



Department
for Transport



UK Cruise Growth Plan





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Foreword



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Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State,
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David Dingle CBE

Chair of CLIA UK Cruise
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Supervisory Board



The cruise industry is a vital part of the UK's maritime and tourism ecosystem.

The UK is a significant cruise market and home to major functions of international cruise lines as well as distinctive British cruise brands.

The cruise sector provided 60,000 jobs to the country in 2023, according to Oxford Economics research commissioned by Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA). As the world's third-largest source market for cruise passengers, and with more than 50 ports welcoming cruise guests from around the world, it is important that the UK continues to attract cruise business. This UK Cruise Growth Plan is a joint endeavour by the UK Government and the UK cruise industry - facilitated by CLIA and the UK Chamber of Shipping - following years of successful

collaboration. The plan serves two purposes. It aims to promote the unique strengths of the UK's thriving cruise sector, and to accelerate progress towards our shared vision: a UK cruise sector that enjoys sustained growth, benefiting the UK economy and coastal communities.

The formation of this plan is a case study in effective collaboration between government and industry. This plan captures the key Growth and People challenges and opportunities faced by the UK cruise sector and spells out our shared commitments to meet them.

These commitments will drive the industry's support for UK Government missions, including economic growth and opportunity for all.

The clarity and certainty of direction represented by these commitments will boost the UK cruise industry's competitive advantage in an internationally competitive sector.

This Plan is focused exclusively and intentionally on the UK cruise sector's growth, and on its people. It also offers a strong blueprint for our future collaboration on connected priorities, such as further progress towards net zero and increasing environmental protection. This plan sits alongside the UK Government's Maritime Decarbonisation Strategy, through which we will work together on shared ambitions and policy development.

Whilst our joint commitments for the UK cruise sector remain steadfast, the outputs in support of them will be adapted as necessary when events demand it. This plan is designed to allow both Government and industry to respond with agility and flexibility in an uncertain international landscape in pursuit of common goals.

We look forward to delivering this UK Cruise Growth Plan in partnership.

We are confident the ongoing relationship between the UK Government and the cruise industry will continue to deliver sustainable economic growth throughout the UK.

Keir Mather MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State,
Department for Transport

David Dingle CBE

Chair of CLIA UK Cruise Council and
Member UK Chamber of Shipping
Supervisory Board

A driver of responsible economic growth

The UK is a world-leading cruise nation. This gives the UK a significant competitive advantage, bringing substantial economic benefits and supporting responsible growth opportunities.

These benefits arise from inbound, outbound, and domestic cruise tourism:

- Every year, there are millions of passenger visits to UK ports and destinations contributing to our visitor economy, often in regions that are harder to access through other forms of tourism. These visits include British nationals seeking to explore their own country.
- The UK is an international cruise hub with guests flying in from around the world to begin their cruises from UK ports.
- The popularity of domestic and international round-Britain cruising benefits coastal communities around the country, including in many remote regions.
- International cruise companies have located their head offices and operations in the UK, bringing both economic and employment opportunities.

The economic impact of cruise tourism is significant and multilayered. According to CLIA, over 60% of cruise guests will return to places they have visited on a cruise, further enhancing the tourism benefit.

Cruise tourism benefits coastal and remote regions and islands that may be harder to reach by other means, supporting local services such as tourist attractions, restaurants, tour operators, shops, taxi and bus drivers, and hotels. This spending is not restricted to the duration of the cruise, as CLIA research shows that the majority of people stay in hotels both at the start and end of their cruise holiday.

CLIA research also reports that the sector supports many thousands of jobs, both directly and indirectly. There is an extensive supply chain across the country providing a vast array of products and services, encompassing interior design, catering, port services, ground handling, logistics, ship retrofit and repair, new build, and net zero technology support to name a few.

In addition, the UK has a thriving travel agency community, which benefits from the UK's position as the world's third-largest source market for cruise.

The annual value of cruise to the UK economy is estimated by Oxford Economics to have been £5.8 billion in 2023, including direct, indirect and induced output.

The UK cruise sector today



A thriving sector means growth potential

According to Cruise Britain, in 2024, there were 3.27 million passenger embarkations and disembarkations at UK ports.

The number of passenger visits to UK ports for a transit call has exceeded two million for both 2023 and 2024. This reflects a continued growth trend since the pandemic and is now some 20% higher than pre-pandemic. Of these passenger visits, Cruise Britain reports 77% are estimated to be from international visitors.

The UK Government recognises the contribution of tourism to its growth agenda and has committed to increasing inbound visits to the UK to 50 million by 2030. As an integral part of the tourism economy, cruise tourism will play a key role in helping the Government to achieve this ambition, bringing significant economic value not only to port cities but to wider coastal and rural communities through extended visitor itineraries and regional excursions.

Developing the UK skills base

The cruise industry offers fulfilling and rewarding careers at sea and landside, with a huge diversity of professional opportunities available.

The UK Department for Transport (DfT), and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), aim to increase the number of new officer cadets recruited by funding 50% of the cost of training. In addition, the DfT and MCA are future-proofing seafarer training through a Cadet Training and Modernisation programme.

The cruise industry also offers multiple careers that mirror opportunities available in land tourism and hospitality services, creating

transferable career pathways. Guest services, entertainment, shore excursion planning, sales, and hospitality management are just a few of the many roles available.

Furthermore, the UK is home to cruise line head offices, hosting operational, sales, business administration, ship management, and legal functions.

An unrivalled cruise ports sector

Cruise facilities located in ports provide operational support for the arrival and departure of cruise ships of all shapes and sizes.

The geographical spread of cruise ports enables access to diverse cultural, historical and natural attractions across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, creating the opportunity for leading itineraries for both domestic and international cruise markets.

The UK's ports' spread, and infrastructure are a major asset to the cruise sector, offering deep-water berths, safe anchorages, modern facilities, and access to key visitor destinations and attractions. In addition, turnaround and transit calls generate substantial local and regional value through passenger spending, crew visits, port fees, supply chain activity, and shore excursion services.

UK ports also benefit from being in the wider British Isles cruising region and proximity to major cruise routes in Northern Europe, well-established marine services, and a high standard of safety, security, and environmental compliance.

Building on our nation's maritime heritage to attract investment

In increasingly volatile and uncertain times, the UK is a country that cruise business can bank on.

The UK has a proud heritage as a world-leading maritime nation. Throughout its history, the seas have played a pivotal role in our fortunes, and this continues into the present day. In 2024, around 85% of goods imports and exports measured by weight were moved by sea.

The UK's maritime offer is attractive and highly competitive. To support shipping companies working in or with the UK, the Department for Transport and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency launched the UK Shipping Concierge in 2021, a team dedicated to supporting maritime business.

Such benefits include the UK's non-negotiable safety standards and excellent representation at the International Maritime Organization (IMO), where the UK is a category A member. The UK's priorities at the IMO include a commitment to enhancing maritime safety and protecting the marine environment. UK-flagged vessels also have access to the

high-quality technical expertise at the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, with optional corporate tax arrangements aimed at investors looking to strategically and commercially manage their shipping fleets from the UK, whilst training UK-based cadets.

The cruise industry is a vital and growing part of the wider UK shipping sector, contributing significantly to economic growth, regional jobs and development, and the UK's global maritime reputation. It also serves as a visible showcase of UK maritime capability and customer service.

The cruise industry enjoys close relationships with multiple departments across the UK Government, Devolved Governments, local authorities, cruise and port operators – relationships that will drive forward the UK Cruise Growth Plan.

Reassurance provided by the UK's strong security offer

The UK Government offers a robust security package to UK and Red Ensign Group (REG) flagged vessels. The UK has the capacity to horizon scan for emerging threats, as well as react to potential security threats to British shipping while remaining agile to security alerts and responding accordingly with industry and wider Government partners.

Why we need a UK Cruise Growth Plan - challenges and opportunities

The UK Government and UK cruise industry have agreed on the following shared Growth and People priorities:

- **Economic impact**
The UK cruise sector's long-term competitive advantage is boosted by positioning the UK as an inbound, outbound and domestic cruise tourism destination, a source market for cruise passengers, and a world-leading hub for maritime-related investment.
- **People, skills, and safety**
Grow a diverse and skilled maritime workforce, and maintain globally recognised safety standards, by positioning the UK as a leader in maritime training, accessibility and green and digital skills development.

Joint growth and people commitments

Economic impact

Shared challenges and opportunities within this theme	Joint commitments
Enhancing the competitive business and industrial environment for cruise in the UK	<p>The UK Government recognises the importance of port infrastructure, maritime innovation, and tourism facilities in supporting international cruise activity and will continue to engage with global partners to explore opportunities for investment and development in these areas.</p> <p>The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) will continue to support and enhance the competitive business environment for the UK cruise industry and promote the opportunities within it to global investors.</p>
Transforming borders for the cruise industry	The UK cruise industry will continue to work with the UK Government on the transition to a digital immigration and border system, and together explore further opportunities that can help reducing friction and administrative burden for crew, passenger and goods.
Boosting UK cruise infrastructure by transforming planning	The UK Government commits to ensuring the planning system is fit for purpose - and to exploring what opportunities exist for UK ports in this planning reform.
Increasing international cruise visitor numbers, and cruise visitor spending, in the UK	The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) will work with VisitBritain and Devolved Governments to ensure its international marketing campaigns highlight the UK's cruise destinations and experiences, showcasing the sector's contribution to the visitor economy and its appeal to all travellers.

Economic impact

Shared challenges and opportunities within this theme	Joint commitments
Recognising cruise within UK inbound, outbound and domestic tourism sectors	<p>The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) will seek to ensure that the the UK cruise industry is appropriately considered in relevant tourism dialogues, initiatives, and strategies led by the UK Government - including but not limited to the Visitor Economy Advisory Council, Devolved Governments, and Crown Dependencies. DCMS will seek to align where possible with the tourism bodies to explore ways to address barriers to sustainable growth potential for the cruise industry in the UK. The UK cruise industry commits to continuing to assist in such alignment where possible.</p> <p>The UK Government and the UK cruise industry will continue to share data, where appropriate, to showcase the sector's positive impact to the UK economy and support policy development decisions.</p>
Helping UK coastal communities see and shape the positive impact of cruise visits	The UK cruise industry will continue to collaborate with the coastal communities it visits, in partnership with local and regional stakeholders, and, where appropriate, with Local Visitor Economy Partnerships and Maritime Clusters programmes.

Joint growth and people commitments

People, skills and safety

Shared challenges and opportunities within this theme	Joint commitments
Amplify and identify the cruise sector's future workforce needs	The Department for Transport (DfT) and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) will continue to future-proof training for careers at sea, to ensure the UK can continue to offer the UK cruise industry officers and ratings who are highly skilled, internationally competitive and equipped to handle current and new vessels, fuels and technologies; skills that are also transferable to shore-side roles.
	The UK Government will collaborate with the UK cruise, shipping, and maritime industries to develop training pathways for shore-side maritime careers and hospitality roles servicing the cruise sector, all of which generate employment and economic growth in coastal communities beyond the ports.
	The UK Government will collaborate with the UK cruise industry to identify any skills gaps for the cruise sector emerging from the digital and green transition.
	The National Shipbuilding Office (NSO) is open to continuing to build a shared understanding with the UK cruise industry of what the opportunity for cruise ship repair, dry-dock, refit and retrofit could look like for the UK.
Security	The UK Government commits to engaging the UK cruise industry on UK Government maritime security priorities as they evolve.
	The UK cruise industry is committed to monitor security issues facing the maritime industry, continuing to engage with the UK Government as it does so.
	The UK cruise industry is committed to sharing findings from its security reviews with the UK Government, and vice versa.

People, skills and safety

Shared challenges and opportunities within this theme	Joint commitments
Safety	The UK Government commits to continuing to engage the UK cruise industry on maritime safety priorities and adherence to recognised international standards. The UK cruise industry is committed to sharing findings from its safety reviews with the UK Government, and vice versa.
	The UK Government is committed to exploring how it can support the UK cruise industry's own modernisation of seafarer training, for safety of its crew and passengers.
Accessibility	The UK cruise industry will continue to engage with the Department for Transport (DfT) and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), on areas of accessibility, including those identified in the annual maritime passenger accessibility survey. Potential focal areas of collaboration are: cruise industry collaboration with terminal operators to facilitate movement around ports; accessible boarding and disembarking at all stages of the cruise; and accessible travel information and pre-booking processes for cruise passengers.
	The UK cruise industry will continue to deliver staff training that consistently meets and satisfies cruise passengers' accessibility requirements.
	The Department for Transport (DfT) commits to working with the UK cruise industry to support operator compliance with passenger rights regulations and to improve the accessibility of the multi-modal journeys that enable cruise holidays, ensuring a more inclusive experience for all passengers.

Future implementation

This UK Cruise Growth Plan sets out our shared vision, our priority challenges and opportunities, and our Joint Commitments that will guide our collective progress.

We will review progress against these Joint Commitments through regular meetings within established governance mechanisms to ensure continued alignment and collaboration, including enhancing opportunities for growth and tackling any challenges jointly.

Updates on progress against the delivery of our Joint Commitments will be delivered at least annually, with major milestones of progress and future priorities communicated via the GOV.UK website, ensuring transparency, shared accountability, and sustained momentum.



