

BRITISH PORTS

# ANNUAL REPORT



# ABOUT BPA

The British Ports Association is the national membership body for ports in the UK.

We represent the interests of operators that handle 86% of all UK port traffic, to Westminster and devolved Governments, and other national and international bodies.

We are an inclusive and progressive association, open to all and committed to the fair treatment of ports up and down the country.

As our membership comprises many ports, terminal operators and port facilities, all of varying size, location and nature, the Association is able to draw upon a wide range of experience and knowledge to represent its members' interests.

We also have a strong network of Associate Members who add much to the value of membership.





Mike Sellers - Portsmouth International Port Chair



**Doug Bannister -Port of Dover** Deputy Chair



Maurice Bullick OBE -Belfast Harbour Honorary Treasurer



Richard Ballantyne OBE Chief Executive



Mark Simmonds Director of Policy & External Affairs



Eileen Salmon Association Secretary & Corporate Services Manager



**Shenaz Bussawon** Events, Marketing & Programmes Manager



George Finch Policy & Economic Analyst



**Rhona Macdonald** Senior Sustainability Advisor



**Zoe Ojo-Earl** Finance & Administration Assistant

The British Ports Association 2023 Annual Report was presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Association, 21 May, 2024.





















33K+ BPA SNAPSHOT OPENS





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# **REPRESENTING MEMBERS**

The British Ports Association (BPA) is the UK port sector's national trade body. Our primary objectives are:

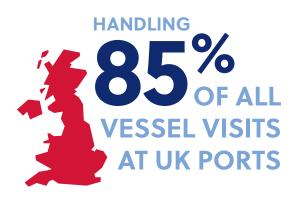
- to represent members' interests and champion the whole of the ports industry;
- to provide information to members, particularly political and regulatory developments which could impact their businesses;
- to create networks for sharing expertise.

We represent over 120 port and terminal members across the UK that collectively manage more than 400 ports, harbours, and marine facilities. This includes the majority of the country's major ports (ports that handle more than one million tonnes of freight per year). We also represent all the UK's main energy gateways and passenger facilities, 19 of the top 20 fishing ports, and an extensive network of ports and harbours that facilitate over one million leisure craft and yachts each year. Our membership accounts for 86% of all UK port tonnage and they handle 85% of all vessel visits at UK ports.





We represent port interests and lobby various tiers of government in the UK and beyond. We are an inclusive organisation and welcome any type of port to join. Our policy is that all ports, whatever their size, location, or ownership, should have equal representation.



We are also the only organisation to promote the entire ports industry and regularly undertake activities to increase the profile of the sector. This was reinforced in 2023 with new parts of government recognising the BPA.

# **2 THE DOMESTIC AGENDA**

While some of the attention ports received was related to major events such as the Covid pandemic and the Brexit fallout, we did see some primary legislation (the Seafarers' Wages Act) come into law. This legislation requires some harbour authorities to verify that shipping lines meeting certain criteria are paying their staff a minimum wage equivalent level.

The implementation is now underway, and the BPA is closely following its development. While we sympathise with the government's position, we do not view ports as a suitable mechanism to enforce the new rules.

There were also certain regional growth tools such as 'Levelling Up' strategies and funding announced in 2023, but pushing for progress on policies such as port connectivity remains challenging. We continue to be fully engaged with all tiers of government around the UK on a range of policy and legislative influences on the UK ports industry. From transport and connectivity, to marine licensing and environmental protection, we have continued a programme of activity across the UK. This included the launch of the reviews of the National Ports Policy Statement in England and the Port Marine Safety Code.

We also increasingly engaged with opposition MPs and parties. We attended the Party Conferences again, hosting and attending events, and we held a special session with the BPA Council looking at the potential policies a Labour government might introduce if it were to come to power.





We promoted the concept of reinforcing what ports do by establishing port zones of economic activity at all our ports while limiting some of the measures that stifle growth and investment in those areas.

The UK Government has responded positively in this area by establishing a number of Freeports, although the numbers were limited and so we want to see the policy rolled out far more widely to avoid regional competition issues.

#### Our aim is to see that all UK ports have the easements and tools necessary to enable them to attract investment and generate growth, and Freeports or Investment Zones can definitely help do this.

Following previous designations in English regions, in 2023 Freeport status was awarded to two sites in Scotland and two in Wales.

There remain some concerns regarding governments' potentially distorting decisionmaking processes. Some ports were included in the UK Government's new Investment Zones, which see similar benefits, so these may become another useful tool for regional growth and investment.

Most port operators are aware of the interest of their environmental impact(s) and are mindful of new developments and activities being subject to increased assessment and safeguarding standards. We continued to highlight the need for such safeguards to be balanced and proportionate.

Finally, geopolitical issues impacted ports through energy prices and supply chain pressures, so we have been reminding policymakers of these developments. Towards the end of the year, Red Sea attacks also had an impact on container and energy ports.

# **ENVIRONMENT** & PLANNING

Port development remained high on our agenda as members reported challenges with terrestrial and marine licensing and consenting. In England, the government finalised preparations for making a 10% biodiversity 'net gain' a mandatory condition of planning. The BPA supported the principle, but was alarmed by the way it was being implemented. While we secured some important changes, there remains work to do. Lessons have been learned as similar approaches are looked at by governments across the UK and in the marine area.

#### Dredging is becoming an issue for an increasing number of ports, and it has become a top priority for the BPA. We have created a new dredging sub-group to share good practice and discuss policy.

Ministers have been considering changes to Action Levels across the UK (some changes were already in effect in Scotland). We made our concerns on Action Levels clear, and emphasised the cost and necessity of dredging, as government agencies have taken an increased interest in the activity.

The Scottish Government dropped plans for Highly Protected Marine Areas following a significant backlash from the fishing community. The Scottish Ports Group also raised concerns, and we were pleased to see Ministers listen. New pilot HPMAs went ahead in England, and while the area covered was much smaller than proposed in Scotland, one port was affected.

The Welsh Government introduced a longawaited Infrastructure Bill that will introduce a unified consenting process for large infrastructure projects. The BPA has been following these proposals for years and it is a welcome development if the new process is well-resourced and implemented. The Welsh Government chose to reconsider new planning rules on flood plains that could have been detrimental to port development but later in the year introduced strict new guidelines for SSSIs.



The UK Government made changes to marine consenting for offshore wind projects in an effort to speed up deployment to meet the UK's ambitious targets. We lobbied for changes to the draft legislation to extend this to marine development in ports related to offshore wind. This is being considered for future changes.

Later in 2023, the UK Government published two action plans to improve processes for securing additional energy from transmission and distribution grid operators. This has been a key priority for the BPA, and we welcomed this as well as the engagement that grew out of it from officials in government. We launched two new and updated projects to support further intervention in this area.

#### A revised first version of the BPA Decarbonisation Benchmarking Tool has been completed and is shortly due to be sent out to members for a first round of data collection.

This tool aims to support UK ports in their decarbonisation journey through the delivery of a robust self-assessment and benchmarking toolkit that accurately measures progress towards reducing carbon emissions and improving energy efficiency of port operations, while also providing a key indicator of the necessary steps to reach industry emission reduction targets.





Ports will be requested to input responses once a year and will be anonymously benchmarked against a sector average. The findings will also allow BPA to publish an annual sustainability report showcasing ports' progress in the energy transition and acting as a useful tool to communicate with government.

Having consulted with the decarbonisation steering group and individual port members, we are now in a position to collect responses from participating ports with the aim to analyse findings and publish an initial report in Q2 2024.

Furthermore, this tool is a continuous work in progress, so the initial round of data collection will also provide an opportunity to assess where amendments are required to ensure the tool is fair, useful, and effective.

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# **PORT GOVERNANCE**

The BPA represents the three main port corporate models: trust, municipal, and private ownership, as well as a collection of some other ports owned by parts of government. The Department for Transport's Ports Good Governance Guidance, published in 2018, continues to be a useful tool for ports as it is focused on corporate governance for all statutory harbour authorities in England, as well as Milford Haven.

It includes information relevant to all types and sizes of organisations that own or manage harbour and port facilities, with specific detailed guidance for trust ports and local authority owned ports. In 2023 DfT, with the help of the BPA, wrote to all harbour authorities about the good principles this document includes as well as reminding ports of the value of compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code. Welcomingly both the Government and our members reinforced the value of the BPA as the industry standard bearer and highlighted that those handful of ports outside the BPA perhaps have more work to do on improving governance.

Meanwhile, the Northern Irish Executive advised that it was considering new ports guidance which could be soon formally consulted on, which we very much welcome. Also, we soon expect Transport Scotland to consult a revised guidance document for Scottish ports. The Welsh Government have said they have no plans to produce a document yet.





On trust ports, we updated our stakeholder briefing document and with the assistance of external specialists, produced a legal advice note for members. We also held online trust board member briefing sessions, which had a very strong turnout.

Trust port classification remains an issue we consider, and it remains our policy to encourage the Government to remove the classification of major trust ports to help them operate without the unhelpful categorisation. This is potentially something we will be discussing with a new UK Government. Lastly, we held an online meeting of our municipal ports members to look at their common themes and challenges. This included the financial situation councils face, as well as common legal issues faced by ports including Freedom of Information Act requests.



# **SAFETY**

In 2023 we were closely involved in the reviews of the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) and the associated Guide to Good Practice by the Department for Transport and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

Alongside this, we continued to promote the principles of the Code worked with government to increase its awareness.

We expect both the Code and Guide to be published this year, and the next MCA compliance review to be published in 2025.

We continued to organise online PMSC duty holder workshops, which we provide free to BPA member ports but encourage nonmembers to join for a small fee.

We held a new introductory course version in conjunction with the specialists ABPmer and will be organising more workshops through 2024. Separately, we followed wider issues across the maritime community including reports and recommendations promulgated by the Marine Accident and Investigation Branch.

We continued to raise pilot ladder deficiencies and dangerously weighted heaving lines to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, and we were pleased to see the Personal Water Craft regulatory classification situation resolved with UK Government legislation.

# **PILOTS' NATIONAL PENSION FUND**

The BPA provides the secretariat for the Association of Participating Bodies of the Pilots National Pension Fund (PNPF).

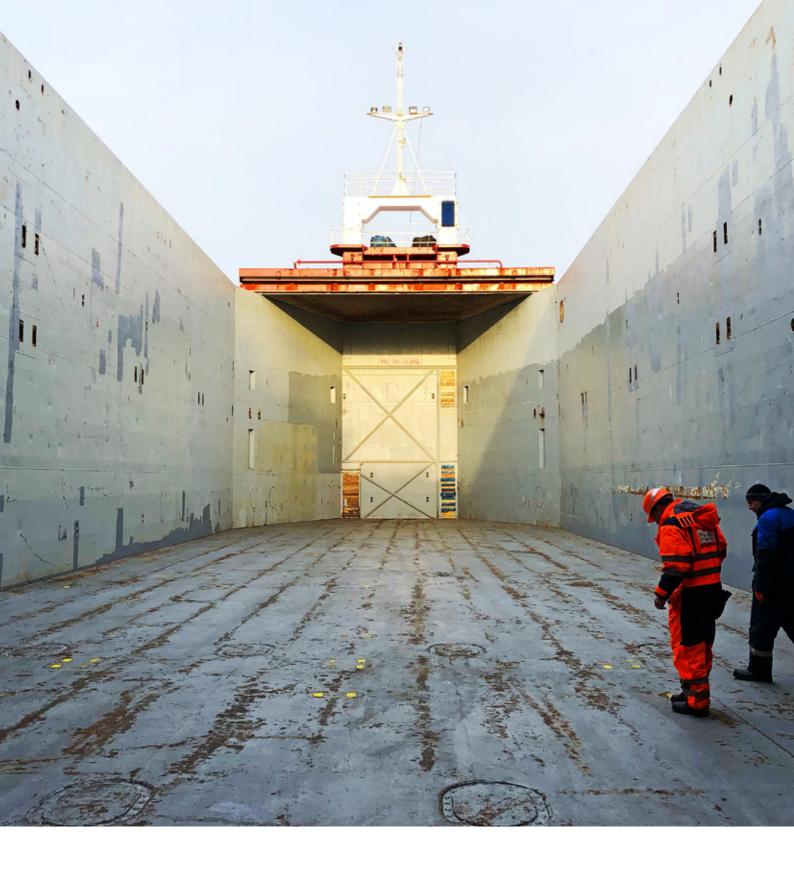
2023 saw the publication of the 2022 Triennial Valuation; this was accompanied by consultation with the Participating bodies and a Valuation Workshop held on 9 October to discuss the findings.

Investment markets were reviewed at the January AGM, and despite challenges in 2022, the fund remains on target to meet long-term funding objectives, and the Trustees are comfortable that targets are achievable in a risk-control approach. The fund is well diversified and remains in the range of the journey plan with the current investment strategy aiming to generate gilts plus 2.2% target return via a multi-asset solution using specialist third party experts in a costeffective manner.

It was agreed that the Trustees would provide members with quarterly investment updates.

We are grateful to Heath McGuire, the Chair of Trustees of the PNPF, and colleagues for their support. As ever, we thank the Port of Dover Chair, Richard Everitt, for his efforts Chairing the Association and Peter Swift of Peel Ports, who acts as Treasurer.





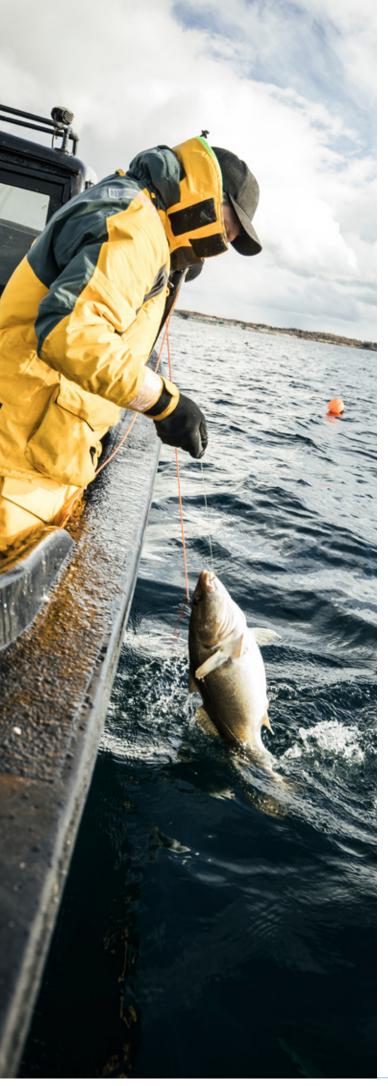


It was a busy year for Ports Skills and Safety (PSS), for which the BPA and UKMPG act as joint quasi-shareholders. The organisation welcomed Stuart Wallace, COO at Forth Ports as board Chair, succeeding David Brown of Bristol Port. Eddie Scoggins, Head of Health, and Safety at Hutchinsons Ports, has taken the position of Vice Chair, and Angela Jeffrey from Port of London Authority became Treasurer in March. The BPA continues to have at least three representatives on the PSS Board, with Stuart supported by former Harwich Haven CEO Neil Glendinning and Martin Lawlor of the Port of Blyth. PSS also welcomed two new staff members: Jen Maddison, Health, Safety, and Culture lead, and Archie Turvey as marketing apprentice.

PSS refreshed its brand with a new logo and strategy in July, culminating in a new website launch in early 2024. The new website features more resources and a discussion forum where PSS members can pose questions to other members. PSS has a standing invite to BPA colleagues to attend the PSS members conference which takes place during Maritime Safety Week each year. Meanwhile PSS continues to take part in the Marine Pilotage Group and has representation at the BPA conference, parliamentary receptions, and other ad-hoc meetings.

We recommend members consider joining PSS as the main body working towards safer ports and achieving a highly-skilled work force.







The BPA is a member of the umbrella body Maritime UK and sits on its National Council and various working groups and networks.

Chris Shirling-Rooke MBE took over as CEO for Maritime UK during the summer of 2023. Since starting, extensive work has been done to refresh the programmes it delivers, which included launching a two-year draft programme of events.

Its main theme is the new Coastal Powerhouse Summits which will consist of careers, policy, diversity, skills, and technology events, and will facilitate collaboration between national and regional stakeholders, supporting coastal communities, port cities, and the broader maritime ecosystem.

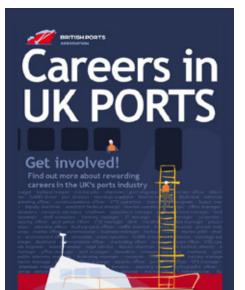
Other achievements included securing £1 million from the UK Government to support Coastal Communities, launching a Roadshow for Girls programme designed to encourage young women to study STEM subjects at school, and more broadly, the MUK ambassador programme engaged with over 45,000 young people from across the UK. They held a number of successful events, including the 2023 awards in Hull, attended by their Patron the Princess Royal, and an AI event with the Department for Transport and Google to support the rapid technological advancements in the sector.

They hosted 14 events over London International Shipping Week, welcoming 1,000 national and international stakeholders from across the industry. During the Autumn Party Conference season, they supported the sector with three receptions.

Shenaz Bussawon is the Deputy Chair of Maritime UK's Ethnicity in Maritime's group and attended Maritime UK's meeting at Waterman's Hall with engaging conversations and points raised about attracting students at career events.









# **CAREERS IN PORTS**

We have taken a leading role in promoting careers in our sector, and in 2023 we produced a new Careers in UK Ports brochure which profiles the wide range of jobs the industry provides. We use this at careers events and share it with policymakers. This is a precursor to our People in Ports initiative which we plan to roll out in 2024.

Additionally, we share ideas and industry best practice related to port careers and apprenticeships with Port Skills and Safety and Maritime UK.





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# **BPA CONFERENCE**

The Port of London Authority hosted the BPA 2023 conference with a record of 400 attendees and 36 Exhibitors. The UK Maritime Minister Baroness Vere provided an opening address, and the conference closed with a keynote address from climate change campaigner Lord Deben.

The BPA Awards were a highlight of the conference:

- Community Impact Award Belfast Harbour
- Sustainability Award Port of Aberdeen
- Skills Award Winner Plymouth Cattewater Harbour
- Outstanding Individual Award Winner Jim Warner, Harwich Haven Authority

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# **BPA EVENTS**

#### Over 300 people attended the BPA Annual Lunch, with the Maritime Minister making an address. This was followed by a lively BPA Summer reception in London for members.

During London International Shipping Week, we organised and participated in several events including our Coastal Shipping Seminar in collaboration with ARUP, and a joint drinks reception with Ports Skills and Safety at the BT Tower with spectacular views over London.

We also organised a Welsh Ports reception at the Senedd which was well attended by Welsh ports and Senedd representatives. This was sponsored by Sam Kurtz, with speeches from Welsh Ports Group Chair Andrew Harston and Welsh Transport Minister Lee Waters.

In November we held the joint Scottish Parliamentary reception in Holyrood, which was sponsored by Liam McArthur MSP, followed by an address from Scottish Ports Chair Stuart Cresswell and Scottish Transport Minister Fiona Hyslop MSP.



# 12 **BPA INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS**

In terms of BPA staffing, we appointed a new Finance and Administration Assistant in September to support the existing team. Prior to that we employed an intern over spring and summer, who assisted with various projects.



# **BPA WORKING GROUPS**

#### **Scottish Ports Group**

#### Chaired by Stuart Cresswell, Associated British Ports

The Scottish Ports Group represents all the major ports in Scotland as well as numerous smaller ports and harbours and is the only industry-led forum in Scotland representing the views of the sector.

The Group has continued to foster a close relationship with Scottish Government officials across multiple directorates, engaging with them on a range of policy matters. In 2023 the Secretariat met Tom Arthur MSP and Scottish Transport Secretary Fiona Hyslop. The Group has also worked closely with other industry bodies, including Crown Estate Scotland, Scottish Council for Development and Industry, Scottish Chambers of Commerce, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

We collaborated with the Enterprise agencies to launch Scottish Ports: Gateways for Growth 2023, a new policy document which outlined the BPA's positions on a range of Scottish matters and promoted the breadth of the Scottish ports industry.

#### Welsh Ports Group

#### Chaired by Andrew Harston, Associated British Ports

We run this as an all-industry group to which non-Welsh port BPA members and UKMPG have standing invite. We have been working more closely with Welsh officials from Cardiff to understand and help shape their priorities, including on a new transport strategy and supporting freight. The Group is wellrepresented by a range of Welsh ports.

After a change in chairmanship, the Group resumed its normal activities in 2023 with sessions with the Welsh Government, a reception for the Welsh Ports Group in the Senedd and meetings with Welsh Transport Minister Lee Walters.

#### **Northern Irish Ports Committee**

The Northern Irish Ports Committee met once in 2023 and we expect more developments this year with the return of Stormont. Representatives from the NI Department for Infrastructure also regularly liaise with the group regarding updates on the work they are doing across the sector, and lately we are following port governance, regulatory, and business rates reviews.



#### **Communications Network**

#### Chaired by Richard Christian, Port of Dover

The Communications Network is for port PR and communications professionals to share good practice and discuss individual and industry-wide campaigns and issues. Discussions have focused on reacting to EU Exit and potential disruption, the importance of the industry during the pandemic, and proactive campaigns managed by Maritime UK.

#### Environment Policy & Sustainable Affairs Group

#### Chaired by Alan Tinline, Associated British Ports, and organised jointly with UKMPG

Climate change and the environment are areas with large regulatory burdens attached, so this generates a lot of work for us, and we expect it to do so for the foreseeable future. The group is always well attended by a broad range of ports which helps inform our continued engagement with Government on domestic and international issues. A number of working groups to better manage the workload have been established.

They are:

- Open-Loop Scrubbers
- Dredging
- Steering Group for the Development of an Environmental Good Practice Guide
- Scope 3 Emissions
- Decarbonisation Benchmarking Steering Group

The Group met three times in 2023 with sub-groups meeting variously in between as needed. It received updates from government officials regarding initiatives related to energy connections reform and ongoing policy development around port decarbonisation.

#### **Ferry Ports Group**

#### Chaired by Emma Ward, Port of Dover

This group focuses on border control issues for goods and passengers travelling via the UK's network of Ro-Ro ports. The impact of Brexit on the Ro-Ro sector continued to be a major focus of the group through the year, as ports prepare for sanitary and phytosanitary border controls on goods arriving from the EU, and the delayed use of Border Control Posts. We also followed the passage and introduction of the Seafarers Act into law.

The group meet on several occasions throughout the year, which included a joint meeting with the UK Chamber of Shipping's Ferry and Cruise Panel.

#### **Finance Managers Working Group**

#### Chaired by Sara Bassett, Shoreham Port

This group comprises finance personnel from ports round the UK. It aims to provide a forum for discussion and exchange of views and ideas between Port Finance Managers and identify and share best practice. The group met in-person in October 2023, hosted by Ashfords LLP at their London offices. The group now meets three times a year, inviting speakers to present on various subjects. Presentations in 2023 included Energy Tri-lemma in Ports, Flexible Finance, Procurement Bill, and Port Refinancing. They also receive an annual update from the Chair of the Procurement subgroup.

Discussions have included port performance and challenges, IT systems, insurance renewal and a reviews of the BPA's annual Remuneration Survey.

#### **Fishing Ports Group**

#### Chaired by Martyn Boyers, Grimsby Fish Dock

The fishing ports and harbours that we represent are sat fairly between catchers and processors, providing an essential part of the supply chain. The Group's lobbying saw a £100 million UK-wide fisheries fund – the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme (FaSS) – launched with two thirds aimed at infrastructure. The Group met in Peterhead and will return to meeting twice a year from 2024.



#### HR & Employment Network

#### Chaired by Stuart Balmer-Howieson, Port of Blyth

This Group consists of HR and employment professionals from a wide range of UK ports and usually meets twice a year to collaborate on common issues, share ideas, and network. Discussions have included recruitment challenges, hybrid working arrangements post pandemic, pay negotiations, managing equality, inclusion, and diversity, boosting employee engagement, and automated HR systems.

In 2023 the network received presentations on employment law, mental health first aid provision, and attracting gender diversity. Port Skills and Safety provided an update on their skills strategy, and the Department for Work and Pensions outlined their various systems of support for employers. The network met at ABP's Port of Hull in October.

Members of this group assisted with our annual Remuneration Benchmarking Survey, which was published in August 2023. It received 58 responses (an improvement from the previous year) from a wide range of ports. The results provide useful information for ports when negotiating remuneration and reward packages, and to encourage take-up we insist that only members that participate in the survey receive the final results.

#### Marine/Pilotage Group

#### Chaired by Gary Doyle, Peel Ports and organised jointly with UKMPG

Much of the work of this all-industry group stems from the Port Marine Safety Code Steering Group. It also takes the lead in responding to MAIB reports. The Group invites representatives from the Maritime Coastguard Agency, UK Maritime Pilots' Association and Port Skills and Safety to each meeting to provide regular updates and discuss issues of mutual interest.

Priority issues continue to be the PMSC review of the code and Guide to Good Practice. There are continuing concerns regarding Hadrian rails and clipping arrangements, categorising ladders, and slower vessel speeds to reduce emissions causing congestion.

Guest speakers this year have included: Katy Ware, MCA, View from the Regulator; Lisa McAuliffe, Deputy to the SOSREP, National Contingency Plan; Chris Tune, DfT Head of Maritime Ukraine Response Maritime Security Division; Stuart Rivers, Chief Executive Merchant Navy Welfare Board, Port Welfare Facilities, Levies and Unauthorised Ship Visitors.





#### **Port Infrastructure Group**

#### Chaired by Brian Rousell, Shoreham Port

This Group is an all industry, non-policy grouping of senior engineers and managers which includes ports outside the BPA umbrella, such as those in the Republic of Ireland. It meets at port locations with a strong emphasis on site visits, infrastructure, planning rules, and port design. Specialist speakers are also invited to every meeting to look at engineering and maintenance challenges.

In 2023 the Group visited Portsmouth International Port and saw construction of the new ferry terminal and BCP. We expect to return to two visits a year in 2024.

#### **Procurement Subgroup**

#### Chaired by Richard Hopperton, Port of London Authority

The group meets twice yearly with an aim to consider best practice and learn from experiences shared. The group reports to the Finance Managers Group annually.

We were able to hold a face-to-face Workshop at Park Street on the new Procurement Act 2023, delivered by members of the Cabinet Office.

Further meetings saw presentations on energy procurement and port infrastructure procurement. Roundtable discussions included the possibility of having a shared procurement framework, and supplier and governance monitoring of approved suppliers. With this in mind, a survey was carried among members of the group, which was completed by nine members and the results were shared with those that responded.

#### **Property Network**

#### Chaired by Victoria Beattie, Port of Tyne

This group was set up in 2021 to consider the many challenges surrounding port property and share experiences. Discussions incorporate planning, business rates, innovation, green energy, and property management. This included the new business rate valuations in 2023, VOA experiences, innovation and green energy generation, and property management strategies.

Presentations in 2023 included a review of English commercial leasing rules, sustainable ports, and private 5G networks for ports.

General discussions have been around the 2023 rates revaluation, Freeports, planning, MMO consenting, biodiversity and environmental net gain, net zero, and utilities challenges.

#### **Regional Ports Group**

#### Chaired by Richard Allan, Cattewater Harbour Commissioners

The Regional Ports Group comprises English and Welsh ports with an annual throughput of fewer than one million tonnes and/or with a strong marine leisure focus.

The group ordinarily meets twice a year and holds seminars with speakers on key topics. Policy matters for regional ports discussed this year included personal watercraft, recreational boat user safety, and how small ports can reach net zero.

#### Security & Resilience Group

#### Chaired by Andy Billings, Associated British Ports, organised jointly with UKMPG

This group disseminates updates and forms industry-wide positions on security and resilience policy. The group meets twice a year and has good engagement from across HMG including DfT, NACTSO, and Police Forces. The BPA launched a Security Alert system to help quickly disseminate security incidents to members of the group, which we know has prevented at least one crime from occurring.



#### **British Ports Association**

30 Park Street, Ground Floor, London, SE1 9EQ

T: +44 (0)20 7260 1780 E: info@britishports.org.uk W: britishports.org.uk

X (Twitter): @britishports Instagram: britishports LinkedIn: British Ports Association



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