the principles of the Civil Service Reform Plan, we are looking for someone with a proven ability to bring commercial principles and practice from the commercial maritime sector, into the public sector environment.

This will be a new and exciting opportunity for someone, perhaps someone in this room this afternoon?

Of course, great customer service is not something that is alien to my colleagues in the MCA as we get exemplary customer satisfaction levels and positive feedback in many parts of our operation – particularly our work with individual seafarers.

Also many of our Customer Account Managers, Customer Service Managers and Marine Surveyors already have exceptional relationships with their shipping clients.

They have built up honest and open relationships that lead to trust and mutual understanding even if there are sometimes disagreements, those are handled in a mature way that assesses risks and options and finds solutions.

The new Director of the UK Ship Register will build on those strengths so that they are the consistent approach in the future whilst our commercial responsiveness will also be supported by the changes we will be making to how we manage our ship survey and inspection activities.

We will improve the availability of our well-trained people and call on the most appropriate resource to meet your survey needs whilst our Marine Surveyors will have better IT and kit to give you the modern service that you expect.

These are exciting times for the UK Ship Register and I know that Graham Candy and other colleagues here this afternoon will be delighted to answer any detailed questions you may have.

We are delighted to be launching today the new Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers. The Code, last updated in 2011, has been subject to a thorough review.

The MCA is particularly grateful to the members of the Working Group, nominated by the National Maritime Occupational Health and Safety Committee, which undertook that review (most of whom are here today).

The Code is a great example of how the UK flag works with shipowners and seafarers' organisations to develop standards which are recognised and embraced worldwide.