

## **PROVISIONAL LOCAL VESSEL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

### **New Numbering System under the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) Ordinance**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the paper is to brief members of the new numbering system to be used for the certification and licensing of local vessels under the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) Ordinance (LVO).

#### **Background**

2. Under the existing legislation, local vessels are categorized into 11 classes, that is, launches, ferry vessels, pleasure vessels, and eight classes of miscellaneous craft. Vessels of different classes are being assigned with licence numbers of different number formats. Licence numbers may have two to six digits and may or may not include a one-letter prefix, or a single letter suffix, or both. The first or the last digit of a licence number may have meaning assigned to it, but the meaning of the digits may change from class to class. Furthermore, yacht clubs' vessels were allocated some peculiar licence numbers. Although such numbers are no longer allocated, some are still in use today. The current numbering system has become so complicated and confusing to the public and the trade that its usefulness is doubtful.

3. Under the LVO, the classification of local vessels will be rationalized, and the number of classes will be streamlined from eleven to four, that is, Class I: passenger vessels, Class II: cargo vessels, Class III: fishing vessels, and Class IV: pleasure vessels. Making use of this opportunity, a new numbering system will be introduced to standardize the format of licence numbers and to make licence numbers easily understood by the public and the trade.

#### **New Numbering System**

##### *New Vessels*

4. In future, under the LVO, every certificated local vessel will be assigned with a unique certificate of ownership number (**COO number**), which is also used as the operating licence number (equivalent to the existing licence number). The COO number comprises a

single letter prefix - except for the number of a Class IV vessel, which has no prefix at all - and five digits. The prefixes denote the classes of vessel: 'A' for Class I, 'B' for Class II and 'C' for Class III. However, to distinct a Class III open sampan fitted with petrol outboard engine (existing P4 sampan) from other Class III vessels so as to remove any doubt on its usage, a prefix 'P' will be assigned to this type of vessels instead of 'C'. Below is an illustration of the new number format that will be used for a new vessel:

*A54321*

*(where 'A' denotes a Class I vessel)*

*P44321*

*(where 'P' denotes a Class III outboard petrol engine open sampan)*

### ***Existing Vessels***

5. Assigning a new number to existing vessels, however, are expected to cause confusion for the trade, especially if the existing numbers have been referred to in various business or legal documents. To minimize such confusion, therefore, the COO number of an existing vessel will be formed by a prefix according to the new numbering system and the vessel's existing licence number. Such COO number will be used until the ownership or class of the vessel is changed, when it will be replaced by a new allocated number as a new vessel. Below is an illustration of the COO number of an existing Class IV miscellaneous craft (a Class II vessel under the LVO):

*BM44321C*

*(where 'B' denotes a Class II vessel under the LVO and  
'M44321C' is the vessel's existing number)*

6. With regard to those pleasure vessels being assigned with a peculiar yacht club number as licence number, these vessels will be assigned with a new number, but will be allowed to be marked on the vessel with their existing numbers, if they prefer, in addition to the COO numbers, as long as the COO numbers are clearly distinguishable.

### **Presentation**

7. Mr F L Cheuk, Senior Marine Officer/Licensing and Port Formalities, will present the paper to members in the meeting.

**Marine Department**  
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