

# Ladyman backs drive for safer port working environment

Minister sings praises of a 'right mix' of safety and efficiency as second initiative is launched, writes **David Osler**

STEPHEN Ladyman has strongly backed a continuing industry drive to turn ports into safer workplaces.

The British shipping minister was speaking at the launch of the Safer Ports Initiative 2 on board HQS Wellington in London.

The occasion was attended by many leading maritime sector figures with other speakers including Associated British Ports chief executive Bo Lerenius and Maritime and Coastguard Agency chief executive John Astbury.



Ladyman: 'Safety should not be seen as a cost.'

SPI2, as it is known, follows on from the original Safer Ports Initiative, which began in September, 2002.

The first SPI reached its target in bringing down accident rates ahead of schedule, and SPI2 seeks to build on that success.

In his first speech since the recent cabinet reshuffle Dr Ladyman stressed the need for the "right mix" of safety and efficiency.

The perception of port work as unskilled and unsafe must be banished if young people were to be attracted to the job, he said.

"Safety should not be seen as a cost," said Dr Ladyman. "A safe working environment can be an effective environment and a profitable environment."

Mr Lerenius said British ports were among the most efficient and competitive in the world.

Changes in recent decades meant that the work was less labour intensive.

But continuous improvement must be the mantra of every person in every port.

Mr Astbury said there was a need to emphasise a proactive stance and good working practices.

The MCA backed SPI2 and had "an essential role to play", he went on.

Port Skills and Safety, a company jointly owned by the UK Major Ports Groups and the British Ports Association to manage SPI and SPI2, has produced figures to illustrate the extent of safety improvement.

When the government published the report Modern Ports in November, 2002, the industry's accident record was clearly unacceptable, said PSS chairman Dea Crampton.

Ports saw four times the accidents of industry as a whole, twice those of construction, and was equal to quarrying and mining.

Although the industry questioned the statistics it

realised it had work to do and needed something like SPI.

Original targets had been exceeded a year ahead of schedule, with the overall number of accidents per 100 workers down from 4.1 in 2001 to 2.8 in 2004, a decline of 31.7%.

The rate for fatal and major accidents over the same period was down from 0.32 per 100 workers to 0.25 and the rate for incidents needing four or more days off work down from 3.8 to 2.6.

SPI2 would concentrate on qualifications, training and guidance and facilitate their delivery, said Mr Crampton.

In particular, he pointed out that a foundation degree suitable for harbour masters, pilots and port managers was being developed.

Other speakers included Bill Callaghan, chairman of the Health and Safety Commission, and Hugh Robertson, senior health and safety officer at the Trades Union Congress.

# NEW PHASE OF UK PORT SAFETY DRIVE BEGINS

Union involved in initiative which has cut accidents by one-third

**NUMAST** has played a key role within a national safety initiative that has cut the accident rate in UK ports by more than one-third over the past four years.

The second phase of the Safer Ports Initiative was launched last month by shipping minister Dr Stephen Ladyman — who warned that young people would not want to work in a sector lacking a strong safety culture.

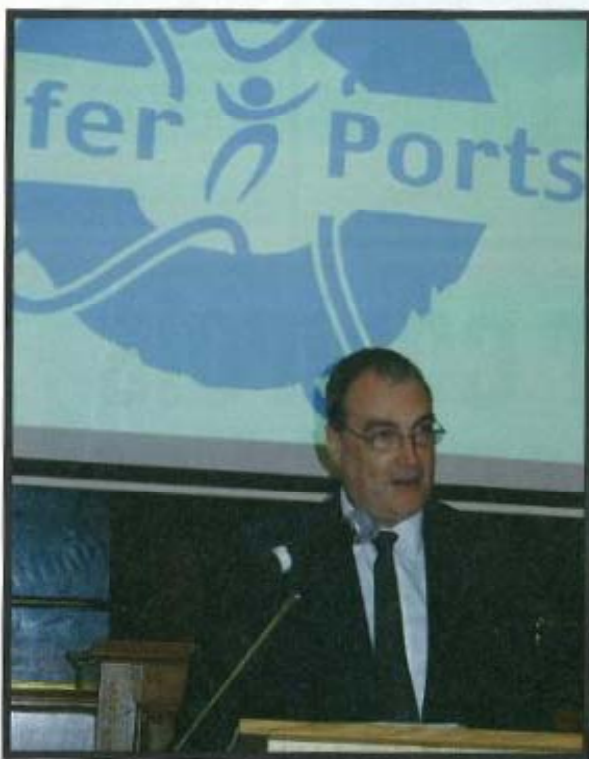
'Any lingering perceptions that the industry is unskilled and, even more worrying, unsafe have to be banished from the minds of young people entering the workforce,' he added.

The first phase of the industry-wide initiative was launched in September 2002, with the target of reducing the rate of reportable fatal and major injury accidents in UK ports by 10% by the end of 2005 and cutting the rate of accidents leading to more than three days off by 20%.

These targets were exceeded a year ahead of schedule, with the overall number of accidents per 100 workers down from 4.1 in 2001 to 2.6 last year — a decline of some 37%.

The rate for fatal and major accidents was down from 0.32 per 100 workers to 0.25 in 2004, while the rate for incidents needing four or more days off work fell from 3.8 to 2.5 over the same period — almost 34%.

Des Crampton, chairman of the Port Skills and Safety body, said the launch of the second phase was 'another major milestone in the development of skills



Shipping minister Dr Stephen Ladyman launches the new port safety initiative

and safety for the ports industry'.

He admitted that the safety record of British ports had clearly been unacceptable at the time the government published a report on the industry in November 2002.

'We recognised that we had a lot of work to do,' he said. Statistics

at this time showed that the docks industry was one of the most dangerous in the UK, with an accident record four times above the national industrial average and twice that of construction.

NUMAST has been part of a national committee — made up of

port employers, government agencies and departments — which has spearheaded the subsequent safety programme.

Mr Crampton said the second phase will now build on the 'very solid achievement' of the past four years — concentrating on qualifications, training and guidance.

The drive to develop a comprehensive qualification structure for the entire industry will include the launch of a ports-based foundation degree relevant for harbour masters, pilots and port managers and to complement the port safety code.

Links to the Merchant Navy are also being enhanced through the Maritime Skills Alliance, which was launched in 2004 to develop a strategic focus on skills issues for the UK marine sector.

Maritime & Coastguard Agency chief executive John Astbury told the launch event that the initiative is very important for ships and seafarers because a significant proportion of accidents onboard ships occur in ports. Issues such as ship design and human factors are crucial for the development of safe working practices and conditions, he added.

Hugh Robertson, senior health and safety officer at the TUC, said the initiative showed what could be done when employers worked together with trade unions and workforces. Safe working conditions were 'an inalienable right in any job', he added, and a strong enforcement programme is needed to support safety policy objectives.

# Port Skills Safety Limited (PSSL)

As reported in the April issue the UKMPA are now a consultee group within PSSL on pilotage standards and training issues and has sent representatives to two events. On May 10th I attended the Launch of the Safer Ports Initiative 2 as UKMPA representative. Hosted by the Chairman of PSSL, Des Crampton, the key part of the launch was a speech by Dr Stephen Ladyman, the shipping Minister which was followed by speeches by, Bo Lerenius (CEO ABP Holdings), Bill Callaghan (Chairman H&SE Agency), John Astbury (CEO of MCA) and Hugh Robertson (Senior Policy Officer TUC). All speakers emphasised the need to ensure on-going focus on maintaining the improving safety record of UK ports and the need to ensure that ports could attract the well trained and skilled personnel essential to the success of a modern port. Such statements tie in with the UKMPA's own agenda for any future developments in pilot recruitment but we do have some concerns over the proposed Maritime Foundation Degree (MFD) which we feel, unless supplemented by some vocational training and experience, will fail to provide the fundamental understanding of how ships handle and behave in a variety of conditions. I was able to make this point informally to several of the PSSL members prior to the first formal meeting which was held on the 25th May where Brian Wilson attended for the UKMPA. That meeting appeared to be positive for pilots and the following is extracted from Brian's report:

## PSSL meeting - 25th May

*PSSL are looking at the Foundation Degree (FD) as a qualification for the ports industry. The key advantage of an FD over traditional degree qualifications is that there are grants available!*

*What is a Foundation Degree? – Basically it is a points based standard of education which is set as an equivalent to a Higher National Diploma (HND) with both having a points rating of 240 points. FDs are more workplace based than a HND and are currently taken up by the more workforce skills groups such as cleaning, hair dressing etc. There is little or no take up in transport, law or most of the professions. However, the rules state that there must be a follow on course from a FD to a full Honours degree and it therefore should not be dismissed as a relevant qualification for pilots especially since it is intended to issue pilots with a certificate of competence. Already new intake cadets (now to be known as "trainee officers") will be following a Foundation Degree course from September. However, we would like to see the follow through structure to a Masters, certificate and what it is worth etc.*

*At the moment, although it could be used as an entry level qualification for pilot recruits coming through an "in house" training program, I doubt if the FD will be enough to suffice the ETCS standard of STCW 95 equivalency which will be the EU requirement for compliance with IMO A960.*

*Having stated that, it is of relevance to note that those who hold the new style Master's certificate and have worked in pilotage for some years, should have the equivalent of about 340 Education credit points. This is 20 points short of a Post Graduate Honours Degree (PGHD) but it is probable that an additional course such a Bridge Resource Management course for pilots would probably provide the necessary additional points to achieve a PGHD and this would bring us into line with the European view that pilotage is a Honours degree qualification.*

*There were concerns about the impending shortage of foreign labour as the existing Eastern European employees are returning home rich and able to jump in and make large*



SP12 Launch - HQS Wellington

*sums of money from their countries of origin. There is therefore a desire to make the ports profession attractive to new entrants at home.*

## What did the meeting achieve?

The National Occupation Standards (NOS) were accepted as the standards for Pilots, Harbour masters, VTSOs and Harbour managers. The pilots' NOS are in line with ETCS so this is a positive development. A steering group has been set up to oversee the progression and to incorporate minor changes needed since they were written. We have a seat on this group.

## Conclusion

It is encouraging that we seem to be entering a new relationship with the ports and the PSSL members listened to our position viewpoint which is a positive development. The DFT and MCA also appear supportive of our views on training and standards and appear eager to conclude the NOS issue.

The PSSL website is now fully operational and has useful links and several documents (including the pilots' NOS) freely available for download at: [www.portskillsandsafety.co.uk/](http://www.portskillsandsafety.co.uk/)

JCB

## UKMPA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2006

Conference dates will be: **15th & 16th November**

Venue: **TGWU Centre, Grand Parade  
Eastbourne, E Sussex BN21 4DN**

Costs will be inclusive and yet to be advised

*Further information will be supplied to your local Secretary*

### UKMPA PRE-CONFERENCE GOLF EASTBOURNE DOWNS GOLF CLUB

Tuesday 14th Nov 2006 – TEE OFF AT 1100 – Cost £20 (Pay on the day)

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SEE [www.uk-golfguide.com/england/47903.html](http://www.uk-golfguide.com/england/47903.html) for details of venue.

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CLOSING DATE FOR BOOKING MONDAY 30TH OCTOBER 2006.