



Marine Notice No. 17 of 2006

To all Passenger Ship Owners

Sectoral Plan for Accessible Transport

Purpose of this Marine Notice

This Marine Notice is designed to summarise for passenger ship owners and operators the relevant requirements of the Department of Transport's Sectoral Plan for Accessible Transport. The preparation of the Plan was required under the provisions of the *Disability Act 2005*.

Background to the Disability Act 2005

The Disability Act 2005 arose from a commitment by Government, both in the Action Programme for the Millennium and the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness. It was listed among the legislative priorities in a Government Decision on the 28 May 2001. Under the Disability Act, six Ministers, including the Minister for Transport, were required to draw up sectoral plans to coincide with the publication of the Disability Bill.

Sectoral Plan for Accessible Transport under the Disability Act 2005

On 1 January 2006 the Maritime Safety Directorate of the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources transferred to the Department of Transport and the sectoral plan dealing with accessible maritime passenger transport was integrated into the Department of Transport Sectoral Plan. The maritime element of the plan was developed in consultation with passenger ship owners and companies, State commercial port companies, State harbour authorities, the National Disability Authority and representatives of disability groups. Regional consultation meetings in cooperation with the National Disability Authority took place around the country during 2005. An outline of the Maritime Passenger Transport Sectoral Plan was presented at these meetings to inform discussion on what was being proposed.

The Sectoral Plan for Accessible Transport was published on the 21st July 2006, and was laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas on the 28 July 2006. The Plan sets out the proposals of the Minister for Transport and the agencies under his aegis in relation to the rolling out over the next number of years of a comprehensive programme of accessible transport for people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments, together with older people.

The Maritime Section of this Plan is outlined in more detail in the attached Appendix. The Appendix is designed as a guidance note for passenger ship owners and operators on the contents of the Plan and on its implementation. Note in particular Number 4 on Complaints and Redress.

A copy of the Sectoral Plan is available to download from the Department's website www.transport.ie or by contacting Mr John Mount, Public Transport Planning Division, Department of Transport, 44 Kildare Street, Dublin 2 - Tel: (01) 6041271, Fax: (01) 6041688 or e-mail johnmount@transport.ie.

Enquiries about the maritime section of the Plan can be made to:

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12th September 2006

For any technical assistance in relation to this Marine Notice please contact
The Marine Surveyors' Office, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2 +353 1 678 3400
For information in relation to technical specification/type approval of radio equipment contact the
Radio Surveyors +353 1 678 2363/2364/2365/2367.
For general enquiries please contact the Maritime Safety Division at +353-1-678 3418
Any enquiries concerning Marine Notices should be addressed to:
Maritime Safety Directorate, Department of Transport, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2
Email: marinenotices@transport.ie
Or visit us at: www.transport.ie

APPENDIX

Transport Access for All, Sectoral Plan for Accessible Transport under the Disability Act 2005

Guidance Note on the Requirements of the Plan for Passenger Ship Owners and Operators

1. Q. What is the Transport Sectoral Plan?

A. The Disability Act 2005 required that a number of Government Departments, including the Department of Transport, prepare Sectoral Plans. The Transport Sectoral Plan addresses the accessibility needs of passengers with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments across land, air and sea transport modes. The Plan includes a section dealing specifically with maritime passenger transport to ensure that accessibility needs of passengers with disabilities on board passenger ships and in ports are fully addressed.

2. Q. To whom in the maritime sector is the Transport Sectoral Plan relevant?

A. All those involved in the provision of maritime transport passenger services need to be aware of the requirements of the Plan. These include owners and operators of all passenger ships. The Maritime Safety Directorate of the Department of Transport has taken a lead in preparing the maritime part of the Plan. It is also specifically responsible for the regulation of the safety of passenger ships. Other public authorities, which have a role in the management or governance of ports such as the Maritime Transport Division of the Department of Transport, Local Authorities and Port Authorities also have roles to play in implementing the Plan.

3. Q. What are the key parts of the plan for the maritime sector?

(i) Standards

The policy objective of the Maritime Section of the Plan is that, in the period to end 2008, an assessment of existing standards of accessibility on passenger ships will be undertaken. Any improvements, which are needed to facilitate access for passengers with disabilities, will be identified. For the period from 2008 to end 2010, an action plan to implement any necessary improvements will be implemented. Appropriate accessibility measures will be undertaken at ports serving passenger vessels.

(ii) Working Group

The Maritime Safety Directorate is committed to establishing a working group with a view to implementing the policy objective in relation to standards referred to at (i) above. This Group, when constituted, will be expected to consult widely with both service providers in the maritime transport passenger sector and also with the disability

sector. Accordingly, a Forum to ensure that this consultative process takes place in an effective manner is envisaged by the Sectoral Plan.

(iii) EU Initiatives

The Plan welcomes the recent European Commission Working Paper on the protection of passenger rights in the maritime transport sector with special emphasis on the rights of passengers with disabilities. The Commission has been consulting with member states. The Department of Transport by letter dated 28 February 2006 sent a copy of the Commission Working Paper and accompanying Commission Questionnaire to all passenger ship operators and invited them to reply directly to the Commission. While the initiative is still at an early stage, the Commission has signalled the possibility of a future legal framework to protect the rights of passengers throughout the European Community. There is already a Commission Directive on safety standards for passengers with reduced mobility, which for the most part, applies to only a small number of existing vessels in Ireland. It is, however, being recommended for any new builds.

(iv) International Maritime Organisation

The Plan identifies that, in respect of **international** ferries, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) has in place recommended guidelines on accessibility standards.

(v) Questionnaire

Surveyors from the Maritime Safety Directorate will issue a questionnaire to passenger vessel owners/operators when undertaking their annual passenger vessel surveys. The purpose of the questionnaire is to establish with passenger vessel operators what standards they already have in place to facilitate passengers with disabilities. **It is important that completed questionnaires are returned to the inspecting surveyor.**

(vi) “Spot Check”

A spot check survey is being undertaken at a sample of larger ports and passenger ferries by a consultant for the Department of Transport. The results of this “spot check” will be made available to relevant service providers as soon as it is completed and ultimately will be available on the Department’s website

(vii) Complaints and Redress

This is an **important** part of the Sectoral Plan and is dealt with in **number 4 below.**

4. Q. Is there anything that passenger vessel operators must do now?

- A.** Yes. The issue of **complaints** from customers needs to be considered by passenger ship operators now. An important element of the Transport Sectoral Plan is the section dealing with ***Complaints and Redress.*** This applies across **all** transport modes and is not unique to maritime transport service providers. Information and guidance on what is required of service providers is contained in the chapter entitled ***Cross Sectoral Issues in the Transport Sector.*** Passenger ship owners/operators should study it carefully.

Briefly the requirement in relation to complaints is that all service providers must implement a complaints and redress procedure. Each company in the transport sector is required to appoint a person responsible for dealing with complaints **no later than the 31st December 2006.**

The section on *Cross Sectoral Issues* also includes useful information and guidance on *disability awareness training, accessibility audits* and *passenger information*, all of which are immediately relevant to passenger ship service providers.

5. Q. What is the current status of the plan and where is it available?

- A.** All sectoral plans, including the Transport Sectoral Plan, have been launched by the Government and will be considered by the Houses of the Oireachtas during the Autumn sessions of the Dail and Seanad.

The Plan is available on the Department of Transport's website www.transport.ie. Alternative formats such as Braille, Audio, Easy to Read and Plain English have been prepared and are available from Mr. John Mount, Public Transport Planning Division Department of Transport 44 Kildare Street – Tel 01 6041271, fax 01 6041688 or e mail johnmount@transport.ie. An Irish Language version of the Plan is also being prepared and copies will be available in the near future. When finalised, the Irish Language version of the Plan will also be placed on the Department's website in MS Word and HTML formats.

6. Q. Where can more information on disability awareness be found?

- A.** Further information is available from the National Disability Authority (NDA), which promotes and helps secure the rights of people with disabilities. The Authority's responsibilities include policy development, research and advice on standards. You can contact the NDA at 25 Clyde Road, Dublin 4, Tel 01 6080400 or email nda@nda.ie or website at www.nda.ie.