

**ANNOTATED AGENDA FOR DISCUSSION BETWEEN BRIAN JOHNSON &
MINISTER COURTS ON MONDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2021 (10:55 – 12:00)**

Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB)

The earlier advice note we provided has been resent with this note (ANNEX A), to help with our discussion.

MCA approach to decarbonisation

The presentation was discussed with Christopher Rodrigues and shared last week. I can talk you through our approach, using the slides to illustrate this. For ease, the presentation has been resent with this note (ANNEX B).

Grandfather Rights

Minister will be aware that the legislation to modernise smaller passenger ship safety (particularly on the tidal Thames) has been stalled because of concerns at the Cabinet Office. The Department has provided further information in an effort to unblock the regulations – we welcome Minister’s continuing support to get the legislation in place.

IMO Instruments Implementation Audit (by the IMO)

The IMO team has completed the formal audit of the UK Maritime Administration – they spoke to more than 90 colleagues from the MCA, the Department and other parts of the machinery of government. They have highlighted just two findings – one about the backlog of maritime legislation (Minister will be familiar with that) and one related to some of our Overseas Territories not being engaged with cruise ships’ Search and Rescue Cooperation Plans. Audits of this type usually highlight between 15-20 findings – to get just two is testament to the UK’s professional standards and compliance with our international obligations.

Your speech tomorrow at the Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council is timely. We must make sure that they do not see the successful audit as a reason to turn their attention away from good governance and compliance.

Legislation Backlog

Thank you for explaining the backlog in maritime legislation recently at the House of Lord’s Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Select Committee. We have a clear plan to clear the backlog over the next year or so, which will also address the main finding from the IMO audit. Three Statutory Instruments related to the International Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention will be coming for signing in early December.

Aviation – the UKSAR2G Programme

Bids have been returned for UKSAR2G and are currently being evaluated. Evaluation will conclude in early December; Bristow Helicopters, Sensitive & 2 Excel and S&I have all returned bids on some or all of the four lots.

It is too early to indicate what the outcome will look like. However, we are still on track to make considerable savings under the new contract/s when awarded. S&I

S&I

We are building capacity into our aviation arrangements to support patrols over the English Channel.

Minister is due to visit East Midlands Airport in December (provisionally 16 December) where he will visit RVL Aviation and see our aerial dispersant spray system.

The Channel and Small Boat Crossings

The Home Secretary signed off the turnaround tactics that Border Force can use in limited circumstances when a small boat is not in distress. Whilst Border Force surface resources have been deployed once, we have had no requests to terminate search and rescue activity.

There will be winter crossings, but our attention is turning to preparations for when the weather improves in the spring. Given the tentative predictions for next year we are moving the unmanned aircraft system (UAS) from our base in Caernarvon to Lydd underpinned by a permanent, fixed wing capability. This will provide a 2,000 hour flying programme that can respond to peaks in small boat crossings giving us situational awareness in the Channel to support search and rescue.

Concierge Service

The concierge service continues to get positive endorsement from industry. The team is actively involved in discussions with shipping firms covering tonnage tax, training, international tax issues, ship decommissioning, decarbonisation investment and much more. A very positive partnering relationship has been established with Department for International Trade officials.

Tonnage Tax

We have provided HM Treasury with feedback from our industry stakeholders on the reforms to tonnage tax announced in the Autumn statement. Industry leaders are very pleased to see shipping and UK flag get so much positive attention but are keen to see the practical details of the reforms and how they could affect their decisions around growing UK business. We are working very closely with HMRC to clarify the specifics of each reform.

HM Coastguard Incidents 2021 & Beach Safety Responsibilities

Between January and October 2021, we dealt with over 32,000 incidents – up 19% from 2019 and 2020. Excluding suicides, deaths at the coast have gone up by 16.5% compared to 2020. The top five contributing activities are coastal walking, swimming, angling, manual paddle sports and sailing.

There has been a 60% increase in mutual aid requests for HM Coastguard to support other emergency services and local authorities in 2021.

The Minister will recall writing to Michael Gove, the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, to seek views on where lead policy responsibility for beach safety should sit. These discussions have now passed to the Economic and Domestic Affairs Secretariat. We are engaged in this process.

Fishing Vessel Safety

Fishing remains a safety concern. In our last round of concentrated inspections in the north of England and Northern Ireland we found 40% of the boats checked were non-compliant with safety requirements. This is an industry where instilling a “safety first” culture is challenging. We have employed more investigators to take robust action against rule breakers and we are using our communications channels to stress safety messages through the “Home & Dry” campaign. It may take more time yet to see that effort translate into fewer deaths and incidents.

Brian Johnson
11 November 2021