

New bill introduced to ensure thousands of seafarers receive fair pay

- new pay protection laws on minimum wage for thousands of seafarers regularly entering UK waters
- laws will prevent firms undercutting fair pay for seafarers by using legal loopholes to pay low wages
- government publishes response to the consultation on Seafarers' Wages Bill

The UK government has today (6 July 2022) introduced new legislation to make sure seafarers get paid at least equivalent to the UK National Minimum Wage.

We are closing a loophole that allowed seafarers who work on vessels that regularly serve UK ports, to be paid below an equivalent to the UK National Minimum Wage for the simple fact that the vessel operates an international service.

Following P&O Ferries' decision to dismiss 800 loyal and hardworking workers without consultation or notice, the government took immediate action to begin changing the law on seafarer pay protection.

The changes mean that thousands of seafarers regularly entering the UK will receive fairer pay, putting the UK ahead of every EU state in its pay protections.

The Seafarers' Wages Bill – introduced in the House of Lords today – enables port authorities to deny access to services calling regularly at UK ports who do not pay their workers equivalent rate to the UK National Minimum Wage (NMW) for time spent in UK waters – closing a legal loophole which was exploited by P&O Ferries.

Maritime Minister Robert Courts said:

Britain's rich maritime history and exciting future is thanks to the extraordinary men and women who work at sea.

Fair pay for seafarers is a must and the new laws we've introduced in Parliament today send a clear signal to operators that the UK will not let seafarers be priced out of their jobs by rogue bosses.

Following P&O Ferries' shameful conduct, the government launched the consultation on the Seafarers' Wages Bill in May 2022. The [response](#), published alongside the introduction of the bill today, shows that the overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that pay protection must remain

at the forefront of the sector's objectives.

The government spoke extensively with industry on how it can rapidly shape new laws on seafarer pay protection and has used the information and perspectives to shape the bill's scope and compliance policies.

Vessels and services that call on UK ports at least every 72 hours on average, or more than 120 times a year, will fall under these new pay requirements and the ports, Maritime and Coastguard Agency and Department for Transport will all have a role in ensuring compliance.

In parallel, the Insolvency Service's criminal and civil investigation into the circumstances of the redundancies made by P&O Ferries continues.

Labour Markets Minister Paul Scully said:

Just because someone works out at sea, it doesn't mean they should be excluded from the protections UK workers receive.

That's why we've moved at pace to get this bill across the line, levelling the playing field and ensuring everyone working in UK territorial waters will benefit from the equivalence of the National Minimum Wage.

We hope seafarers will soon see the difference in their pay packets, as we continue to protect and enhance the rights of all workers

As part of the Secretary of State for Transport's [seafarer protections 9-point plan](#), we are continuing to work with our near European neighbours on bilateral agreements.

This discussion focuses on exploring agreements that help to improve seafarer welfare and protections and the potential development of bilateral minimum wage corridors.

British seafarers are recognised as some of the most highly skilled worldwide and the UK's [Maritime 2050 strategy](#) sets out a plan for a fairer global maritime industry.

Seafarers' Charity. Deborah Layde, Chief Executive, said:

After P&O Ferries appalling disregard for their hardworking seafarers, many of whom had given many years of loyal service to the company, I am delighted to see government taking steps to ensure fair pay and enhanced protections for seafarers regularly entering UK ports.

The Seafarers' Charity welcomes The Seafarers' Wages Bill as an important step in recognising the substantial contribution

seafarers make to our economy in what can be a very demanding job.

At The Seafarers' Charity we fully support efforts to ensure that all seafarers receive equivalent pay and protections as those working ashore.