

## Highlights of topics discussed on 16 March 2022

### Welcome & meeting opened

### Business Update

It had been a hectic few months with a number of external factors presenting themselves; Omicron variant was still impacting onboard operations in terms of crew activity and guest operation albeit fortunately no serious cases. Resultant restrictions were being worked on in the background (4 ships were back to Level 1); the business would continue to review restrictions onboard with a view to reducing these where possible. The booster campaign had helped to stop spread of the virus.

The conflict in Ukraine had clearly had an impact; Flag and other administrations had joined forces to support and the business were continuing to look at operations and itineraries in view of the ongoing situation.

Arcadia was due to restart in service at the end of the month. Queen Victoria had done a phenomenal job over winter in the Caribbean to support crew and guests; efforts of all onboard recognized and appreciated. 4<sup>th</sup> Cunard ship officially named as Queen Anne. Work on Arvia continues for her readiness at the end of the year.

Welfare and wellbeing had been and continued to be a key focus, in addition to Team Strength on board.

### IT Update including Wi-Fi

New Wi fi packages were talked through; it was noted queries had been received in relation to packages available, flexibility and content; cost efficiency and reliability of connection were known to be important factors to crew. The business had been investing in IT infrastructure around hardware, bandwidth volume, and package content/availability including investigating feasibility of free connectivity for some areas eg Whatsapp and online banking apps/pages.

Packages being introduced were structured to flex based on need; Ship location was known to impact what might be suitable on a particular day (eg sea day vs port day may mean there's more connectivity from shoreside locations). The provision of additional connection points in cabins had been approved which would increase signal although global hardware issues were impacting progress.

It was confirmed that ships were now at 4-5 times the volume of bandwidth compared with pre-pandemic levels. The cost was around 2800 times on ships compared with shoreside. It was also confirmed the packages for wi-fi were in a trial stage and feedback would continue to be sought before a full scale roll out. Additionally, there were mechanisms that meant SIMS could be updated in routers which would get over issues of connectivity/roaming at particular ports (Caribbean and Fjords for example).

A query was raised around whether video conferencing had been considered within the free elements of packages; due to the cost and bandwidth required it was unlikely this would be included at any time, but there was consideration for what else could be made available for free. It was felt the advances in wi-fi were a great result for the Fleet and this was praised and really appreciated by crew.

### Car Hire

A meeting with Zenith had highlighted there were still challenges industry wide and in particular with 'one way' car hire – this was unlikely to change this year and exacerbated by manufacturers making a change to electric vehicles. Providers were operating on a 7 day minimum hire basis in the main. Over the last 6 months, although bookings were low, only 15% had been turned down by providers. Confirmation given that it was still possible to book direct with other providers. Zenith were committed to supporting as much as they could and were continuing to look at alternative options and it was noted there were also discounts available for some providers through Perks at Work.

### Seafarer Travel Policy

The policy had been reviewed in 2020 – With most ships back in service, the proposal was now that the policy would revert back to 'pre pandemic' state from 1 May 2022. This was agreed collectively by the group.

## Relatives Travel

It was confirmed relatives travel had been paused as a result of the pandemic; Aspirations were shared that Officers were looking for an increase in allowance for spouse travel; Reward team had previously stated there were no plans to review but this would be revisited.

## Seafarers Earnings Deductions

Attendees were reminded that tax was a personal responsibility however; the Flag state of a ship had an impact for NI which meant it was advantageous for UK Officers to work on non British flagged ships as this meant class 2 NI applied, as oppose to Class 1 NI on a British flagged ship. Consideration needed to be given when deploying UK Officers.

It was asked if there was any support that the business could offer in relation to tax; it was confirmed that the business continued to negotiate with the UK Government to try and get some leniency – this hadn't been successful as yet but attempts would continue. It was also mentioned that there was a financial assistance program which Officers could access (a company loan) if they were struggling with an unexpected tax bill.

## New Starter Approach

New starters were a key driver of over working due to a number of factors including timing of start date and additional training requirements within year 1; it was noted that current contracts split liquidation of those days dependent on start date (if an individual joined 30 June or before, would be paid as End of Tour bonus at the end of the year. Those joined from 1 July onwards would have over worked days carried forward, meaning less days they could work in year 2). This was inconsistent and had a huge impact on the operation. 1100 'over worked' days in 2021 were caused by new starters which would have a knock-on impact elsewhere.

The business proposal was that all new starters be treated consistently in relation to ADW reconciliation; this proposal would touch all annualized contracts moving forward for new starters only. The proposal was that at the end of the first year of work only, any 'days over' would be paid at a flat rate and liquidated in January. This would apply only to the 1<sup>st</sup> year when there was a need for additional training. As of calendar year 2, normal arrangements for ETB would be in place. The intention would be that this was introduced from July this year.

There was challenge around how this would work for late starters; if someone joined 1 December, pro rata, they would be over worked and would be paid. Come 1<sup>st</sup> January they'd be in year 2 so would still have 11 months of training to undertake. It was confirmed this had been considered; those who started earlier in the year tended not to over work compared with those who started later; also late starters would still be paid and be consolidated and if over worked have that paid in the following year as per 'normal' ETB. Ideally this would be a 12 month rolling year however this would make pay very complicated. It was asked if it would be possible to split the year; i.e. those who start 1 July onwards have their 'year 1' as 1 July – 30 June; this was recognized as a good suggestion and would be looked into.

A challenge was raised that those in their 1<sup>st</sup> year starting early wouldn't be entitled to ETB but that Rotations would have the opportunity to utilize them for the whole year. It was suggested there should be a cap on the number of extra days that new starters could be asked to work in their first year. It was reiterated again that this proposal was to resolve a high level of overwork for new starters which already existed, not to abuse those in their first year. Confirmed the change would only apply to those new to business and not for promoted posts.

A question was asked about the value of onboarding costs for new seafarers (3<sup>rd</sup> Officer/2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer). It was felt that knowing this figure would help new recruits understand their financial value and how much was being invested in them.

## Welfare

Mental Health awareness strategy was discussed and it was confirmed that all SMT and Ops Managers were trained in mental health first aid; it was recognised that others outside of SMT needed to be trained so that the support was more accessible. The business were looking to introduce a mental health 'champion(s)' on board by way of peer support and to facilitate conversations.

It was shared that not all shoreside activities translated well to Fleet; the more that could be done and explored in terms of structure of work patterns on board to ensure ways of working could enable initiatives, the better.

Feedback had been received that Officer cabins were smaller on Iona than other ships, it was recognized that the cabin size can not be changed. Other feedback included no Officer lounge, beverages limited in crew mess and mess food limited in variety.

Diet was raised; impact on health and obesity – had this gone anywhere in the last 6-12 months?

A question was raised about whether the cost of glasses and eye tests (required for work to use with VDU's) was eligible for reimbursement as UK H&S legislation suggested it should be; suggested contact People Support Team who would be able to advise. One attendee advised he'd claimed on expenses for an eye exam which was rejected outright while another confirmed he'd successfully claimed for eye test expenses.

All were encouraged to share ideas to improve onboard life.

### **PAW Agreement Review Update**

All were thanked for contributing to the review; the agreement was now finalised and circulated yesterday. PAW email addresses were in progress and an update would be provided as soon as more was known.

In light of new members and revised agreement would likely be asking all members to sign a new NDA to reflect the confidential nature of some of the discussions they would be involved in through the forum.

### **AOB**

- 1) **Share Purchase Options for Seafarers:** Continued to be explored for Seafarers but was more complex for Fleet; Reward team indicated 2022/2023
- 2) **Sight of Rotations:** Rotations should be available for all on the Bridge – specific incidents where this was not the case should be passed over for investigation. Where tours were changing the team would prioritise changes occurring soonest and would reach out to Officers as appropriate.
- 3) **Cognito form:** There had been mixed feedback; it was felt the speed of response and reliability/accuracy varied; otherwise good feedback.
- 4) **Timing of PAW meetings:** Request for consideration of ship location when planning meetings: Confirmed would review next PAW meet (may be able to do that at Carnival House).
- 5) **PDR Framework:** Phase 1 roll out this month and feedback from PAW members was welcomed. Initial response was that comms hadn't been well received; it was felt changes were made without any discussion or consultation which should be the case where there was a pay impact. PDR's were specifically set up for technical competencies to prove ability in rank. PDR 2 now seemed to be entirely aimed at behaviours which had resulted in individuals who had almost finished PDR 2 in the 'old' format being given a tight deadline to complete it or lose their progress and start again under the 'new' format; the knock on impact was pressure on Line Managers to sign off. It was confirmed there was no change to pay link or mechanism; rates were the same. Discussion over whether PDR vs appraisal was the right place to pick up behaviours. Continued feedback was invited.

Next meeting Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022

**Meeting closed.**