

Maritime UK briefing note

HOUSE OF COMMONS GENERAL DEBATE ON 'SUPPORT FOR THE AVIATION, TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRIES', 10 JUNE 2021

The UK maritime sector and Covid-19

- The UK maritime sector, represented by umbrella body Maritime UK, comprises the shipping, ports, engineering, professional services, and leisure marine industries.
- The sector contributes £46.1bn to the economy every year and supports 1.1 million jobs across all nations and regions in the UK. 95% of UK imports and exports are moved by sea.
- The critical role of maritime has been highlighted throughout the Covid-19 crisis, in driving and maintaining critical supply chains for essential goods such as food and medicines, as well as contributing to the prosperity of coastal communities in the UK, which were hit hard by the pandemic.

Maritime leisure and tourism industries

- Significant parts of the sector are involved in the leisure and tourism industries. This includes cruise, ferry and leisure marine activity in ports and marinas around the country as well as inland waterways. These parts of the sector have been some of the hardest hit by the global pandemic, as restrictions to movement and travel has made cruise and leisure activity difficult and often impossible.
- All UK cruise traffic ground to a halt in March 2020, and while the first domestic cruises have recently started sailing around the UK coast, the implications of the past year should not be understated. It has been estimated that the voluntary suspension of cruise operations in March 2020 has cost more than £7bn and 52,000 jobs. International cruising is still under a specific travel advisory notice from the FCDO, separate from the new traffic light system.
- The pandemic first broke out in the UK at a critical time of the year for the leisure marine industry, which had just started preparing for travel and tourism activity in the summer season. Leisure marine activity is a critical source of income for many coastal communities and for areas around inland waterways across the UK. The absence of visitors will have had implications for businesses of all sizes involved in all parts of the sector: ports, services, engineering, training, education, and so on. The boating tourism industry contributed a

value of £5.8bn to the economy in 2018/19.

- It is important to note that the inability of these parts of the sector to fully operate in the past year also has significant consequences for the wider maritime ecosystems and supply chains, as well as the coastal communities that depend on their business and the visitors they attract. The leisure marine industry is a tourism enabler that has a multiplier effect on other parts of the economy, such as retail, restaurants, and accommodation.

Support for recovery

- Government and industry have a responsibility to support the recovery of all parts of the maritime sector, which will have direct implications for the successful achievement of critical long-term goals such as the decarbonisation of the sector.

What kind of support is industry asking for?

- Support for the resumption of international cruise through early clarity on the body of evidence required from cruise operators, and the removal of the cruise-specific travel advisory from FCDO.
- Support from government to promote tourism which encourages participation in the maritime sector, such as staycations, as well as the health and wellbeing benefits of activity by the water.
- The recovery of those parts of the sector involved in travel and tourism depend on the services of the rest of the sector, including engineering and maintenance. Support must therefore also be considered to ensure that there are jobs and training available for these parts of the sector.
- Support for maritime decarbonisation by providing investment in R&D, which will be key to making the UK a supplier of green products, rather than just a consumer, and which will make it a more attractive destination for tourism.