

Lack of rules threatens southern ocean

Shipping called on to protect environment

Neville Smith

A LACK of comprehensive rules governing shipping in the southern ocean threatens an environmental catastrophe in the event of a serious casualty, a green non-government organisation has warned.

The Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition will use the Marine Environment Protection Committee to present a paper calling for increased co-operation between the International Maritime Organization and the parties to Antarctic Treaty on the formulation of guidelines that could be used as the basis of a new joint instrument.

An "extraordinarily bad" year for accidents in the Antarctic last year prompted Asoc to investigate the patchwork of rules governing shipping in the region. "We

took a look at the end of last year after *Explorer* went down and we found this needed a close look," said executive director James Barnes.

"Our starting point was whether anyone has a handle on what's going on with shipping in the Antarctic. The answer was no."

Traffic is growing at a time when separate regimes govern the operations of tourism, fishery, whaling and government ships. Mr Barnes estimates that in tourism alone, ship numbers have tripled in 12 years and passenger numbers grown perhaps as much as tenfold in 20 years.

And despite some progress on transferring guidelines developed for Arctic shipping to the Antarctic, the coalition has identified serious shortcomings, including a lack of ice strengthening requirements and inadequate capacity of hydrographic survey, liability cover, search and rescue and oil spill response.

A liability annex was tacked onto the environmental protocol to the Antarctic Treaty last year but this is unlikely to be ratified for another three to five years.

Gas giant First Q-flex for Suez Canal



THE 210,000 cu m *Duhail* has become the largest liquefied natural gas carrier to transit the Suez Canal, writes Tony Gray.

Duhail, also the first of the new generation of Q-flex vessels to transit the waterway, is on a voyage to deliver a Qatargas cargo to GasNatural

in Cartagena. The vessel, pictured in the Suez Canal on Tuesday, is owned by Nakilat, Commerz Real and Pronav and was built by Daewoo.

The casualties of last year shared few common characteristics but Mr Barnes says all illustrate the paper's points.

"*Explorer* was said to be purpose-built in 1968 but nobody really asked what is the reality of this 46-year-old ship, which in rather modest ice sank in 23 hours."

The whaling ship *Nishin Maru* was specified as ice class with full redundancy but lost power for 10 days after an explosion in which one crewmember was killed.

Friends of the Earth's Sian Prior points out that the *Explorer* was "lucky in all respects because there were two ships

nearby that were closer than they had planned to be and the sea was calm."

A major casualty involving an oil spill would be a disaster for the marine environment because Antarctic Sea conditions would not disperse the oil.

Ms Prior notes support for a ban on the use of heavy fuel oil in the region but disagreement over whether ships there should be allowed to carry it at all.

She said her colleagues observing development of IMO's guidelines for operations in ice-covered Arctic waters believe they are not stringent enough for the

southern ocean. Both she and Mr Barnes advocate a joint IMO-Antarctic Treaty approach that encompasses all ship types in a single framework agreement, as guidelines then a mandatory instrument.

"We need a framework so that we don't find out 10 years down the line that a particular sector is excluded."

The result could be a joint IMO-AT convention that would circumvent the problem that the region has no direct coastal states. Feedback suggests support from the US and Norway, which is in favour of the HFO ban.

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Rescue: a woman is airlifted to safety.

Seaside derring-do

THE Maritime and Coastguard Agency — along with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution — will soon once more appear on the nation's television screens as the fifth series of *Seaside Rescue* kicks off at 1830 hrs this Sunday on BBC 1.

Much of the action will feature footage shot last summer at several locations. Coastguards from Solent and Falmouth Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centres are featured, along with rescue teams and volunteer lifeboat crews from the Isle of Wight, Falmouth, Perranporth and St Agnes and the coastguard search and rescue helicopter, based at Lee on Solent.

In the first episode, the chopper is called to assist the evacuation of people from the severe flooding in Gloucestershire last July.

The helicopter crew rescued a total of 15 people and eight dogs from various locations, including a man and woman and their dog from a narrow boat. Five young people were also rescued from the roof of a pub and an elderly lady — and her pet mutt — from her caravan.

Richard Norris, chief pilot at Lee on Solent, said: "We were very pleased that we were able to assist in the rescue of these people and their pets from their scary and precarious situations. Seaside

Rescue has been a good opportunity to showcase the work of the coastguard and the helicopter crews and to highlight some of the difficult incidents that we have been called to."

Cutty Sark appeal

SOME things are worth preserving and the Cutty Sark Conservation Project is pulling out all the stops to reach its target of £35m (\$69m), including seeking support in the highest of places.

Sponsors' contributions are essential, so a fund-raising reception at Buckingham Palace, hosted by the Duke of Edinburgh, seemed just the ticket to inspire the capital's shipbrokers and other members of the shipping community to join in and save the legend.

HRH Prince Philip is the Founder Patron of the Cutty Sark Trust and is an important advocate for her continued survival. The prince spearheaded the original 1957 campaign to save the ship by bringing her to Greenwich in south-east London.

In the early hours of May 21 last year, a fire swept through the Cutty Sark while she was undergoing a £25m conservation.

Initial fears that the ship was completely destroyed proved unfounded. Nevertheless, the damage was considerable — all three decks were substantially lost and, although considerably less than was expected, there was some minor distortion to the iron framework.

The Cutty Sark Conservation Project has been set up to preserve the fabric of the world's most famous merchant ship and ensure she has a sustainable future.

To help save a maritime legend, please contact the Cutty Sark Trust at 2 Greenwich Church St, London SE10 9BG; +44 (02) 8858 2698; www.cuttysark.org.uk.

Bilbao and back

HOW'S this for a bargain? Take a trip from the UK to Spain for just £15. And only £15 to sail back.

It's an offer from P&O Ferries to celebrate the 15th anniversary of its Portsmouth to Bilbao service, on which the trip is offered.

Brian Rees, head of public relations at P&O Ferries' Dover headquarters, says: "This special offer is to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the service. The fare covers a range of dates in April and May with bookings to be made by April 25."

On reaching Bilbao there's time for a shore excursion before the return sailing on the *Pride of Bilbao* cruise ferry.

Onboard facilities include live entertainment, a casino, bars and restaurants, two cinemas, a beauty centre and even a fitness suite. Not bad for a £15-a-head trip.

Lloyd's List OVERSEAS			
Bermuda	\$6.40	Kuwait	Dinars3.60
Cyprus	(€5.00)/€2.93	Malta	LM189/€5.00
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Greece	€5.00	UAE	AED 25.00
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