

100 years of maritime history and opportunities for 2020

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Your Royal Highness.

Thank you for that welcome.

It's a real pleasure to speak to you this evening.

The Chamber of Shipping Annual Dinner is always one of the highlights of the maritime year.

But tonight is particularly special, as the Chamber celebrates 100 years since gaining the Royal Charter.

How different UK maritime looked a century ago.

Docks and canals had just come under the authority of the first Ministry of Transport, created by the Lloyd George government in 1919...

The department has come a long way.

Despite the contrasts between then and now, however, there are also striking parallels.

Like today, it was a time of great change.

With Britain's changing position in the world.

Countries eager to grab a greater share of an industry that Britain had dominated for so long.

And like now, the challenges facing the maritime sector were coupled with great opportunities...

Which is what I want to speak about this evening.

Earlier today the Prime Minister made his first speech as we start our new role on the global stage.

And he opened with the quote: 'explosion of global trade with new maritime technologies'.

Well, having worked with you over the year I know that we are ready to take on the opportunity that comes our way. And I have let the PM know we are ready and waiting.

Highlighting achievements

But first, don't we all agree that maritime is a great industry?

And it's been a pleasure to represent you in Parliament, across the UK and Europe, more widely overseas, and of course as hosts of the IMO.

As your Royal Highness's father, the Duke of Edinburgh, once said to me, MPs & ministers are getting younger and come and go.

And it's the nature of our political system that ministers are often given too little time to really make a difference.

So I'm delighted to have returned to the Department for Transport after the general election with continuing responsibility for maritime.

It's a role I have performed with pride for the past 2 years.

And I mustn't forget to thank the superb officials in the maritime directorate whose global reputation reflects their expertise and, thanks to having me as their minister, 7 days a week of hard graft. Thank you.

Teamwork has brought many personal highlights for us.

Achievements that I have only been able to deliver for maritime with your help.

For example:

- signing the ILO Work in Fishing Convention no188 – a reminder that the people in this industry come first
- creating & launching Maritime Safety Week – to ensure we continue to fight for water safety, fisherman and seafarers
- reconfirming our commitment to the Bonn Agreement – dealing with oil pollution of the North Sea
- delivering a £30 million fund to ports across England to upgrade infrastructure
- as Minister for the Year of Engineering, I believe the most successful government programme as it reached over 5 million young people and families to inspire them to work in our industry
- launching the [Clean Maritime Plan](#) – more on that in a minute
- and working with the IMO and Secretary General to push forward women in maritime, the environment, and further work on human rights and transparency to follow

We can all be proud of what we've achieved in the last year.

And it began with the publication of [Maritime 2050](#).

Galvanising industry and government to work together on reaching our shared long-term vision.

We set the sector a further mission, this time to deliver zero-emissions

shipping in the UK, through our Clean Maritime Plan.

I know this is not straightforward or without economic consequence.

Reducing the environmental impact of shipping is critical to our growth strategy for the industry.

And it was good to see industry taking up the challenge, such as the International Chamber of Shipping's proposal for a major \$5 billion research and development fund to tackle emissions in the shipping industry.

Importantly, all these measures were the product of detailed industry involvement, knowledge and expertise...

So while they are visionary, they also set out real-world plans to achieve our shared responsibility.

Of course, September saw the sector come together to deliver another outstanding London International Shipping Week...

When we were once again able to promote our dynamic and world leading maritime sector to the world.

So much planning. So much work, for all of us. But so worth it.

As the PM said in his speech earlier maritime tech is vital, and we are deeply progressive.

We published the Technology and Innovation in UK Maritime route-map, our vision for maritime autonomy.

To support this, we worked with MarRi-UK to launch the £1.5 million Technology and Innovation fund.

This will set standards worldwide.

And there was another small issue in 2019 that brought the department and industry together...

Preparing our departure from the EU.

I want to thank everyone in maritime who engaged with government over the past year...

And who – despite the pressures and complexities involved – tirelessly gave their time to get the industry ready, and prepare the country.

Your contribution has been incredible. Thank you for being patient and I look forward to rolling up our sleeves and cracking on with the next phase.

Where once again maritime will be key to delivering the government agenda.

2020

As we have worked together it's clear to me that we still have much more to do.

I believe in 2020 we can drive even more positive change.

That's the message I've been taking on my tour of ports over the past month... as I've visited Blyth, Liverpool, Southampton, Plymouth, Felixstowe, Belfast, Tilbury and London Gateway.

And this week when I visit Glasgow, Rosyth, Orkney and Aberdeen.

It's been great to catch up with all the latest growth plans and investments and to ensure that real Maritime 2050 progress is being made on the ground.

For example, the incredible UK innovation behind autonomous technology in Plymouth and at the National Oceanography Centre in Southampton...

And seeing our ports' ambitious projects to future-proof for bigger ships and benefit from potential new trade deals...

To catching up on the first Port Enterprise Partnership at Southampton...

And touring the world-leading offshore wind testing centre in Blyth, where earlier this year they welcomed the world's longest wind turbine blade at 107 meters (in case the Americans claim there's is bigger!) to their facilities.

We are always bigger and better in the UK!

And I've had some very interesting discussions about our plans to introduce freeports across the UK.

And I am determined we get this right for you and I will continue to represent your views.

Flag plans

Meanwhile, our mission to become the world's best-performing flag continues...

We'll have representation secured in Greece by March, and the Digital UK Ship Register is in the final stages of testing.

As we rapidly move towards a modernised flag service, this allows us to provide even better, more responsive customer service, supported by a global network of MCA surveyors and intelligent data that will diminish the risk of detentions.

I spoke earlier about the competitive nature of the industry.

Just as we need to present a high-quality offering to potential partners, we also need to offer value.

And we are working across government to introduce fiscal improvements to the UK flag to provide a much more competitive financial proposition to world shipping.

Alongside that, the UK will be the ethical flag of choice.

So we're really looking forward to hosting a Green Finance Forum, and of course the Global Maritime Forum in London later this year...

Hugely important events for the industry as we modernise and become greener, cleaner and more transparent.

Atlantic crossing

I've already mentioned the role of technology in helping us seize the opportunities of the future.

Later this year, a ground-breaking British maritime project will create global headlines for all the right reasons.

When an autonomous ship is due to sail independently across the Atlantic to mark the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower voyage, travelling from Plymouth, to Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Developed by UK-based MSubs, this new initiative builds upon the first unmanned international voyage which took place last year, by UK manufacturer Sea-Kit.

Both projects have been enabled by the UK's innovative stance on autonomous shipping testing and development...

Through the work of the Maritime Autonomy Regulation Lab, led by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

The work will be used to shape the evolution of international regulations through the IMO.

So it's here in the UK, where we are setting the standards internationally on creating the rules, regulations, rights and vocabulary that will shape the market and governance for years to come. We are making history.

Middle East

That question of safety in shipping – has been very much on our minds recently as a result of the increased tensions in the Middle East.

Some 9 million tonnes of shipping was protected by the Royal Navy over a period of nearly 4 months, allowing British vessels to continue operating in the face of direct threats in the Strait of Hormuz.

The International Maritime Security Construct is providing security to commercial shipping in the Gulf, and the Ministry of Defence

And Department for Transport continues to review the threat, and advise shipping on a daily basis.

In case you weren't aware, as threats to shipping evolve, just last week I was pleased to publish new cyber security guidance

And I visited Southampton University to see their continued investment in maritime cyber security testing, which they plan to roll out as the exemplar of shipping cyber security.

Conclusion

So, to sum up, 100 years on from the Chamber's Royal Charter, we find ourselves at another historic juncture...

And as we set out our vision for Global Britain there has never been a greater opportunity to unleash the UK's full potential.

And maritime is at the heart of it.

As a sector we need to continue to think bigger, bolder and work even faster so we don't get left behind.

We have some big issues to contend with, but the last year has shown that the maritime industry is not afraid to take risks... and, by the way, neither am I.

I believe 2020 is the year we start the maritime revolution.

This is the year where we really deliver our long-term vision for maritime.

Where we ask: "how do we want to be remembered in 2120?" 100 years from now...

This year feels to me to be a turning point.

The start of a fresh era for shipping in this country, built on innovation, enterprise and ambition.

A chance to create a new chapter in the history of this remarkable industry.

Just think, in 100 years' time at your next anniversary someone else will be standing here quoting many of you in this room...

Saying that we were the ones who got it right. We were the ones who had the vision.

Thank you.