

PILOTAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Ref. : HQ/COM 928/29 (21)

Minutes of the Pilotage Advisory Committee Meeting

Date : 24 September 2013 (Tuesday)
Place : Conference Room A, 24/F, Harbour Building
Time : 10:30 a.m.

Present

Chairman: Mr. H. M. TUNG	Deputy Director of Marine
Member: Capt. ZHOU Wei	HK Shipowners Association
Mr. CHAN Wo-shing	HK Liner Shipping Association
Mr. Eric CHEUNG	Dry Bulk Cargo Operators
(on behalf of Mr. YANG Xiao-guang)	
Mr. David DENG	Break Bulk Cargo Operators
Mr. FONG Yuk-choi, Phileas	Tug Operators
Mr. NG Kin-man	Master Mariner
Mr. YEUNG Wai-tin, Danny	HK Pilots Association
Mr. CHAN Ming-shun	HK Pilots Association
Mr. LAI Chi-tung	AD/PC(Ag), MD
Secretary: Ms. Alison WONG	EO(C&G), MD

In Attendance

Mr. WONG Wing-hung	SMO/VTC, MD
Mr. J. J. WANG	MO/VTC(3)
Mr. K. W. CHAN	MO/Pilotage, MD
Ms. Yvette CHAN	HK Pilots Association
Ms. Catherine CHOW	Break Bulk Cargo Operators
Mr. Alan WONG	HK Shipowners Association

Absent

Mr. LEUNG Kwan-hang	Oil Terminal Operators
Mr. LEE Kwok-tung	Containers Terminal Operators
Mr. ZHANG Zhi-liang	Dockyard Industry
Capt. LO Ting-ho	Master Mariner

Mr. John WILSON
Mr. CHAN Tim

Master Mariner
S(N)EX(1), MD

OPENING REMARKS

1. The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting. He extended his welcome particularly to the following persons –
 - (a) Mr. Eric CHEUNG, who was attending the meeting on behalf of Mr. YANG Xiao-guang representing the dry bulk cargo operators; and
 - (b) Ms. Catherine CHOW representing the break bulk cargo operators and Mr. Alan WONG of the OOCL Hong Kong Branch, who were attending the meeting as observers.

AGENDA ITEMS

I. Interview of Apprentice Pilot

2. The Chairman informed the meeting that four applicants, Mr. KWAN Kin-keung, Terry, Mr. SIU Chun-chai, Mr. LO Wai-kwong and Mr. TO Cheuk-hang who had already passed the necessary medical examination would be interviewed. Mr. NG Kin-man declared that he was at present a colleague with Mr. KWAN and Mr. SIU.
3. The four applicants were then interviewed in separate sessions. They were asked to brief members on their own background and to respond to some questions about their ship handling experience, reasons for joining maritime industry and applying to join this profession, knowledge of pilotage services, and whether they could adapt to the shift pattern of pilot's work, etc.
4. Capt. ZHOU Wei noted that some candidates had no recent experience in handling large container ships and raised his concerns over their capability to maneuver large vessels in the bustling harbor. Members also noticed that the

communication skills of some candidates needed to be polished up in order to effectively perform the duties of a pilot. They enquired about the training to be provided by HKPA to those candidates and the assessments to be conducted after the training in view of the above observations.

5. Mr. YEUNG Wai-tin, Danny and Mr. CHAN Ming-shun responded that intensive six-month training on ship handling and piloting skills would be given to the successful candidates during their apprenticeship. Training on communication skills would also be arranged for the apprentice pilots if deemed necessary. To ensure their proficiency in taking up a pilot's role, HKPA would conduct internal practical assessments for every individual apprentice pilot before recommending him for the upgrading examination. In case the performance of the apprentice pilot was not satisfactory or he failed the internal assessments, he would have his training period extended.
6. After discussions, members were satisfied with the candidates' qualifications and experience, and agreed to recommend them to the Pilotage Authority for registration as apprentice pilots. The Chairman suggested and members agreed that HKPA should offer special training to Mr. SIU Chun-chai to enhance his communication skills and the training report in this aspect should be submitted to PAC for consideration together with the apprentice training record when recommending him for the upgrading examination.
7. The Chairman also remarked that Mr. TO Cheuk-hang's registration as apprentice pilot would be withheld subject to the legal advice of the Department of Justice (DoJ) on his application for postponement of training and apprenticeship.

[Post-meeting note: With the approval from the Pilotage Authority, Mr. KWAN Kin-keung, Terry, Mr. SIU Chun-chai and Mr. LO Wai-kwong registered as apprentice pilots on 24.9.2013.]

II. Confirmation of Minutes of Last Meeting

8. The minutes were sent to members for comments on 17.4.2013. No comments had been received and the minutes were confirmed without amendments.

III. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes of Meeting

PAC Paper No. 7/2010 – “Retaining the Same Class of Licence for Pilots to Work beyond the Age of 65 Years”

9. The Chairman reported that the Pilotage (Amendment) Ordinance 2013 had been passed by the Legislative Council (LegCo) on 22.5.2013 and gazetted on 31.5.2013 for commencement. This item could be removed.
10. Mr. LAI Chi-tung supplemented that one of the items under the above Ordinance concerning the charging for pilotage exemption required a consequential amendment to Regulation 6 of Cap. 84A that specified the prescribed fee level. Subject to the passage of negative vetting of the LegCo, the amended legislation had been appointed by the Secretary for Transport and Housing to be commenced on 1.12.2013.

PAC Paper No. 1/2013 – “Proposed Amendments to the Examination and Training of Pilots”

11. The draft drafting instructions was under preparation and would be submitted to DoJ for clearance in the 4th quarter of 2013 before putting up to the Transport and Housing Bureau for follow up. It was hoped that the proposed amendments could be completed in the 2014 legislative session.

PAC Paper No. 2/2013 – “Review on Utilizing Tidal Windows for Slightly Over-height Vessels to Transit Ma Wan Channel”

12. Mr. WONG Wing-hung recapped that the tidal windows allowance scheme was endorsed by the PAC at its meeting on 18.1.2013. A briefing session had been conducted on 24.1.2013 to brief the industry on the detailed information and operation procedures. Over the past 8 months, the scheme was found running smooth and the shipping agents were familiar with the application procedures as well as the tidal window principle behind. There were so far more than 90 transits made by 29 vessels coming from 8 companies utilizing the tidal windows to transit beneath the Tsing Ma Bridge.

13. In order to validate the appropriateness of the 0.3m error correcting factor implemented in the tidal windows calculation, the Vessel Traffic Centre (VTC) had conducted quarterly reviews on the discrepancies between the predicted and actual tidal height. The review results of the 1st and 2nd quarters of 2013 indicated that the correcting factor was still appropriate. Mr. WONG further pointed out that the differences of the tidal height were obvious during the passage of the typhoons in the recent months. Transit beneath the Tsing Ma Bridge was suspended under very rough weather until the tidal height resumed normal.

14. In response to Capt. ZHOU Wei's suggestion on the installation of Global Positioning System at the Tsing Ma Bridge to detect the air draught of large vessels, Mr. LAI Chi-tung replied that the VTS system of VTC to be revamped in 2016 would take into account an air-draft detection system.

15. Mr. CHAN Ming-shun enquired about the possibility of relaxing the air draft restriction if the actual height of the vessels could be detected. Mr. LAI Chi-tung remarked that the new VTS system of VTC to be put in place might facilitate the adjustment of the correction factors. The air draft limitation could be reviewed by then. Mr. WONG Wing-hung said that MD would continue to keep in view the effectiveness of the scheme and suggested this item could be removed from the agenda for the time being. The Chairman concluded that this item would be removed until new development on this issue

was made.

Concentrated Inspection on Pilot Transfer Arrangements of Foreign Going Ships Carried out in Hong Kong in 2012

16. According to the figures provided by HKPA, the number of pilot ladder deficiency cases was on the decrease from 2011 to 2013. It was suggested that this item could be removed.

IV. New Discussion Item

PAC Paper No. 3/2013 – “Establishment of Principal Fairways in the Waters North of Lantau Island”

17. Mr. WONG Wing-hung presented the paper in detail. He enunciated that the proposal was originated from a review on the buoyage system of the waters north of Lantau Island suggested in the marine investigation report on the collision of the Neftegaz-67 and Yao Hai in 2008. On top of the original buoyage review, the proposal was developed with a view to better organize the marine traffic in the waters at north of Lantau which had become one of the busiest waterways in Hong Kong by the establishment of principal fairways. He introduced the proposed fairway configuration such as the delineation, the establishment of a fairway junction, the laying of new cardinal mark, the relocation of existing buoys and the adoption of a one-way traffic control measure at the waterway at the proposed Castle Peak Fairway, etc.
18. As a related issue, Mr. WONG reported that for better organization of marine traffic, VTC had briefed the ocean-tug operators and requested them to navigate along the inshore waters. If the ocean-tugs wished to use the fairways being proposed, they might do so but should follow the requirement of the International Regulations for Preventing Collision at Sea.

19. Mr. NG Kin-man and Capt. ZHOU Wei probed into the details of the one-way traffic control mechanism concerning the session from CP3 to CP7, including the role of VTC in the scheduling of vessels. Mr. WONG explained that the said traffic control measure only applied to piloted vessels. As a traffic rule, whenever there is a piloted vessel of LOA over 290m transiting the narrow waterway, one way traffic rule would be adopted. That is, if two piloted vessels were expected to meet head-on at the narrow water area with one of them having LOA over 290m, then only one of them at a time could navigate through it. The pilots on board the vessels would decide and report the scheduling to VTC. VTC would monitor the traffic and make adjustment if deemed appropriate. He further remarked that this traffic rule was already in place in the waterway and was working smooth all the while.
20. Mr. LAI Chi-tung supplemented that the one-way traffic measure was the extension of the traffic rule of transiting Ma Wan.
21. Mr. CHAN Wo-shing pointed out that the proposed Hong Kong International Airport Third Runway expansion project would lead to a more heavy and congested traffic in the Umston Road Fairway and the Castle Peak Fairway. He commented that MD should arrange patrol launches to monitor and regulate the traffic on the spot, in particular to ensure that smaller vessels would comply with the fairway rules in the said waters. His suggestion was echoed by Mr. CHAN Ming-shun who noticed that crossing traffic in the area was much busier during the passage of typhoons when vessels evacuated to take shelter at Tuen Mun Anchorage.
22. Mr. LAI Chi-tung responded that the purpose of establishing principal fairways was to better organize the traffic and to enhance navigational safety in the waters. Apart from the promotion activities of the newly established fairways such as seminars and visits to the industry, on-site patrol would be arranged to regulate the traffic. He further recited that in order to master the on-scene traffic situation, simulations had been conducted with HKPA at the MD

Training Centre covering the north-bound and south-bound traffic in the course of designing the fairways.

23. Capt. ZHOU Wei enquired on the disposition of buoys in the Ha Pang Fairway. Mr. WONG Wing-hung explained that the intention of limiting the number of buoys was to allow more sea rooms for vessels moving between Ha Pang Fairway and the Fairway Junction, particularly under unfavorable weather or sea conditions. With the advancement of navigation aids it would not be necessary to lay buoys to physically delineate the boundary of the fairways. Instead, buoys would rather be laid to indicate dangerous zones. Mr. WONG further clarified that Rule 9 (narrow channels) of the Collision Regulations would not be applied to the Fairway Junction as it was not part of the principal fairways.
24. Members had no further comments on the paper and the paper was endorsed. Mr. WONG Wing-hung added that the Local Vessels Advisory Committee and the Port Operations Committee would also be consulted at their coming meeting on the issue.

PAC Paper No. 4/2013 – “Proposed Amendments to the Berthing Guidelines”

25. Mr. K. W. CHAN introduced the background of the paper in detail. He recounted that the first berth of the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal (KTCT) would be fully operated with the terminal building at the site of the former Kai Tak Airport in October 2013. In November 2012, MD and HKPA had jointly conducted simulations for berthing and unberthing operations of the KTCT-1 in the MD Training Centre. Based on the simulation results and the practical experience of the pilots, the Berthing Guidelines for KTCT-1 were drawn up. Two trial berthing to KTCT were conducted in March 2013 (with M.V. “Celebrity Millennium” and in June 2013 (with M. V. “Mariner of the Seas”) under the framework of the proposed Berthing Guidelines. On the other hand, to meet the need of cruise vessels transiting the Central Harbour to and from

KTCT, corresponding arrangement and requirement for the Berthing Guidelines of Cruise Ship Transiting the Central Harbour had also been revised. The proposed requirements would be on a trial basis for one year so that findings from all seasons could be captured for compiling the final figures for execution.

26. Mr. WONG Wing-hung elaborated that the original design of KTCT only allowed for vessels to berth port-side-to, as berthing starboard-side-to might block the microwave link between the radar at KTCT and Victoria Peak. MD had been working closely with the Tourism Commission and the operator of the Cruise Terminal to remove this restriction. In view of the above, Item 5 of the paper on KTCT-1 had been revised to include the berthing arrangements of starboard-side-to. As the berthing arrangements had yet been finalized, a general remark indicating that prior approval from VTC for berthing starboard-side-to had been included. MD would follow up with parties concerned on the related formalities.
27. Mr. WONG further supplemented that subject to the water depth at the Cruise Terminal to be maintained by the Civil Engineering and Development Department in future, the maximum draft allowed for berthing at KTCT-1 would be adjusted accordingly. After discussion, members endorsed the proposed amendment contained in Item 5 of the paper.
28. The proposed amendments contained in Item 4 of the paper were catered for the west-bound cruise ships transiting the Central Harbour via Northern Fairway and Central Fairway. Simulation sessions with the HKPA had been conducted in this regard. In respond to Mr. CHAN Wo-shing's enquiry on the provision of patrol boat by MD, Mr LAI Chi-tung remarked that opportunity would be taken to review the existing arrangement taking into account the proposal of widening the Northern, Southern and Central Fairways and the realignment of buoys along these waterways.

29. Referring to point 6 of the General Remarks of Item 4, Mr. CHAN Ming-shun expressed that the pilots on board the vessels would have operational difficulties to obtain VTC's prior consent for the vessels to deviate from the designated traffic route if the decisions were made by the pilots on the scene during emergency. He proposed to amend the wording by "VTC must be kept closely informed" of the intention to deviate from the traffic route.
30. Mr. WONG Wing-hung stressed that the requirement laid down in the General Remark was for vessels planning to deviate from the designated traffic route under normal situation such as to maintain adequate UKC. VTC's prior consent should be obtained for better control as contravention of traffic rule was involved. For emergency situations, pilots or masters should make on the spot judgments to navigate through a safe route to avoid collision and keep VTC informed.
31. Mr. YEUNG Wai-tin, Danny opined that the wording was confusing and could be misleading that pilots were required to obtain VTC's prior consent even in emergency. As the requirement was not directly relevant to the berthing and unberthing operations, after deliberation, members agreed to remove point 6 of the General Remarks from Item 4.
32. Mr. CHAN Wo-shing enquired about the rationale behind engaging 2 pilots for cruise ships of LOA over 270m. Mr. YEUNG Wai-tin, Danny explained that as the structure of a cruise ship was different from that of a container ship, for safety reason it was pivotal to have a co-pilot to assist look-out for the duty pilot when berthing and unberthing the terminal. The Chairman highlighted that the berthing arrangement would be on trial for 1 year and the requirements therein were subject to review.
33. Members raised no other comments and the paper was endorsed. The revised Berthing Guidelines would be uploaded to the internet in due course.

V. Any Other Business

34. There was no other business raised by members.

VI. Date of Next Meeting

35. The meeting ended at 1:30 p.m. The date of the next meeting would be announced in due course.