



# Business and Trade Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Peter Hebblethwaite  
CEO, P&O Ferries  
[By email]

10 May 2024

Dear Mr Hebblethwaite

## **Labour Market Reform: Workers' Rights and Protections**

Thank you for taking the time to provide the Business and Trade Committee with oral evidence on 7 May 2024, and for your follow up letter on the same day clarifying your comments on seafarers' leave and rest breaks. Since that session, media outlets have reported that members of your agency crew have disputed the evidence that you gave to the Committee. Stakeholders have also been in touch to say that the evidence that you provided was misleading. The Committee is concerned by those allegations and I do not want the Committee to be left with a potentially misleading impression of the facts. I note that the truthfulness of evidence provided to Select Committees, whether in written or oral form, is a cornerstone of the Parliamentary Select Committee system. I also note that attempting to mislead a Select Committee might equate to a contempt of Parliament.

To ensure that we have been given full and accurate answers, the Committee would appreciate a full response to the following questions by **12 noon on Friday 17 May 2024**.

### *Continuous working days and rotation lengths*

In your letter dated 7 May 2024, you state that seafarers work for a continuous number of days during their rotation and that the length of a rotation varies between seafarers. Using data from the last three months, please could you provide the Committee with information on:

- the longest, average and median number of continuous days a seafarer has worked before at least one day off is taken; and
- the longest, average and median rotation lengths for seafarers.

Please could you break these figures down by your Dover to Calais, Hull to Rotterdam and Cairnryan to Larne routes.

### *When leave is taken*

You stated in your 7 May letter that all agency seafarers must take at least one paid day off per month. Please could you confirm:

- the date when that policy came into force;

- whether this leave is taken during a seafarers' rotation (That is, when the seafarer is on board the ship), or whether the leave is taken at the end of their rotation. If this is at the discretion of the seafarer, please could you provide the Committee with data on how many seafarers took leave during their rotation and how many took leave at the end of their rotation; and
- whether there have been instances where this day off has not been taken and, if this is the case, how often this happens.

### *Short contracts*

You also state that the rules of taken leave does not apply to those on 'very short contracts.' Using data from the last three months, please could you provide information on:

- the average and longest length of these short contracts; and
- the percentage of seafarers employed on short contracts.

As before, please could you break these figures down by your Dover to Calais, Hull to Rotterdam and Cairnryan to Larne routes.

### *Length of hours worked*

In your letter you state that P&O Ferries complies with MLC requirements that seafarers are required to rest no fewer than 10 hours in any 24-hour period and 77 hours in any seven-day period. Using data from the last three months, please could you provide the Committee with the longest, average and median hours worked by seafarers in a week.

As before, please could you break these figures down by your Dover to Calais, Hull to Rotterdam and Cairnryan to Larne routes.

### *Seafarers' Charter*

In evidence you provided to the Committee you said that you expect to sign the UK seafarers' charter 'within months.' Please could you confirm your target date for signing this charter.

### *Crew numbers*

The Committee would appreciate it if you could confirm, as of 19 March 2024 (when the French legislation was passed) the number of agency crew that worked on your Dover to Calais route and the percentage of those crew who are not from Europe. The Committee would like to know how many crew members you are expecting to retain once the French legislation comes into force.

*Seafarer welfare*

Please could you explain to the Committee what research or analysis was taken that made you confident that:

- having one day off a month is enough to ensure crew do not become fatigued; and
- spending long periods (17 weeks or more) onboard a ship doesn't impact the crew's mental health and wellbeing.

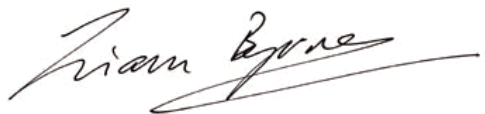
*Other follow ups from the evidence session*

Finally, you agreed with the Committee during your oral evidence session on 7 May that you would write with details on:

- the conditions on which a seafarer can or cannot leave the ship; and
- information of the procurement process with Philcrew and the conclusions of your due diligence exercise into them.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with the Clerk of the Committee who will be able to assist you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Liam Byrne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Chair of the Business and Trade Committee**