



Department
for Transport

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
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Baroness Vere of Norbiton
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Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your letter of 25 November 2022, enclosing correspondence from your constituent,
regarding the Seafarers' Wages Bill.

Following the outrageous actions of P&O Ferries in dismissing 800 staff without consultation nor notice, the Government remains committed to ensuring that we secure better employment protections for our seafarers, and my officials have been working hard to progress the seafarer protections nine-point plan.

The Seafarers' Wages Bill is a key strand in this plan and is an important step among a suite of other measures to improve seafarer protections and welfare. The legislation will ensure that seafarers with close ties to the UK, working aboard services in scope of the Bill and who do not qualify to the UK National Minimum Wage, are paid a fair wage. We will achieve this by making access to UK ports conditional on vessel operators demonstrating that they will be paying at least an equivalent rate to the UK National Minimum Wage to their seafarers whilst in UK waters.

references roster patterns, increased safety risks, minimum crewing, and the absence of pension rights and apprenticeships as central to P&O Ferries' attack on jobs, stating that the Seafarers' Wages Bill is restricted to wage protection only. We are clear that the Bill is not a silver bullet for all the issues that were brought to light by P&O Ferries' actions, but it is an important step and we have made progress on this new legislation in very short order to ensure that seafarers receive wage protection as soon as possible. Progress is also being made on the other parts of the nine-point plan. We are working to ensure high standards of wellbeing are key to the sector. We intend to soon launch the Seafarers Charter, boosting seafarers' long-term working conditions.

Your constituent also mentions concern about the role of domestic ports in the compliance process. Ports, referred to as 'harbour authorities' in the Bill, *will not* have to play an active enforcement role. Their primary role is to receive declarations and they will not be involved in checking the validity of those declarations. The responsibility lies instead with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, which will be the government agency responsible for detailed inspections, investigations and prosecutions, on behalf of the Secretary of State.

As the Seafarers' Wages Bill progresses through the parliamentary process and on to its Second Reading in the House of Commons, we will continue to work in close partnership with industry, including unions, and we continue to consider all perspectives on the policy.

Whilst I am disappointed with the outcome of the Insolvency Service's criminal investigation into P&O Ferries and the circumstances surrounding the dismissals, the Insolvency Service's civil investigation remains ongoing, and I am unable to comment further on this. However, the government has undertaken a review of all ongoing UK Government contracts with P&O Ferries, and one contract between the Home Office and P&O Ferries has been terminated. If any publicly funded ongoing contract were to emerge which has not been identified through this process, then we would take appropriate action.

We are also liaising with our near European neighbours on how we can collaborate on seafarer welfare, and to explore the creation of bilateral minimum wage corridors.

Please pass on my gratitude to your constituent for taking the time to write in.

Yours,
Charlotte

BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON