



From the General Secretary

12 March 2020

Dear Area/Branch Secretaries and Shipmates,

FLASH - CORONAVIRUS – CANCELLATION OF NATIONAL RNA EVENTS

Further to my note of 09 March, the Coronavirus crisis continues to escalate and only yesterday the World Health Organisation (WHO) reclassified this Covid-19 contagion as a pandemic meaning that the threat is now world-wide. As previously noted the demographic of **our membership is in a significantly higher risk group** therefore the RNA is now updating our advice to branches and members which is above and beyond that issued by Public Health England.

We would be neglecting our duty of care to our shipmates if we did not give this the priority and respect it deserves. The measures suggested below may therefore appear somewhat draconian however please understand that if we lose even one of our shipmates because it was spread at an Area/Branch or national event then it would be a tragedy. Clearly, we don't want to shut down operations but to carry on regardless may be construed as reckless.

The Government has a 4-phase action plan to combat this lethal strain and has just moved the country from the current phase of **Contain** to **Delay**. The purpose of the Delay Phase is to push the bulk of the outbreak to the summer when there is less pressure on the NHS. This implies that we should anticipate that this virus is likely to be around and virulent for the next several months.

With this in mind, and in consultation with both the National President and National Chairman, **the decision to cancel this summer's Conference in Liverpool has been taken**. How we might rearrange or fulfil our AGM responsibilities will be promulgated in due course. In addition, **the Welfare Seminar on 25 Apr and the Standard Bearers Competition on 16 May are also postponed**. Watch this space for rearranged fixtures.

The decision to do this has not been taken lightly however it is felt that early and decisive action is necessary not least before shipmates make bookings which later have to be cancelled. Shipmates who have already booked will not be left out of pocket however every attempt should be made to use travel insurance or reimbursement through their credit cards.

In addition, although we cannot dictate, Central Office now strongly recommends a policy of social distancing and therefore **all Area/Branch meetings should be suspended indefinitely**; there is no point in exposing potentially vulnerable shipmates to unnecessary risk. We will update this guidance as soon as we feel it is prudent to do so. For those Areas/Branches which have AGMs planned, these unusual attenuating circumstances warrant exceptional measures and delayed governance is an acceptable outcome.

Please distribute widely, keep following government public health guidelines and look after your oppos by phone.

Best wishes,

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