

**Local Vessels Advisory Committee**

**Proposal to permit Class I launches  
to tow an open deck vessel not exceeding 8 m in length overall**

**Purpose**

1. The purpose of this paper is to seek members' views on the proposal to permit Class I launches to tow an open deck vessel not exceeding 8 m in length overall.

**Background**

2. Under Section 93 of the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (General) Regulation, Cap. 548F, except with the permission of the Director of Marine, a local vessel shall not be used for towing another vessel (whether or not a local vessel) unless such towing is undertaken in order to save that other vessel, its crew or its passengers from danger.

3. Currently, Class IV vessels, i.e. pleasure vessels, are permitted to tow, for pleasure purposes, an open deck vessel which has no person on board.

4. Many Class I launches operate in a way similar to that of pleasure vessels in that when reaching certain destinations in shallow waters, passengers have to be transferred to smaller open deck vessels for disembarkation to shore and vice versa. In view of the operational needs, the Hong Kong & Kowloon Motor Boats & Tug Boats Association (MBTA) proposed that Class I launches should be permitted to tow an open deck vessel for the aforesaid purpose.

5. The proposal was discussed at the meetings of the Sub-committee on Survey Work of Local Vessels held on 23 July 2009, 9 October 2009 and 26 May 2010. In consultation with the Licensing and Port Formalities Section of the Marine Department, the Sub-committee considered the proposal put forward by MBTA and agreed that Class I launches should be permitted to tow an open deck vessel not exceeding 8 m in length overall subject to compliance with the conditions set out in the following paragraphs.

## **Proposal**

6. It is proposed that a Class I launch be permitted to tow an open deck vessel only when the following conditions are fully complied with:

- (i) The open deck vessel does not exceed 8 m in length overall, not carrying any person on board while being towed and holding a valid operating licence.
- (ii) Proper towing light should be provided and installed on the launch according to the requirements of the Merchant Shipping (Safety) (Signals of Distress and Prevention of Collisions) Regulations.
- (iii) Mooring bitts installed should be rigid and properly maintained.
- (iv) Ropes for towing should be of suitable strength and length in accordance with acceptable standards of the trade and good seamanship practice.
- (v) Towing should be conducted under good visibility and favorable weather conditions. Towing activity should not proceed when strong monsoon signal or tropical cyclone warning signal No. 3 or higher is issued by the Hong Kong Observatory. If the weather deteriorates to the above situation during towage, the coxswain should exercise his/her seamanship to determine the suitable arrangement for the voyage to ensure the safety of the passengers, launch and the tow.

7. The owner should submit a declaration of compliance with the above conditions together with the application for a Class I launch to tow an open deck vessel. If the application is approved, the permission to tow will be endorsed in the Operating Licence of the Class I launch.

## **Action requested**

8. Members are invited to comment and endorse the above proposal.

Marine Department  
Shipping Division  
Local Vessels Safety Branch

3 August 2010