

Joint MMO-UKMPG initiative to set new standard for marine licensing

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A major collaborative effort to test, modernise and improve the marine licensing system is gathering momentum.

The Marine Management Organisation's (MMO) Non-Executive Board recently welcomed Geraint Evans, Chief Executive of the UK Major Ports Group (UKMPG), who outlined the strong progress of the Ports Sandbox programme and the deepening partnership between the regulator and the ports sector.

The Ports Sandbox is a joint initiative, co-designed with industry, that aims to strengthen consistency, transparency and predictability across the marine licensing process. By bringing together frontline industry insight and regulatory expertise, the programme is testing practical ways to streamline processes, enhance early engagement and build a clearer shared understanding along the licensing journey — all with the aim of supporting better outcomes and the Government's agenda for growth.

The project also reflects the direction set out in the recent Corry Review, translating its call for clearer, outcome-focused and more adaptive regulation into practical action.

Michelle Willis, Acting Chief Executive of MMO, said:

This work is grounded in collaboration, openness and a shared commitment to learning. It reflects the core principles of good regulation — proportionality, accountability, transparency and consistency — and supports the ambitions highlighted in the Corry Review to create a more coherent and outcome-focused regulatory landscape.

Our programme with UKMPG recognises the importance of this foundational industry and is designed to protect the environment while enabling the sustainable growth of the ports sector.

Geraint Evans, Chief Executive of UKMPG, added:

The Sandbox is a powerful example of genuine joint working between MMO and industry, who share a clear interest in environmental protection and the sustainable growth of the ports sector. Shared understanding builds trust, and this model represents the beginning of a long-term partnership between the UK's major ports and MMO.

Early progress has already shown the value of this approach. Through the Sandbox, MMO and UKMPG members have identified shared opportunities across communication, transparency and process improvement. The work has highlighted where clearer information, stronger early engagement and more consistent expectations can make a meaningful difference to applicants and case teams alike. Opportunities are also emerging for new tools and guidance that can support a

more predictable and user-friendly licensing experience.

As the programme expands, engagement will widen to include more ports, consultees and partners to ensure the system reflects real-world needs and experience. Over the coming months, the project will continue to test new approaches, develop and publish shared tools and guidance, and invite applicants, consultees and stakeholders to help shape the next phase of work.

MMO and UKMPG remain committed to developing a modern, collaborative and effective licensing system — one built on shared learning, continuous improvement and practical changes that support economic growth, environmental stewardship and an improved experience for everyone involved in marine licensing.

More information is available in this report:

Report on Ports Sandbox Actions (PDF, 299 KB, 20 pages)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-mmo-ukmpg-initiative-to-set-new-standard-for-marine-licensing>