

Violet Lynch
Light Dues Consultation
Zone 2/34
Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DR

Wednesday, 13th May 2009

Dear Ms. Lynch,

The British Marine Federation is the trade association for the leisure boating industry, representing around 1,500 member companies. Our members provide the boats, equipment, facilities and services that enable 3.2 million people to enjoy their recreation afloat on the coast and inland waterways of our country. The BMF also operates the London and Southampton International Boat Shows via its subsidiary National Boat Shows Ltd.

Our industry is wholly comprised of small and medium-sized enterprises with over 95% of companies within our membership employing less than 50 people (based on BMF membership statistics). In total the UK leisure marine sector directly employs over 35,000 people and generates annual revenues of over £3 billion, of which 35% represents export sales. Over recent years the leisure marine sector has been recognised by Government as a manufacturing success story and a growing and valuable contributor to the UK economy.

The BMF have regularly contributed to the ongoing development of the Department's Light Dues policy and we are delighted to have the opportunity to respond to your latest consultation

The BMF and the leisure marine industry that we represent very much welcomes, we strongly support the Department's intentions to make no changes to the charges levied against recreational boaters.

Users of recreational craft already contribute to the provision of aids provided via the

GLA, through mooring fees and harbour dues in addition to periodic fees. Pleasure craft navigation is now focused on the use of the Global Positioning System, particularly as the technology has become more affordable to the ordinary recreational sailor, and there is now a nominal utility derived from the GLA's activities by recreational boaters.

There are few examples of recreational boaters who require the additional accuracy and assurance offered by the GLA-provided differential signal and, hence, we do not anticipate significant demand for additional aids to navigation in the future. Our members are content with existing provisions and do not seek further provisions except in those areas where new hazards have emerged that may be dangerous to small craft. For pleasure craft users, however, such hazards are likely to emerge in shallow water, which often falls within the jurisdiction of the harbour authority.

Our industry is always concerned about any Government measure that will increase the costs of participating in boating. The boat market is dependent on discretionary spend and, as a consequence, is suffering particularly badly during the current economic downturn. By not increasing periodic charges the Department has removed a possible impediment to potential new boat purchasers and existing boaters facing increased costs.

We note with interest the Department's comments that a change to the periodical light dues may be considered at the next review of the fees. Given the evidence submitted above, coupled with the views of our members and recreational boaters at large, we look forward to consulting with you further on this matter.

I hope you find these brief comments helpful. Please contact me if you require more information.

Yours sincerely

Howard Pridding
Executive Director