



GLOBAL PORT MARINE OPERATIONS

8th International Harbour Masters Congress
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Q&A Session: The role of Harbour Master



Capt. Kevin Richardson, General Manager Port Operations/Harbour Master, Port of Dover & President, United Kingdom Harbour Masters Association, United Kingdom highlights the importance of the role of Harbour Masters to the marine industry as a whole and offers an insight into how harbour masters help keep a port moving! Capt Richardson's presentation at the 8th IHMA Congress will address harbour masters' qualifications.

The Port of Dover has approximately 23,500 ferry movements every year – with an average of 55 crossings every day, 24 hours a day. Situated on one side of the Straights of Dover, one of the busiest shipping lanes in Europe, the port is of huge economic value to Kent and the UK as a whole. As Harbour Master, what does it take to run such a busy and important port?

The simple answer is "Quite a lot"! However in such a busy operational environment both on the marine side and on the terminal side of operations I adopt one personal maxim and that is, "Keep it moving..... but keep it safe!"

There is a very simple equation, which I call "the bathtub equation" that applies to the port of Dover. If uplift exceeds demand all is well and the bathtub remains stable... However, if demand exceeds uplift then we have a problem - the bathtub overflows!

"Keep it moving..... but keep it safe!"

Keeping the equilibrium constant in this complex equation is what I, as Harbour Master, try and do on a continuous and consistent basis. Get it wrong and there are either huge shipping delays or huge terminal traffic delays and probably both.

How do you deal with this problem on a daily basis?

By having trained and competent staff that monitor traffic management, both marine and landside and where possible, proactively manage any issues before they impact on the port. It is equally important that they react quickly, decisively and efficiently with any issues that arise that have the capacity to make the bathtub overflow! This could be bad weather, a marine accident, a major incident in the port or a major traffic accident on the approaches to the port, to name a few. If the business is interrupted, it is my responsibility to minimise that period of interruption which would very quickly have knock on effects to the county of Kent and the whole SE UK region.



A look in the bathtub

Source: international.kent.gov.uk

The 8th IHMA Congress in Cork will address the changing landscape of ports and how these changes are redefining the role of harbour masters in the future. There are a number of major developments underway and in the pipeline for the Port of Dover. How have extension works impacted your role?

It's an extension of the above point really and being prepared for the capacity challenges to come.

We have just received approval to our Harbour Revision Order which effectively gives us "planning permission" to prepare the port for a new second ferry terminal when that is required, at this time probably around 2020. It took three years to prepare the submission and get it approved (that's actually quite quick) and I was very involved in the planning issues in terms of layout and design of the new terminal both from the berth perspective as well as the actual traffic management layout. A full environmental impact assessment was also undertaken which I also contributed to as Harbour Master.

More immediately we are investing some **£50M over the next 5 years** to ensure that Terminal 1 continues to be able to handle the volumes of traffic we need to in the run up to Terminal 2. There are many small projects in the Terminal 1 upgrade but one of the **most significant is a £7M project**, with the catchy title, "The Traffic Management Improvement" (TMI) project. This involves creating a traffic buffer zone inside the port to park up and process upwards of 200 freight vehicles in times of stress.

"Whilst all of these things will be fantastic when they are built... we need to keep the place moving whilst they are being built... and that is my major challenge!"

The capacity does not sound much but it is the difference between being able to handle such traffic in the port or having it impact directly on the local town infrastructure and jamming up the town of Dover for prolonged periods. We are also significantly upgrading our berth infrastructure over the same period to handle the latest generation of superferrys.



Dover's Eastern Docks, the UK's largest ferry terminal

Source: cruiseandferry.net

Whilst all of these things will be fantastic when they are built...we need to keep the place moving and the business operating efficiently **whilst** they are being built...and that is my major challenge!

The role of harbour master seems to be evolving to include roles such as operations manager and marine services manager. Are these changes cosmetic or has the role itself changed?

I think my responses to the first two questions clearly demonstrate that the role of Harbour Master in some ports has evolved considerably from its original marine technical origins. The role has definitely changed in Dover over the past 10 years or so on the back of the huge expansion of the port. It very much depends on individual port authorities though. Some PA's keep the Harbour Master role restricted to the marine technical and statutory role for good and valid reasons. There is no global template.

“The traditional recruitment pond which used to be fed by the Merchant Marine and Royal Navy in the UK is drying up fast”

The problem of sourcing suitably qualified personnel for this important role is very much a global phenomenon. How do you explain this decline? Has there been a shift in the source of recruitment? Have other positions become more attractive for those with the necessary qualifications?

In my view there is a definite lack of qualified and competent people suitable for the very important role of Harbour Master. The traditional recruitment pond which used to be fed by the Merchant Marine and Royal Navy in the UK is drying up fast. I believe the same is true of Europe and other parts of the world. There have been very definite shifts in the source of recruitment with agencies going much further afield and international in most cases to try and get the right people with the right qualifications and the right experience.

What is the right qualification? The answer to that used to be "A Masters Foreign Going Certificate of Competency" (Coc) and this qualification is still at the forefront of most port authorities' minds when they produce the person specification for the recruitment process. However, I think things are changing and indeed they will have to change because the supply of Master Mariners is drying up... slowly but surely.

What actions have been taken in the UK to address this problem?

The UKHMA has been pushing for some 5 years now for a Harbour Masters Certificate of Competency. Such a certificate would be endorsed by the MCA in the UK and open to marine professionals to undertake. They would need to demonstrate their compliance with the CoC criteria which are based on the National Occupational Standards for Harbour Masters. These criteria are much more specific on what is actually needed to become a Harbour Master in the UK today - not just the possession of a Masters Ticket, although this would be a very important step in the process.

“There is no global template”

How are these developments progressing?

Very well.

“... I anticipate the first H/Master CoC to be issued in mid-2012....”

The UKHMA has completely revised the National Occupational Standards in concert with Port Skills and Safety: the UK organisation tasked with the stewardship of all National Occupational Standards in the marine industry. The CoC criteria are almost complete and the MCA have been consulted in the process at every step. I anticipate the first H/Master CoC to be issued by mid-2012 and the roll out will continue over the next few years.

Your paper at the 8th IHMA Congress will ask the question as to whether the UK model might be suitable for application on an international basis. At this stage, can you offer us any insight into the answer?

Well I don't want to pre-empt my presentation but I hope to demonstrate the value of the CoC system if nothing else. I believe the CoC would be welcomed not least by existing Harbour Masters.

“... if I were the Chief Executive of Port Future and presented with two candidates... which one would I choose?”

Why would they not welcome a qualification that demonstrates their continued competence and moreover is developmental and potentially extremely valuable when looking at career advancement opportunities? Also, what Port Authority Management Board would not welcome the

reassurance that such a fundamentally key appointment for them can be filled by a person with such a qualification?

I ask myself, if I were the Chief Executive of Port Future and presented with two candidates: one has a Harbour Masters CoC and the Masters Certificate; the other has a Master Certificate... which one would I choose?

Captain Kevin Richardson is delivering his presentation, ‘Harbour Masters Qualifications: Could the UK model become an international template?’ at the 8th IHMA Congress on Monday 14th May 2012.

For more details on the conference programme for the 8th IHMA Congress in Cork, visit:

<http://www.globalportoperations.com> or contact: tina.karas@informa.com.au