



Department
for Transport

From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State
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Huw Merriman MP
Chair
Transport Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

24 November 2020

Dear Chair,

UK seafarers awaiting crew change

Following the evidence session on 9 September on the impact of COVID-19 on the transport sector, an additional question was raised regarding the number of British seafarers awaiting crew change due to national restrictions being imposed around the world. The wish was to report this number on a weekly basis.

I am afraid that we are unable to provide an accurate estimate of the number of British seafarers currently awaiting crew change. I can assure you that this is not due to a lack of interest in our seafarers and their welfare. Bringing our seafarers home is a matter of high importance to both myself and the Government and we are working tirelessly to make this happen, at a national and international level.

At the evidence session we heard about and discussed the complexities of the maritime sector, particularly around the crewing and flagging of vessels. Those same complexities are why we cannot provide an accurate number.

The Maritime and Coastguard agency do hold records for UK certified officers, but this does not extend to knowing who they are employed by or on which vessel they are serving. By way of illustration, a British seafarer could be working on a vessel registered in State A, their employment contract is in State B, the owner of the vessel is resident in State C, the charterer of the vessel is in State D, the vessel is operating in State E (or between States E and F), and the rest of the crew are from States G to Z.

My officials would be very happy to provide a more detailed verbal briefing to you on this complicated matter if it would be helpful.

I hope this letter provides you with a useful update to the committee's outstanding question, and I can assure you that both myself and my department will continue to work tirelessly to bring our UK seafarers home.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robert Courts', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'R' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

ROBERT COURTS MP

MINISTER FOR AVIATION, MARITIME AND SECURITY