



A Consultation on Changes to MCA Survey and Inspection

Marine Office Locations

External Responses

Question 3: What technology based channels should be made available to enable you to conduct your business more effectively with the MCA?

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Response ID	Represent Person or Organisation? (size if applicable?)	Response
REXT0001	Individual	Online NOE submission and application tracker would be of great benefit and hopefully speed up response times. I imagine that all information entered into a NOE application form then has to be entered manually into a IT system anyway. Digital certificates would have to depend on what certificates were being issued. Digital CoC's I don't think would be appropriate. Not sure that MCA eye examinations should be continued, after all the ENG1s carried out by MCA approved Doctors. Would it not be a better use of resources if MCA approved opticians carried out the eye tests? While not part of my business with the MCA, the ability to have surveyors working remotely from home via secure remote servers systems or from other government offices would provide a much more flexible structure. This would also mean that when recruiting new surveyors the MCA would not be limited to recruiting talent in the local area or only people available to relocate.
REXT0002	Organisation	No Response
REXT0003	Individual	I would be concerned about moving to online systems. For example some fishermen I know would not be 'computer literate', and would struggle to fill in online booking forms. Our organisation uses EDRMS records management (TRIM) which is great when it is working. However sometimes it is good to have paper copy backups, particularly in remote locations.
REXT0004	Individual	The ability to book inspections etc. on line would be an advantage. Most forms seem to require printing and hand completing – is it not possible to have better forms that allow easy editing? Admittedly this may well be a problem of our company IT systems!
REXT0005	Organisation, 6 - 15	ANYTHING THAT REDUCES VSITS AND TRAVEL
REXT0006	Individual	I agree with the proposed relocation of offices. It makes a lot of sense. However, it would mean extended travelling to cover East Anglia region from an Ipswich office.
REXT0007	Organisation	No Response
REXT0008	Individual	Online survey help other than just m notices an actual interactive page where you select type of vessel, length, GRT any applicable items and you get a full checklist that applies to your vessel/s. Same goes for safe manning for yachts etc. etc.
REXT0009	Organisation, 6 - 15	We are happy with e-mail and telephone communication.
REXT0010	Organisation, 0 – 5	Email is fine
REXT0011	Organisation, 31 – 100	No Response
REXT0012	Organisation, 0 – 5	On line access to the certification database would be enormously useful, similar to that offered by Classification Societies. It would enable cross checking of our records and upcoming survey dates. Access to electronic certification via portable devices would also be an asset. Access to a searchable database of current and superseded M Notices and SI's would be beneficial. All other proposed developments are welcomed and will improve customer support.
REXT0013	Organisation, 100+	On-line application for Ship Certification.
REXT0014	Organisation	Technology based channels -There is clearly significant potential for the use of online processes ship and seafarer administration e.g CoC administration (perhaps through gov.uk as per tax returns), ship survey and certification, booking services etc however fundamentally it is the service that lies behind the technology that matters, that the processing of any of these services is timely and efficient, that surveyors are available to attend vessels and no delays or additional costs are incurred. The issue of connectivity needs also to be recognised with some communication from vessels and seafarers at sea needing services that operate on low bandwidth or intermittent or no online connection. This could be an issue for Surveyors working remotely.
REXT0015	Individual	No Response

REXT0016	Organisation	Proposals for flexible working with surveyors working from home and remote IT systems are most welcome, as this will lead to less travelling time and benefits to both sides. It is considered that this is already a proven system as the MCA's locally based Torbay surveyor has been working successfully in this manner since the closure of the Brixham office. Having an MCA representative on site (in Torbay) is most welcome.
REXT0017	Organisation	I would like to know when a surveyor is attending a vessel in my port, so access to the electronic scheduling system would be advantageous.
REXT0018	Individual	All of technology related already highlighted in the report are good to effectively conduct business with MCA.
REXT0019	Organisation, 6 – 15	I feel that a website separate from the Government one would be an improvement for the MCA. - Online features such as tracing the progress of NOE's and Certificate revalidations would also improve things.
REXT0020	Organisation, 100+	Giving surveyors more flexibility to respond to e mails whilst away from the office would sometimes expedite response to customer needs. This is particularly so if the matter is time critical and the normal surveyor may have detailed or historical knowledge of the matter.
REXT0021	Organisation, 100+	Online certification checks, booking of surveyors and results of surveys e.g. NCN's
REXT0022	Organisation, 100+	The MCA and the UK Ship Registry still seem to rely heavily on paper based systems. Original hard copies of documents and plans need to be produced, compiled, posted, read, approved stamped and posted back again by registered mail. - - Other flag states can work with soft copy documents or plans at least up to the point of approval and then use couriers. - - MCA billing process is mostly paper based forms and signatures. - - There are relatively few on-line forms in use. - - Some flag States have developed ways of issuing electronic certificates.
REXT0023	Individual	the system at present works very well with phone and emails
REXT0024	Organisation, 100+	ONLINE BOOK PORTALS FOR SURVEYS AND INSPECTIONS AND EXAM BOOKINGS WOULD BE HELPFUL AS LONG AS THE MCA CAN GET THE TECHNOLOGY WORKING RIGHT FROM THE START! - DIGITAL CERTIFICATES WOULD BE VERY USEFUL AND WOULD ENABLE THE MCA TO CATCH UP WITH OTHER FLAG STATES.
REXT0025	Organisation	From a Fishing Industry perspective, it is access to communicate with the relevant surveyor that is important. This can either be via phone, email or text, but the important issue to contactability (if that is a word!!).
REXT0026	Organisation	No Response
REXT0027	Organisation	Call me old fashioned, but a human voice is ideal for us. We operate in an area with limited internet access, are mostly operating on a boat without the ability to communicate online and so therefore find it very useful to continue with the landline telephone system. We are at present able to discuss times of tide and when it would be efficient to book a survey with limited disruption, which would not be possible with a touchscreen system.
REXT0028	Organisation	We would not have a problem with issuing of certificates online and making bookings for surveys online, corresponding by email is quick and responsive.
REXT0029	Organisation	I feel great care must be taken when considering adding too much technology into the system. A real person on the end of a phone or face to face at a desk is far more help and efficient than a computer (although computers and technology have their place alongside) Not everyone in this business is computer literate especially some of the older generation and also our particular area has very limited internet access. Take this simple form for example it was very hard to find yet alone understand and we ended up having to phone up the office to get help and advice what to do! A sensible mix of technology and good old fashion talking needs careful consideration before making any changes!
REXT0030	Organisation, 31 – 100	Current comms systems are good if properly resourced (staffed).
REXT0031	Organisation, 31 – 100	Technology channels have not necessarily made communication with other services easier or more efficient eg, NHS 24, BT, High st Banks and all other automated, 'call centre' type response centres which rely on checklist phone operators. In areas of poor access to technology, phone signal, poor broadband, slow internet connections, technical based channels fail to the detriment of those living in those areas. Many of the Scottish coastal areas where fishermen work face these limitations, so face to face access or direct telephone access to decision making staff is essential. Because the links of safety, regulatory compliance, ability to pursue one's work in a fair and equitable way, flexibility and empathy for the unique position their job places fishermen into, are all underpinned with positive communication and relations with the human face of the MCA, this has to be properly understood and embedded in not just its ethos but in how interaction takes place. Communication with representative bodies such as fishing Associations can be easily accessed through web and digital means. Direct communication with individual fishermen needs to be on a human face- to- face, (or telephone) basis.
REXT0032	Organisation	Email and telephone works fine as it is. It needs to be noted that many operators are very small organisations (sometimes employing less than 5 employees) and in some cases operate from their own homes. How sophisticated do you want the technology to become before it's no longer cost effective to operate a small passenger boat business? I note the surveyors are using laptops etc to complete survey forms during their visit to operators and often require internet connection, which is not always available in remote areas of the country.
REXT0033	Organisation	Given the nature of the parts of the industry fishermen need and deserve more than an IT based approach and a website. The fact is more Surveyors and better regulation are required to allow greater flexibility. These proposals do not address either of those problems.
REXT0034	Organisation	not sure

REXT0035	Organisation	The proposal to have an on-line oral booking system will allow candidates to book their own orals which reduces the need for them to attend MCA offices in person. This will be an advantage but will not allow for booking queries that a central IT system could not resolve, so it would need a manned system to allow for these non-standard applications, estimated to be 100 / year from Redacted . Currently the oral booking are taken sequentially to ensure each day of the Surveyor's time is filled. The IT system would need to allow for that.
REXT0036	Organisation	We already communicate mostly via e-mail and telephone. Local Offices provide access to officers when needed. Any loss of admin support to the officers will be 'felt' by the ports.
REXT0037	Individual	No Response
REXT0038	Organisation	We are pleased to see that the MCA is looking to embrace a range of technology solutions for the booking of surveyors for inspection and examinations, and for the issuing of digital certificates. However it does not alleviate our concerns regarding the availability of MCA officers and the loss of our current close working procedures with the personnel at the Orpington office.
REXT0039	Individual	I am an ordinary working man. I do not have or use a computer. You surply the technology and the secetary to operate it!!
REXT0040	Not specified	No Response
REXT0041	Organisation	No Response
REXT0042	Individual	No Response
REXT0043	Individual	No Response
REXT0044	Organisation	No Response
REXT0045	Organisation, 100+	<p>Greater electronic working will clearly be an important element in any strategy for improving the service that the MCA provides to operators of UK flag ships and to UK seafarers. Redacted is pleased to see the list of tools (in section 3.3.1 of the consultation document) that are being developed, and would urge the prompt introduction of all of them. To modernise and provide greater electronic support tools to the surveyors to support their remote working will be hugely beneficial.</p> <p>Several of the proposed new tools, such as online portals for booking surveys and examinations and digital certificates, have been the subject of specific requests from shipowners at meetings with the MCA hosted by Redacted over the last couple of years. The MCA is to be commended for acting on those requests.</p> <p>Clearly, however, those tools are a means to achieve a higher standard of service and, on their own, they do not constitute a higher standard of service. Their usefulness will depend on the processes they support and on the expertise of the personnel using them. Your consultation document acknowledges that the proposed system for electronic scheduling of surveyor resources (presumably through the online portal for booking surveys?) needs to be supported by a database of surveyor competence. It is equally essential for the MCA to ensure that it has access to the full array of such competence and expertise that it needs in order to meet the requirements of operators of UK-flag ships, whether from within its pool of in-house surveyors or from elsewhere.</p> <p>Similarly, an online booking portal for oral examinations will be really useful only if it operates across all examination venues. An electronic version of the current arrangements whereby would-be candidates must contact individual Marine Offices in turn to see whether they have an available slot would be of limited value.</p> <p>The usefulness of any booking system will depend on what is available for booking. Whether in respect of surveys of ships or examinations of seafarers, the MCA should define fixed standards for the availability of slots. Suggestions accordingly are set out in response to Question 5 below. There is a view, at the moment, that the functionality of the MCA website may be constrained by being hosted on the gov.uk site. In any event, there would be merit in a debate about whether the MCA, as a service provider to operators of UK-flag ships and to UK seafarers should have a standalone website – as its competitors do – where it is able to determine the online facilities it will offer and how these will be presented. Redacted would also welcome a high-quality helpline where seafarers and operators of ships can get prompt access to reliable and authoritative advice. Again, however, the creation of a technical channel will only be part of the provision of such a helpline: sufficient expert personnel need to be on hand to provide reliable and authoritative answers to enquiries in a timely manner.</p>
REXT0046	Organisation, 100+	<p>Taken from the consolation document as an industry we are very supportive of the suggestions below. However industry is very sceptical around the ability of the civil service and its track record at being able to bring in a successful IT solution on time and within budget. Online booking and the ability to have a members access areas that gives fishing vessel owners scope to see items like outstanding survey defects, survey dates and survey requirements would greatly aid industry in their quest to run a safer and more effective business.</p> <p>Industry would however like to make a note at this consultation that in the event of any cost cutting measures by introducing IT solutions, the current system is carried on until such time any new system is well bedded in. The fear of a fishing vessel not being able to secure a survey date due to IT problems and there are no humans left to talk to is unacceptable.</p> <p>The MCA must deliver a responsive and flexible, national and international service.</p> <p>To support this a number of new tools and changes to some working practices are being developed. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An online booking portal for vessel surveys and inspections • An online booking portal for oral examinations • Issuing certificates digitally • Piloting a central unit for booking international surveys and inspections, potentially extending to other S&I activities • Improved IT tools to support both remote working and the more efficient conduct of surveys and inspections – including printers, chargers and Business Skype • Other enhanced ICT applications, including migrating towards electronic data records management (EDRMS), to improve information handling and digital communications

REXT0047	Organisation	Email facility is fine, the admin staff use it to good extent, surveyors rarely reply.
REXT0048	Organisation	The current MCA web site is rather slow but obviously web based applications or access is essential, all Class Societies have a portal based system which allow s a client to log in to see status of surveys or certificates. The present MSF 5100 system needs to be an on line service/ All forms should be electronic and able to be filled out on line. A standalone website for the MCA (which should be split into Merchant/Fishing/Leisure w here it will only show M Notices and contact information specific to that sector) which is easy to access and user friendly. The current website through the gov.uk domain is very difficult to navigate and frustrating to find the information required. Response times to queries should be appropriate to the situation. This is not always the case at present.
REXT0049	Individual	No obvious changes
REXT0050	Organisation	No Response
REXT0051	Organisation, 100+	Modernise and provide greater electronic support tools to the surveyors to support their remote working.
REXT0052	Individual	Here in Orkney we have remoteness issues. We deal with the Aberdeen office for fishing vessel surveys and inspections. Due to the heavy workload it is difficult to talk to somebody regarding individual cases. Some areas have slow internet connections and poor mobile phone coverage. Internet based technology can be off or unavailable for lengthy periods so at the moment that technology is unreliable here. Hopefully in the future when infrastructure is upgraded it will be an efficient working practice!
REXT0053	Organisation, 100+	Redacted highly doubts the effectiveness of an application which cannot check the lashings on board a ship or take action to ensure the safety of crew and dock workers in a port. There is a clear need for an inspector to be working on the port so they can witness the scene when a ship arrives into the port area with the lashings already removed. Redacted does not believe relying on whistle-blowers is the way forward as these individuals can end up becoming unofficially blacklisted and out of work in the industry. There is a significant distrust of technology among the ratings and some of the dock workers and it is difficult to see how this can be overcome. If the administration work of the MCA is outsourced to the Red Ensign Group administrators there will be further grave concerns over confidentiality and data protection. We are concerned that the level of reports to the MCA of inappropriate working activities will decline, giving a false perspective, making the industry appear safer than it really is.
REXT0054	Organisation	The MCA should computerise all ships records and create a computerised client and ships database. This will have the benefit of ensuring; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Records are no longer lost. b. Compliance with the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 which states that duplication of records should not be required from clients. c. Electronic files can be viewed by clients and regulators alike. This means P/C records etc can all be reviewed online in real time. d. A central database will create efficiency savings for surveyors, continuity of service and most importantly enable other staff and clients to operate to a consistent standard ie actions taken previously can be better understood and disseminated accordingly. e. Enable latest technology to be incorporated and updated within the database thus ensuring large files eg over 5Mb and “Dropbox” style systems can be used. f. The MCA must urgently develop a computerised bookings system for surveyor appointments that clients can access and use. This will reduce costs and improve efficiency ie replicate the existing template used by clients through DVSA (the MCA sister organisation). Redacted can recommend a system if needed. g. Follow the lead from the DVSA to go to an online PC system to assist with enforcement and reduce paperwork. In respect of this vision of an improved responsive flexible system, lessons should be learnt from the centralised and subsequently aborted patient record system which failed for the NHS as part of the terms of reference for this aspect of modernisation of the MCA paper based systems.
REXT0055	Organisation	As an alternative to using email/telecoms, Surveys could be booked on line (as per Class) and approvals (SOPEP, Cargo Securing Manuals)
REXT0056	Organisation	Development of an on-line database could be very cost effective in reviewing survey / certification status for our managed UK registered vessels and for arranging upcoming surveys. This could also provide direct access to certificates and survey/audit reports for both the management company and for each vessel. It could also provide an efficient method for advising of changes to upcoming legislation and/or regulation and access to MGN/MSN/MIN and Safety Bullet-Ins.
REXT0057	Organisation, 100+	A better structured website would also enable customers to find appropriate background information and guidance in a more timely manner. The way in which the new MCA area on the main UK.gov website is organised has made it considerably more difficult to find some of the more detailed guidance documents. See also our comments in response to Q4 regarding out of hours service coverage.
REXT0058	Organisation	Online booking portals for survey and inspections would be useful, but will not replace the benefit of being able to talk to the Local Marine Office about our specific requirements. Digital issuing of certificates would be an advantage. We would be quite happy to be emailed our certificates that we could then print out ourselves. This would obviously save the MCA printing and postage costs A regular industry Enewsletter would be appreciated. This would help to keep us up to date with all updates on MCA procedures.

REXT0059	Organisation	An online system which enables those requiring services to book and adjust surveyor time, online payment, ability to carry out telephone and video conferences. Surveyor consistency is a constant problem from office to office, there is a need for surveyor's assessments and decisions to be available throughout the system to enable alternate surveyor's access to the decisions taken at a previous time. Each vessel being issued with an electronic file which is accessible would be of significant benefit.
REXT0060	Individual	None - email is sufficient
REXT0061	Organisation, 31 – 100	Further internet based survey applications
REXT0062	Organisation, 100+	None other than what are already in place.
REXT0063	Organisation	No Response
REXT0064	Organisation, 100+	No Response
REXT0065	Redacted	Redacted
REXT0066	Organisation, 100+	Proposals for Digital Certificates and electronic storage of records a) We broadly welcome this as a necessary step forward. b) We would like assurances that records are easily available to surveyors even when on site so that issues can be resolved without the need of a subsequent chargeable visit.
REXT0067	Organisation	No Response