

Economic growth, innovation and customer service on the agenda for UK Flag Forum 2026

16.4.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

Delegates from across the UK maritime sector gathered in London to discuss opportunities for strengthening economic growth, innovation and industry-government collaboration at UK Flag Forum 2026.

Returning to the Queen Elizabeth II Centre for a second year, the UK Flag Forum brings ship owners and operators, industry leaders and government partners together to discuss UK Flag interests, including maritime safety and technology.

The day opened with a warm welcome from Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) CEO Virginia McVea, followed by Opening Remarks from the MCA Chair Lord Simon Stevens. Maritime Minister Keir Mather MP then delivered a keynote speech to an audience including delegates from both domestic and international shipping companies, maritime professional business services, innovation organisations and other government departments.

The morning panel discussed strengthening economic growth and investment opportunities through a competitive UK maritime offer, with input from senior leaders across government and industry. The next session explored maritime innovation and how the UK can best capitalise on emerging technologies to strengthen its competitiveness and support sustainable growth.

The afternoon saw a showcase of the UK Maritime Innovation Hub, setting out its mission to support the development and deployment of new technologies across the maritime sector more quickly and safely. The Hub will support opportunities arising from the £448m UKSHORE programme, highlighting how new and ambitious ideas can be developed into practical solutions to further enhance and decarbonise UK shipping.

A separate track gave attendees the opportunity to explore and discuss UK Flag services and its plan for continued modernisation.

To close the event, UK Flag Special Recognition Awards were awarded to shipping companies in areas of collaboration, decarbonisation, seafarer development and both vessel and crew safety.

Keir Mather, Aviation, Maritime and Decarbonisation Minister, said: "I was delighted to attend the UK Flag Forum today to discuss how the Government and industry can ensure the sector continues to thrive. Our world-class flag means a standard of safety, excellence, and global credibility.

"Shipping is the backbone of our economy, and recent events have underlined the value of our hardworking UK seafarers and operators. That's why we're backing industry with £448 million to develop clean fuels and technologies that will create skilled jobs, cut emissions and deliver long-term growth for our coastal communities."

MCA Director of UK Customer Service Lars Lippuner said: "As Flag Forum returns to London for a second time, we're incredibly pleased to have welcomed a uniquely diverse range of speakers, drawn from across the MCA and UK maritime environment.

“From safety and innovation to Government Research and Development programmes, this landmark event has explored some of the most exciting topics at the forefront of UK Flag and the global maritime environment right now.”

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/economic-growth-innovation-and-customer-service-on-the-agenda-for-uk-flag-forum-2026>