Welcome to the May edition of the Mersey Maritime Ezine! When I opened this publication last month I didn’t think it would be possible to beat the sheer amount of news, views and activities that we showcased in this virtual magazine for our members. How wrong I was! I am really heartened that once again we have exceeded expectations and have a really full and interesting Ezine for you to read. Of itself this is a positive but it points to a deeply significant message: the maritime industry is alive and kicking (or should that be floating!) in the Liverpool City Region and beyond. Despite the unprecedented and challenging times around the COVID-19 pandemic, we can take heart that maritime logistics and energy businesses, their staff and key workers are doing all they can to ensure we have a vibrant and dynamic sector as we emerge from this crisis.

And I believe we are now clearly moving into the next phase of the Coronavirus challenge. Last month I reflected on the ‘3Rs’ framework that Government have set to guide the industry through the pandemic: Restart, Recovery and Renew. Our focus as an organisation locally, and in our work on the national stage with Maritime UK, is firmly in the ‘Recovery’ phase. That’s why the work we have been doing around the ‘Maritime Business Support Survey’ is so crucial. Whilst interesting of itself in helping us understand what the situation is like out there on the ground amongst our member businesses, the survey has a much greater relevance too. It is now being used to have a direct influence on the industry recovery plan and themes that we are feeding into Government and which we know have traction at the highest levels. Indeed, as CEO of the UK’s leading maritime cluster organisation, I continue to engage each week in the work of the ‘Maritime Business Continuity Taskforce’ which includes direct conversations with Government. Mersey Maritime’s unique voice and insight into the ‘state of the maritime industry’ in the region is well heard but most importantly it is helping to shape what emerges after this crisis is over. If you haven’t yet had time to complete the second iteration of the survey, please do. It is available via the Mersey Maritime website homepage. Please do also contact me direct if you would like a specific update around this focus of ours in recent months and if you have particular comment to make about what the industry needs to recover and renew itself in the weeks and months ahead.
This month we are delighted to highlight our tremendous ‘Member of the Month’ that is Tapiit Maritime. Tapiit burst on to the industry scene not that long ago and have already made a big impact and were worthy winners of the International Trade Award at the MMI20 event back in March. It really is worth checking out their business and engaging in some of their work if you can. We are also pleased to offer a deep dive into the history of one of our key partners, Western Union Business Solutions, with a longer than usual article covering the interesting origins and development of an organisation that is known the world over as leaders in the sphere of cross border business payments. We are grateful too for substantial contributions from Hill Dickinson LLP and the British Ports Association around their current thinking on the COVID-19 situation and how businesses are taking steps to survive and rebuild. You will also see a range of articles across the breadth of the industry, including the charitable sector, with many showing a focus on the wider business agenda with new appointments and projects either underway or firmly on the horizon.

Mersey Maritime is beginning to make its own preparations for a return to some form of normality. Our staff remain available to you at this ongoing time of challenge and uncertainty and we would welcome your ongoing engagement with our events and activities as we strive, as ever, to support the maritime sector in the Liverpool City Region and the wider North West. For those of you who haven’t been able to attend one of our weekly ‘Face-2-Face’ events, please try and do so! The Ezine contains two longer write-ups from some particularly memorable highlights from May; our events with Clive Hickman of the Manufacturing Technology Centre and Richard Ballantyne of the British Ports Association which are well worth delving into. Thank you to all those who have taken the time to contribute so fully to these activities which have proved very popular amongst the membership.

Have a fantastic month ahead and enjoy the broad range of articles in this month’s publication! And please do remember to be in touch at any time if the Mersey Maritime team can be of assistance to you.
Representative body for the maritime sector in the Liverpool City Region, Mersey Maritime, have launched the second round of their comprehensive business support survey in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As an organisation they led this initiative at a national level in April to ensure the unique interests of maritime sector businesses were captured and then represented at the highest level of decision making possible. As a key member of the Maritime UK ‘Maritime Business Continuity Taskforce’, the results of the survey were fed into the Department for Transport and other Government departments in the weekly meetings that have been taking place as a response to the crisis. Now the second iteration of the survey is available for maritime businesses to complete over the course of the next two weeks.

Commenting, Chief Executive of Mersey Maritime, Chris Shirling-Rooke, said:

“The reason Mersey Maritime exists is to represent the views and interests of all its members, large or small. This is so vitally important at this time of unprecedented national challenge as the country, and our maritime industry, continues to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic. It became clear to us early on in the crisis, that the perspective of maritime wasn’t always as prominent as it needed to be in the range of measures implemented to assist businesses and other organisations in dealing with the threats they were experiencing on a daily basis. That’s why we launched the original survey which was then rolled out as best practice across the other regions of the United Kingdom and through our partner maritime trade associations.

“Now it is time to follow up with a further deep dive into what the industry is experiencing and as a way to identify what additional measures might be needed to offer support. We know the Government now wish to focus on three key phases: Restart, Recover and Renew. The insights that this survey will provide, direct from our members and partner organisations, will be crucial in allowing us to represent the industry once again with ministers and their officials. Our industry has already shown its resilience in order to keep the country fed, supplied and fuelled, but now we need to further understand the ‘state of health’ of the sector out there as we look to the recovery stage.

“I would urge all maritime businesses in the Liverpool City Region to engage with us on this important process.”

To access the simple, ninety second survey, click here: https://merseymaritime.typeform.com/to/SxwP1o
As the nation remembers the 75th anniversary of VE Day, the day the Second World War came to an end on European soil, Chief Executive of Mersey Maritime, Chris Shirling-Rooke reflects:

“We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the greatest generation that served in combat and on the home front during the Second World War.

Whilst we now need to celebrate VE Day 75 in our homes and on our doorsteps, rather than in parades and street parties as we all wanted, I hope all our Mersey Maritime members will come together to mark this historic occasion.

In these difficult times, acts of remembrance are even more poignant and important, and I am sure everyone will want to join in remembering and giving thanks to those who gave so much to secure peace, freedom and prosperity in Europe.

We know this acutely here in our region. A region with people with the sea in our blood. A region that can justifiably be incredibly proud of the role it played in defending freedom for the world.

As we face some of the most challenging times since the Second World War, now more than ever it is important to unite in recognition of people’s service to the nation, just as communities did 75 years ago.

We will never forget and always be thankful.”
Britain's emergence from the coronavirus crisis could herald a new era of British manufacturing and innovation.

Addressing members of Mersey Maritime at one of the organisation’s virtual Face-2-Face networking events, Clive Hickman, chief executive of the Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC), called for a renewed focus on the UK’s knowledge economy.

Based in Liverpool and the Midlands, the MTC is an independent research and technology resource with the brief of bridging the gap between academia and industry – often referred to as the ‘valley of death’. It was established in Coventry in 2010 and now has a team of 34 people at Liverpool Science Park.

New platform

Mr Hickman talked about how manufacturers and innovators had demonstrated their value during the COVID-19 crisis by turning their skills to develop vital equipment for NHS staff on the frontline of fighting the virus.

He said this effort could provide a platform for a new era of British manufacturing and innovation. He explained: “From the mid-1980s manufacturing was forgotten about. We were happy to let it be done overseas. But Germany has continued to manufacture, so why can’t we?”

“What has always frustrated me is that despite us having the best research in the world at our universities, coming up with great products and processes, so many things end up being made abroad. Flat screen TVs is my favourite example of that.

“We need to invest in the capacity to make things here in the UK. We need to upskill our workforce so they can quickly adapt to what is needed. Training will be a big part of the work we do in Liverpool in the future.”
Automation push

Mr Hickman also talked of the need for automation in industry, an area in which he felt the UK lagged behind other parts of the world. And he took issue with the notion that increased automation will lead to higher unemployment, pointing out that it typically increases productivity and leads to more jobs.

“We need to embrace automation much more than we have so far,” he explained. “We see a lot of automation in the automotive sector, but not so much elsewhere. For example, much of our food supply industry is dominated by people and there is not as much technology as there could be. Technology creates jobs, not the reverse.”

Crisis management

He said that during the COVID-19 epidemic and particularly during the lockdown, the MTC has faced the same challenges as businesses across the UK in maintaining cashflow and ensuring they have a viable business at the other end of the crisis, as well as ensuring the welfare of its employees.

He added: “Half of our income comes from government grants, which we believe are secure. We are focused on winning the industrial orders that make up the other 50% of our income. We have furloughed some employees but are topping up the furlough to ensure people still get their usual salaries.

“We have also cancelled recruitment for the foreseeable future, cancelled all capital expenditure and converted capital grant to revenue, and we have secured a £4m advance on our Catapult grant.”

Mr Hickman went into detail about multiple partnerships with industry and the NHS during the crisis to increase the supply of vital personal protection equipment (PPE) for health and key workers. There have been supply chain projects for intubation shields, ventilators, face shields, ear savers, water dispensers, ambulance sanitisation and hand sanitisers.

MTC projects included developing intubation shields for Barts Hospital Trust, was part of a consortium developing new ventilators, 3D printed more than 200 face shields and passed them to Jaguar Land Rover for onward supply, and helped Johnson & Johnson convert one of their fragrance production lines to make hand sanitisers.

University challenge

The urgency of the COVID-19 crisis has inspired academics and industry to innovate quickly and Mr Hickman hopes this effort will see the knowledge economy given a much higher priority as we move out of the crisis phase and into recovery. He said the ingenuity that exists in our universities is key to the UK’s future growth.

He added: “The work that is done at our universities is fantastic and we need to learn from them. In other parts of the world, universities drive the economy. But, here in the UK, we don’t convert enough of our research into innovation. Hopefully, now, that will change.”

Read more about the MTC here: http://www.the-mtc.org/
Training specialist Tapiit is shortly to launch its online mental wellbeing programme aimed at both managers and workers who spend long periods at sea.

The Liverpool firm offers training platforms that connects individuals and companies with training providers and is well established in the maritime sector. Earlier this year it won the International Trade Award at the Mersey Maritime Industry Awards.

In March it launched a new venture, offering yoga and mental wellbeing courses via live streamed online sessions and, from June 1, is now expanding its offer to seafarers at all levels. They have to cope with long periods away from land and their families and so face particular mental health challenges.

Anastasia Kohanuka, sales manager at Tapiit says the firm’s new FlexiiMind mental well-being programme and services addresses a subject “close to our hearts”, that of the welfare of seafarers.

She explained: “We are all aware of the unique conditions seafarers are working in and everything else that comes with it - isolation, being away from the family, unique living conditions, etc.

“Many of us attended mental health first aid courses, mental health awareness courses and boardroom meetings to address the issues. The main issue is that those courses and training programmes are still labelling people with mental health problems, as ‘mental health disease’, talking about depression, anxiety and answering questions such as ‘What do we do when something happens?’.”
"What we really need to look at is what is happening before that, so it never gets to ‘when something happens’.

“We need to look at the mental well-being culture of the company, culture that doesn’t have any place for stigma and labelling people, a culture where company’s policies reflect the beliefs in well-being, culture where everyone has support and doesn’t have to fear of raising their hand. And that has to start from the top.”

For the past six months, Tapiit has been working with a team of clinical psychologists and maritime professionals - with support from unions and maritime organisations - to develop a corporate mental well-being programme, which is divided into three stages:

**Stage 1 course:** Mental well-being for leaders (also includes a follow up session) – going live with it now.

**Stage 2 course:** Mental well-being for the front-line employees (also includes a follow up session).

**Stage 3:** Bespoke services. We will work directly with a company to expand the mental well-being package, look into company’s existing procedures and propose additional services, support packages for employees, merchandise, visual material and so on.

Anastasia added: "We are all aware that we spend most of our life in work, and corporate mental well-being is one of the largest contributors to our general mental health and well-being. It is extremely important their mental well-being is promoted and supported by the leaders and managers within the organisations in order to maintain this culture throughout the company.

"But it is also important to remember that our leaders need support too and need to be looked after, especially during these challenging times. Our course is looking at such areas as eliminating stigma, providing leaders with the tools to look after their own mental well-being, supporting others around you, maintaining a well-being culture at work, and offering resources and tools to deal with day-to-day life with its highs and lows."

All training and the courses are done live so there is no need for the extra cost of travel and accommodation. Tapiit brings the live course to its clients. Stage 1 will go live on 01 June, with Stage 2 being launched shortly afterwards. Mersey Maritime members can get a 15% discount. Email bookings@tapiitlive.com and quote discount code MERSEY1.

Learn more about the wider work of Tapiit here: https://www.tapiitlive.com/ / https://tapiit.com/
Mersey Maritime welcomed Beverley Rice, Director, of chartered accountancy firm Robinson Rice Associates Ltd on to its Board in December 2019. Beverley has a robust maritime track record counting shipping lines, engineering companies and exporters amongst her clients. Prior to Robinson Rice, Beverley worked for an international firm of accountants. She has attained FCA and CTA status and specialises in all aspects of tax planning for companies and individuals including corporate tax, personal tax, capital taxes and the maritime sector.

Chris Shirling-Rooke, Chief Executive of Mersey Maritime, said: “It is a pleasure to welcome Beverley to the board. A board that over the coming months and years will grow and further reflect the spectrum within our incredibly diverse maritime sector. Beverley been a great supporter of the Mersey Maritime project and having her here can only add to the depth of knowledge and leadership that we can call upon!”

John Hulmes, Chairman of Mersey Maritime added: “Beverley is a leading North West accountant with a wealth of experience especially at forward planning, and her presence on the Board at Mersey Maritime can only further enhance the status and strength of our team. I’ve no doubt she will prove to be a major asset to us as we move forward as the UK’s leading maritime cluster organisation.”

Read more about Robinson Rice Associates Ltd here: http://www.rra.uk.com/
Mersey Maritime member Micro-Epsilon is looking to roll out its fever monitoring system which could prove valuable to companies as we move out of the coronavirus lockdown.

The concept of the system is it will detect elevated body temperature, which is an indicator of fever and possible infection. As people want to enter a building or facility, the system will scan their face and then give a go/no go signal. This signal can also be connected to door entry systems and turn-styles.

At the heart of the system is the thermal imaging system produced by Micro-Epsilon and, along with a partner, has packaged this into an automatic entry system. It is looking to jointly promote this to the marketplace.

Christopher Jones, managing director of Micro-Epsilon, said: "This system could be ideal for companies involved in the asset management or facilities management of medium to large buildings/organisations, as well as at public events and locations.

"The key factor for this type of system is it must be more accurate than +/-0.5 degrees C which is the FDA and ISO standard required for approved fever monitoring systems. Our solution has this accuracy and can be proven through documented evidence.

"Many systems out there are jumping on the bandwagon and not accurate. Hand-held thermal cameras are definitely not capable of this accuracy."

Read more here: https://www.micro-epsilon.co.uk/news/2020/2020-05-01-MEUK-Fever_Screening
A major figure in the revival of Merseyside’s Cammell Laird shipyard, John Syvret, has stepped down as chief executive of the business.

Mr Syvret is retiring from his executive role with Cammell Laird, which employs hundreds of people in Birkenhead, and Atlantic and Peninsula Marine Services, but remains on the board as a non-executive director. Cammell Laird’s majority shareholder is Peel Holdings.

Tony Graham has also stepped down from his role as chief operating officer with Cammell Laird. David McGinley, the managing director of global ship repair, conversion and marine specialist Atlantic and Peninsula Marine Services, has been appointed as the chief executive of Cammell Laird with immediate effect.

Mr Syvret helped to bring Cammell Laird back from the dead when it went into receivership in 2001. It suffered financial difficulties due to the late withdrawal from a £50m refit contract for the cruise ship Costa Classica.

He helped relaunch the business on the banks on the Mersey in Birkenhead as Northwestern Shiprepairers and Shipbuilders, with the Cammell Laird name returning to the company by 2008.

Since then he has overseen a successful growth of the business with key contracts including building sections of the UK’s two new aircraft carriers, HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Queen Elizabeth, the construction of the new £200m polar research vessel, Sir David Attenborough, and an ongoing contract to maintain the Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels.
He also diversified the firm, expanding its reach in other areas of maritime and engineering. Cammell Laird has played a role in the growth of the offshore wind sector in Liverpool Bay and has worked with the nuclear sector.

In September last year he welcomed legendary broadcaster and naturalist Sir David Attenborough, and the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, to Cammell Laird for the official naming ceremony of the polar research vessel.

Mr Syvret was made a CBE in 2012. In late 2012 he was involved in a bitter dispute with the GMB and Unite over plans to lay off 290 Cammell Laird workers, following the ending of a number of contracts.

He will maintain his involvement with his charitable initiatives, which include Wirral Youth Zone and the Engineering College, together with the national industry related boards including the Society of Maritime Industries and the Maritime Enterprise Working Group.

David McGinley is a visiting Professor at the University of Strathclyde in Scotland and is a past president of the UK Shipbuilders and Ship Repairers Association, part chair of the Association of British Offshore Industries and is a director of the Society of Maritime Industries.

Read more about Cammell Laird here: https://www.clbh.co.uk/
The coronavirus pandemic we are currently living through has, without question, had a huge impact on every single aspect of our lives, we are worried for our health, our families and friends, and also the economic impact of COVID-19 on our futures.

Since the beginning of the government enforced lockdown in March both industry and related businesses have had to rapidly adapt, change and evolve. Many of us are now working from home, we connect remotely, much of our purchasing has been moved online and, in some cases, businesses have repurposed processes to help with the fight against the pandemic.

As industry and businesses battled to become resilient, we have seen a growing trend in the need for digital transformation and where perceived barriers and risk once stood as obstacles on this path, a new openness has evolved.

Digitisation in industry has been an important topic for some time and it remains big news. It is seen as a concept which looks to use digital technologies and data to improve efficiency and productivity and as a result create revenue and develop business.

Maritime Digital Hub has worked hard to build relationships with carefully selected partners to help simplify and guide industry on their path to digitisation. We realised early on that understanding a concept and seeing how a solution will work for you can be challenging and quite often the issues arise where the uses of certain technology can be lost in translation.

Webtrends Optimize is a founding partner of Maritime Digital Hub, described by Kevin Smith (Founder and Digital Transformation Advisor) as ‘skilled experts in their field… able to provide simple and clear solutions that deliver real business value’.
So, let’s take a minute to explore how they can help.

The UK is a world leading maritime centre, supporting more than 900,000 jobs and adding more than £37.4bn gross value to the UK economy. There are many different types of industries involved in this sector with most relying on a digital presence to support their business. These digital assets are critically important, and with a global pandemic changing the way people engage and an unpredictable cash flow, now more than ever is the time to ensure your assets are working for you.

Optimising your existing assets to greater ensure that traffic landing on your page completes a specific task is not just related to online purchasing, it also includes email sign-up, fulfilling a survey or downloading an app, ultimately it is the completion of your call to action.

Conversion rate optimisation (CRO) is one such way to drive website traffic into leads, customers and brand advocates, all without the risks involved with rebuilding existing sites.

Our partner Webtrends Optimize understands the importance of your digital assets and are here to help you increase online conversions iteratively, without having to rebuild from scratch, and most importantly without risk. Through AB testing, analysis and personalisation tools, or a combination of all of these, Webtrends Optimize look to find the right solutions based on the data, the industry, the brand, the website and the consumer.

Practical uses for this type of service and technology are far reaching and Webtrends Optimize have applied their vast skill set to support various clients across many sectors; Virgin Wines described how ‘having a trusted partnership was key’. Get The Label (part of JD Sports) were able to consolidate their technology tools and make huge savings, and airline Alitalia generated an uplift of €2m per quarter from AB testing.

To learn more about Webtrends Optimize visit their website www.webtrends-optimize.com
HAULAGE FIRMS FACING COLLAPSE AMID COVID CRISIS

Thousands of road haulage firms across the UK are facing imminent collapse amid the coronavirus crisis and it could have dire implications for the country’s economic recovery.

That was the stark message delivered by Richard Burnett, Chief Executive of the Road Haulage Association (RHA, in an online address to business leaders from Liverpool city region’s maritime sector.

Addressing the audience as part of Mersey Maritime’s weekly online Face-2-Face series of events, Mr Burnett said whole sections of Britain’s road haulage industry had been “decimated” by the COVID-19 crisis as large parts of the economy ground to a halt.

Calling for urgent Government intervention to prop up the stricken sector, which is annually worth £124bn to the UK economy, Mr Burnett said: “Government will have to intervene otherwise the UK recovery will be much slower.”

Around 98% of everything we eat, use and wear will, at some point in the supply chain, be transported by road. More than 2.5m people work in the haulage and logistics industry and 493,600 commercial vehicles over 3.5 tonnes are registered in the UK.

“There has been a wake-up call during the COVID crisis, a realisation that without the integrated supply chain in this country we could not have maintained vital supplies of food and medicines,” Mr Burnett added.

However, while the public perception of hauliers may be focused on the large operators such as Stobart, the fact is that 85% of road hauliers are small and medium-sized enterprises. And it is these businesses, existing on razor-thin margins, who are hurting most due to the current crisis.

Mr Burnett said: "Through the COVID crisis people have started to realise that it is the smaller businesses that have been providing the support for the bigger operators. It is these SMEs that have been keeping the wheels turning."
“On March 15 I spoke to Transport Secretary Grant Shapps about how those hauliers that were supporting the events industry were the first to be hit as large events such as concerts were cancelled. I told him then that we were going to need financial support.”

While the supply chain for essential supplies such as food and medicines has held up during the crisis, hauliers servicing other business sectors have seen work dry up at an alarming rate. Removals, car transportation and construction have been hardest hit.

The RHA surveyed around 12,000 of its members and found that only 5% were maintaining their normal volumes with 83% seeing a significant reduction and 22% having no work at all. Firms had seen 25% of drivers furloughed, 50% of drivers inactive and 46% of the national HGV fleet inactive.

“In the survey, 52% of those who responded said they did not expect to survive for longer than a month,” added Mr Burnett. “That was three weeks ago and now we are already starting to see businesses collapse. Their customers are also collapsing, putting more pressure on cashflows, so we are seeing a domino effect. Operators are now failing on a worrying scale. Insolvency numbers are increasing.”

While Chancellor Rishi Sunak has unveiled a number of measures to support businesses, Mr Burnett said the road haulage industry was going to need specific sector support. He revealed that 95% of haulage businesses that had applied for loans under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme had seen their applications rejected by banks.

Specific types of support the industry is seeking includes direct cash injections, business rates holidays, paying 80% of outstanding invoices and a move to a weekly furlough model.

Mr Burnett said Government was now listening to the industry’s concerns. He explained: “Government didn’t really understand the road haulage sector prior to the coronavirus crisis. Now, thanks to us, they know a lot more and we are starting to see plans put together across Whitehall departments.”

Mersey Maritime Chief Executive, Chris Shirling-Rooke, said: “Logistics is a huge and integral part of the maritime sector and our members are fully aware of the importance of hauliers to the UK supply chain.

“We are fully supportive of the RHA’s efforts to persuade the Government to make sure the integrity of the UK logistics sector is maintained. We at Mersey Maritime are giving the sector all the support we can offer.”

Information about the work of the Road Haulage Association can be found here: https://www.rha.uk.net/
Seafarers and offshore workers are to be exempt from the requirement that persons arriving in the UK from 8 June 2020 self-isolate for 14 days upon arrival, the Government have announced. The exemption includes essential workers but not tourists and other passengers.

The Government announced on 22 May 2020 that new restrictions would be applied on persons entering the UK with effect from 8 June 2020. These are:

- To provide journey and contact details when travelling to the UK
- Not to leave the place where they are staying for the first 14 days that they are in the UK, except in very limited situations (known as ‘self-isolating’).

The measures will apply to arrivals from anywhere outside the UK with the exception of Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. They will be reviewed at three-week intervals.

In addition to seafarers and offshore workers, there are exemptions for inspectors or surveyors of ships and workers with specialist technical skills, where those skills are required for essential or emergency works or services (including commissioning, maintenance, and repairs and safety checks) to ensure the continued production, supply, movement, manufacture, storage or preservation of goods. A full list of occupational groups who will be exempted from the quarantine requirement can be seen on the www.gov.uk website.
Seafarers, offshore workers and other persons exempted from quarantining will still be required to provide journey and contact details when travelling to the UK. This will be done using an online form, which will be available soon. Travellers might be asked to show that they have completed the form when they arrive in the UK.

Those who are required to self-isolate will be permitted to leave the place where they are staying only if:

- They need urgent medical treatment
- They need support from social services
- They need food and medicine and cannot get them delivered or get a friend or family member to bring them
- They are attending the funeral of a close relative, or for other compassionate reasons
- There is an emergency, such as a fire at the place where they are staying

They are not permitted to have visitors, including friends and family, unless they are providing essential care. Any travellers to the UK who are not able safely to self-isolate at the place where they intend to stay must advise the UK Border Force, who will offer a choice of accommodation for the self-isolation period.

Global logistics firm Edge Worldwide is switching operations from southern UK ports to the Port of Liverpool after growing frustrated with increasing delays.

Port of Liverpool owner Peel Ports has secured an agreement with Salford-based Edge which transports freight and consumer goods from major ports across the world on behalf of a number of UK-based wholesale and retail clients.

Edge says it has experienced increased lead times, longer queues and restricted driver availability for onward freight at southern English ports. Long road journeys to Northern distribution centres has meant even further delay for goods arriving onshore to reach their final destination.

The company says that, with high volatile demand, reliable routes to market are critical and with increased uncertainty surrounding the future of logistics and the overall supply chain, it is vital that businesses have access to a well-connected Port.

It added the Port of Liverpool had been a viable alternative even before the COVID-19 crisis, but said a growing number of businesses are understanding that it makes commercial and viable sense to ship products close to destination.

The Port of Liverpool’s lead times have never been more efficient and with average truck turnaround times now consistently below 40 minutes. Efficient lead times and the added benefit of shortening the land journey to end destination, means that the customer goods reached shelves quicker providing relief for stores under consumer pressure.
Andy Raglan, managing director from Edge Worldwide, said: "Liverpool has been a growing opportunity for a number of our customers even before the pandemic, highlighting it as a viable alternative to Southern Ports."

"With the blank sailings impacting the supply chain in the south, we are seeing more and more customers requesting to use Liverpool instead. During this time Liverpool has continued to impress with its collaborative approach to business and the operational efficiency provided by the new deep sea terminal."

Edge Worldwide’s experience offers a vote of confidence that shipping to the north of England is a competitive route to international markets and the Port of Liverpool provides a very real solution to time-critical cargo from across the world.

David Huck, managing director at Peel Ports, added: "At difficult times like these, retailers want to know that their supply chains are able to cope with increased demand and we can prove that the Port of Liverpool is ready to meet their needs."

"Our improved lead times also mark a further shift away from southern ports, with problems only expected to worsen, COVID-19 shows no immediate sign of easing and delays are getting longer. We’re pleased that we can offer relief and efficiency to retailers under pressure."

Read more about Edge Worldwide here: https://www.edgewl.com/
Nowadays there are very few remarkable stories about start-ups. Companies may have been started by studious types while they were at college, or by young graduates with business loans, but there are not many that can claim to have changed history and influenced major events.

In 1851, the New York and Mississippi Valley Printing Telegraph Company was created. It was in the business of communications, and initially offered a message relaying service, employing a team of bicycle messengers who delivered letters. However, it soon saw that the future was in telegrams - the cutting-edge technology of the time. Telegraph companies sprang up all over the United States, but they were all local and small scale. None could offer a long-range service across the country. As a result, customers had to pay for multiple services for one message to make its way across the country.

So, in 1856, the New York and Mississippi Valley Printing Telegraph Company changed its name to the Western Union Telegraph Company, declaring that its stated aim was to send telegraphs directly from the east coast to the west coast.

Civil War brings new challenges, and opportunities

In 1861 the need for swift communication became more urgent, with the outbreak of the American Civil War. At the time, the only rapid communication service was provided by the Pony Express, which took ten days to carry telegrams and mail across the country.

Although Western Union was busy acquiring competitor services, this was not enough to enable it to span the country. A 2,000-mile line across the plains and over the Rocky Mountains was needed to complete the network. No other telegraph company would take on the challenge, as the geography and the threat of sabotage meant the odds of a successful completion were stacked against them.
The first transcontinental telegraph line was completed at Salt Lake City on 24th October 1861, only 112 days after the project was begun. Two days later, the US government stopped using the Pony Express service and turned to Western Union to speed messages across the continent.

**Success, Growth and Diversification**

Gradually, Western Union absorbed more than 500 telegraph companies across the nation, and in 1884 it was one of the first eleven stocks to be listed on the Dow-Jones Transportation Average. As the company grew, it diversified into new services. Many of these fell under the description of communications, such as the first inter-city facsimile, the first pre-paid phone card and becoming the first company to have five satellites in orbit, but Western Union also took the opportunity to move into another fast-growing area - financial services.

Western Union now can provide services in over 200 countries and territories around the world. The best known of these is its Money Transfer service. Individuals and businesses can send money in almost any currency to almost any destination. For businesses involved in import and export, being able to pay for goods or receive funds quickly is essential as cashflow is the lifeblood of any business venture. But what really makes the difference for these importers and exporters is being able to remove the risk factor of dealing in a foreign currency, when exchange rates are constantly moving.

**Western Union – supporting businesses with a global network**

Today, Western Union Business Services provides international payments in over 130 currencies, with competitive spot rates, optimal routing and cost effective transfers as well as a globally leading online platform which not only facilitates online payments and bulk upload, but which also gives real time access to positions and mark to market valuations.
With a highly qualified team of currency experts and a service tailored specifically to the needs of SMEs, they specialise in protecting the profits of international businesses from currency fluctuations, with a range of hedging tools and strategies. With their wide range of Foreign Exchange services, actionable analysis and decision support tools, they give SMEs more transparency and control over their foreign exchange and international payments.

Western Union is a company with an extraordinary history and, as technology continues to change, a fast-moving, exciting future. It’s a long way from bicycle messengers and singing telegrams, but Western Union is still trading successfully and helping to keep things moving across borders, languages and cultures.

Read more about Western Unions Business Solutions here: https://business.westernunion.com/en-gb/
Liverpool City Region-based fuel giant, Essar Oil UK, is offering frontline NHS staff battling the coronavirus epidemic.

From May 7, NHS staff have been able to secure a 10p-per-litre discount at more than 70 Essar-branded retail forecourts around the UK by simply showing their NHS ID cards at the till point.

Based at Stanlow, on the banks of the River Mersey, Essar Oil UK’s facility is one of the largest refineries in the country, employing around 1,000 people. It supplies 16% of all UK road transport fuels and every year produces 4.4bn litres of diesel, 3bn litres of petrol and 2bn litres of jet fuel.

The global Essar Group acquired the then loss-making Stanlow in 2011 from Shell and has since invested £650m turning it into a sustainable and profitable business which now generates annual revenues of more than £4bn.

Ramsay MacDonald, Essar head of retail, said: “There aren’t many people who deserve to be rewarded more during the Coronavirus outbreak than NHS workers. We hope providing them with a discount is a small way for the energy industry to show its appreciation to them.

“Essar recognise the extraordinary job that NHS workers are doing to care for others and they deserve all our support through this crisis. We have been delighted with the great response from Essar dealers, who have enthusiastically helped deliver this recognition across our dealer network.”

Read more about Essar Oil UK here: https://www.essaroil.co.uk/
Caroline Prosser, legal director at Liverpool law firm Hill Dickinson, outlines some of the key issues facing companies looking to adjust to life after the coronavirus lockdown...

Four months ago, nobody had even heard of coronavirus (COVID-19), yet in that short space of time, the virus has utterly transformed the employment landscape in the UK.

Like in any crisis, there have been some winners and some losers. For some, business is booming and they are actively recruiting additional staff to meet extra demand, but for the majority of businesses the enforced lockdown and social distancing measures have had a devastating economic impact.

Estimates suggest that up to 30% of the UK workforce has been furloughed and many more are currently working from home, whilst simultaneously needing to look after children due to the closure of schools and childcare providers.

Thankfully, there are tentative signs that the UK has reached its peak of infections and that the infection curve is starting to flatten. There are also signs that the conversation is starting to switch towards how the UK can begin to lift the lockdown restrictions and get the economy working again.

It is safe to assume that lockdown measures will not be lifted overnight; instead, the restrictions will be lifted in a managed way. It seems probable that lower-risk parts of the economy will be allowed to get back to work first.

Higher risk sectors, including hospitality and leisure, are likely to see lockdown continue for a while yet, and then see a gradual release of restrictions.

When employers are given the green light to resume operations, they will still face many challenges around deciding how to safely operate and reintegrate their workforce. In this article, we consider some of the main issues employers are likely to face, and how they can prepare for life after lockdown.
How can we prepare our business for a safe return to work?

‘If you fail to prepare, you are preparing to fail’ (Benjamin Franklin). Employers would be wise to heed these words of wisdom and use this time to start to prepare their businesses for life after lockdown.

Start thinking now about how you can adjust your old ways of working to make the working environment safer for your staff, visitors and customers. Employers have a number of common law and statutory duties in relation to health and safety at work and the starting point for any employer will be to familiarise itself with current HSW guidance. Consider how the usual ways of working can be adjusted to allow for greater social distancing and additional hygiene measures.

Consulting with staff and managers about the proposed measures may highlight areas of concern and/or solutions, which you have not identified in your risk assessments. Staff and managers will need to be retrained in the new protocols and procedures.

Consider if any changes need to be made to your business premises to reduce hot spots of contact, which may increase the risk of spreading the virus.

Will changes to the size and composition of your workforce be needed?

Many businesses will find that lockdown, and the post-lockdown economic shock, will have changed their business needs.

It may not necessarily make good business sense to re-start the business after lockdown is released, with the same number of staff, doing the jobs they did before the pandemic. Business survival may make it necessary to consider re-shaping the workforce via restructures and/or redundancies.

To reduce the risk of legal claims, these processes must be handled fairly and within existing legal boundaries. Consider the impact on staff morale if they have already had to take a pay cut with a view to protecting jobs, only to find that job losses are in fact inevitable.

For those staff being retained, consider whether they can continue in their current roles. It may be necessary or desirable to transfer some of them to new duties (which may involve some retraining). For example:

- Should staff who have had confirmed coronavirus (and who may therefore have some degree of natural immunity from re-infection) be transferred to customer-facing duties?
- Can you protect the most vulnerable staff by moving them away from frontline duties to a role in which they face a lower risk of infection?
- To the extent that it is practicable to do so, should staff continue working from home wherever possible?

How can we reintegrate staff after lockdown?

This may turn out to be more of a challenge than many employers think. The starting point should be to consider staffing needs to get the workplace ready for full re-opening, both in terms of staff numbers and in terms of skill sets.

This may mean that some staff are brought back from furlough leave earlier than others and this selection should be handled fairly and be capable of objective justification.
Staff being asked to return from furlough leave should be given sufficient notice to prepare (and account should be taken of any ongoing childcare issues they may have due to the closure of schools and nurseries).

If some staff have been working full-time, whilst others have been on furlough leave, there may be tensions amongst staff upon a return to work. Staff who have continued to work may not be keen on relinquishing new duties and responsibilities they have undertaken.

Those who have been on furlough leave may feel marginalised upon their return to work, as if their ‘place’ in the workforce is under threat. Tempers amongst staff may quickly fray. Managers should be prepared to mediate and resolve these tensions, through agreement wherever possible.

The starting point is that employees remain employed in their previous positions, so any change to this on return will require a degree of discussion and consultation with staff and, in some circumstances, changes to the contract may be required.

Staff who have been able to work remotely may not be keen on giving up that flexibility and their newfound freedom. An increase in flexible working requests seems highly likely and employers may find it harder than ever to justify rejecting such requests, in circumstances where agile working has proven to be successful over recent months.

Businesses will also need to restart processes that have previously been put on hold such as disciplinary and performance, and advice should be sought in respect of absence and how to treat those absences related to coronavirus.

**What can we do to help staff with their mental health?**

Many staff will have seen their mental health suffer during the last few months. Some staff may have faced the loss of loved ones and may need additional support to manage their grief.

The isolation during lockdown may have had a damaging impact on the mental wellbeing of others, leaving them lonely, anxious or depressed. Among staff who have continued to work, managing the challenges of home schooling whilst also working may have been exhausting and left them very stressed out.

Employers should consider how robust their support mechanisms are to deal with the challenges these issues may bring and improve them where possible.

**How far can you go to monitor and control the health of your employees?**

Coronavirus testing in the UK is currently limited by the government to those who are severely ill, key workers and their families. Antibody testing is not yet widely available (and there are some concerns about its reliability since nobody can yet be certain that having had the virus protects you from catching it again in the future).

A vaccine is undergoing trials but, even if it proves successful, it will take up to 18 months to be widely available. Under current laws, an employer cannot force an employee to undergo a medical procedure (e.g. coronavirus test or vaccination) without their consent, and it is unlikely that refusal of consent would be a fair reason for dismissal.

As such, the approach taken by employers to encourage such measures will need to be more carrot, and less stick.
How long should we rely on staff forbearance in supporting the business?

In addition to utilising furlough leave and taking advantage of other business support measures, many businesses will have introduced measures that rely on the forbearance of staff (e.g. temporary pay cuts, postponed salary reviews).

As the lockdown is lifted, and staff are asked to return to a more normal pattern of work, they may be increasingly likely to lose patience and challenge such measures. Therefore, they should be kept under constant review and not extended further than necessary.

The terms under which such measures were agreed with staff should be honoured, and consultation should take place if they need to be extended or altered.

To sum up, employers may find that reintegrating their workforce and adjusting to the ‘new normal’ poses significant challenges. However, with some forethought and preparation, the impact of these challenges can be minimised and dealt with appropriately.

Access the Hill Dickinson Coronavirus Hub here: https://www.hilldickinson.com/COVID19
Chief Executive of the British Ports Association, Richard Ballantyne, writes:

Much has been made of the UK’s maritime sector keeping shop shelves stocked and the country supplied during the Coronavirus pandemic but with phased lifting of the lockdown we are now examining what shape will the UK’s economy be in. A recession is now being widely forecast so looking at how the country resets is paramount.

As part of this process the team at the British Ports Association has been looking at how ports may feature in any recovery. This month we published an economic recovery plan for government that highlights how investment in ports can play a part in the UK’s healing from the deepest economic shock in living memory.

A key message we are making is that we should be energising our ports by igniting their potential to fire up the economy and this plan is for 2020 and beyond.

The Covid-19 crisis has been unprecedented in both the speed and depth at which it has hit us. Many ports have seen significant drops in volumes in activity which were impossible to predict and the impact is likely to be felt over the medium-term as the health crisis eases but the economic impact bites.

Ports are key national and regional hubs for economic activity and jobs. However, collected by the BPA shows that just 36% of our ports feel confident about their business outlook over the next 12 months so we need Government to fan the flames of their potential to spark wider economic benefits. Help ports and you help the country.

As the national ports industry association, the BPA is, therefore, proposing three packages and areas of focus; Continued medium-term cash flow and business support; a massive scaling up of the UK’s infrastructure ambitions; and a bold and broad-based Freeports policy and port zoning strategy.

We are also promoting a Green Maritime Fund to provide a pro Net Zero development and growth agenda. These packages offer a path to prosperity in the long-term while promoting sustainable growth and helping ports to realise their potential in what is likely to be the most challenging economic climate for a generation.
The Plan outlines a framework for recovery, providing government with ideas on how to unlock the untapped potential of UK ports to drive growth; supporting a recovery process that brings all of the regions of the UK along with it - to create a stronger Britain than ever before. It focuses on three key areas to kick start economic activity:

1. **Continued medium-term cash flow and business support**

According to data collected by the BPA, 86% of ports have seen either substantial or severe impacts on shipping and customer activities. However, ports are not only seeing a vast impact on their commercial activity but facing requests for assistance to help keep port users afloat too.

Furthermore, 32% of ports are now concerned about borrowings and banking covenants. The government must, therefore, support investment and cash flow in the short-term. Measures outlined within the plan including a government factoring service. This would allow ports and other businesses to raise funds in the short term. The BPA also highlights how a deferral of business rates backed by central Government would also free up capital to help cash flow.

Looking ahead, the BPA is asking government to support skills development to ensure retaining and developing people is not a cost burden.

2. **A massive scaling up of the UK’s infrastructure ambitions**

Without a doubt, investment in infrastructure will play a fundamental role in securing the UK’s future prosperity. Infrastructure investments are entirely cost-effective; when money is channelled into infrastructure, returns to the economy are multiplied. Measures outlined within the plan include a UK Infrastructure Bank and a Green Maritime Fund.

The BPA welcomes government’s sustainability objectives but we would stress that significant investment will be required to achieve these targets. The BPA is, therefore, proposing government adopts a Green Maritime Fund, to unlock capital, aid the growth of the sector while also taking steps towards the Government’s most critical long-term policy aims.

We will also shortly be publishing a paper that explores how to overcome the barriers to ship-to-shore power.

3. **A bold and broad-based inclusive Freeports policy**

The UK government is in the process of developing a UK-wide strategy on Freeports, and the BPA will be outlining our views further within our response to the consultation. However, we have identified several imperative conditions of the UK Freeport model to unlock the untapped potential of the UK’s coastal communities - leaving no region behind through this process - by drawing investment into manufacturing and logistics. We urge the government not to limit its ambition to the previously suggested 10 site proposals as there is a real danger of the leaving some regions behind by limiting the scope. We also ask that government reclassifies ‘port zones’ with improved planning, fiscal and regulatory status.

Divided into short, medium and long-term initiatives, the plan outlines how government can utilise ports and the wider maritime industry, not only to administer first aid to the economy in its first steps towards recovery but to prevent economic aftershocks and stimulate growth for years to come.

As mentioned, included in our proposals are a suggested Green Maritime Fund to drive sustainable development and help stimulate growth consistent with the Government’s Net Zero aims.

Ports have the ambition to lead the country to a new future. A key message is that we want energise our ports by igniting their potential to fire up the economy. Let’s make it happen!

**Richard Ballantyne**
Chief Executive
British Ports Association

Richard.ballantyne@britishports.org.uk
@richard_bpa
BATHGATE CHOSEN AS GOVERNMENT COVID SUPPORT LOANS INTERMEDIARY

Bathgate Business Finance has been selected as a Funding Circle Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) partner, allowing it to apply for the Government-backed business support loans on behalf of eligible businesses.

As an approved intermediary, the West Kirby-based finance specialist can make applications for loans up to the value of £250,000, with a guaranteed APR of below 9% and no repayments due for the first 12 months.

The supporting documentation required is considerably less onerous than the information required by banks and the process is expected to be much faster, with decisions typically being made within 24 hours. To be eligible for the loan, businesses must be UK-based with a turnover of less than £45m, with more than 50% of that coming from trading activity, rather than investments.

As well as having been adversely affected by the coronavirus, businesses need to have at least three years trading history and the loan should primarily be taken for business purposes and activity in the UK.

Gordon Andrews, managing director at Bathgate, said: "The COVID-19 outbreak has taken an enormous financial toll on businesses in the region, across all sectors, and we have seen the impact of the disruption and uncertainty.

"Banks are primarily dealing with applications for loans for existing customers and with the new Bounce Back Scheme, which is limited to a maximum of £50,000 per client, are unsurprisingly inundated with proposals. Funding Circle CBILS provides another option.

"To ensure that applications are presented correctly and can be dealt with efficiently, Funding Circle has ceased the availability of direct access to their portals from clients and non-approved intermediaries with immediate effect."
Borrow between £10,000 and £250,000.
Loan period of two to 5 years.
No repayments for 12 months.
Government pays interest for the first 12 months.
APR less than 9%.
No personal guarantee required.
No fee to take out of loan.
Decision within 24 hours.

“As an approved intermediary for Funding Circle CBILS we will be able to help SMEs navigate the loan application process quickly and efficiently, by completing the application on their behalf.”

Funding Circle CBILS loans offer an array of benefits, some of which are only available to a limited number of funders, including the 12-month repayment holiday. Other benefits of the loans include:

- Borrow between £10,000 and £250,000.
- Loan period of two to 5 years.
- No repayments for 12 months.
- Government pays interest for the first 12 months.
- APR less than 9%.
- No personal guarantee required.
- No fee to take out of loan.
- Decision within 24 hours.

Now open for applications from new and existing clients for limited companies only at present, Bathgate Business Finance expects demands to be high and is advising businesses wishing to apply for a loan to ensure they have the correct paperwork ready to ensure a smooth process.

Information required for the application is last two years’ accounts, last six months’ bank statements, basic finance application form and GDPR consent forms.

For further information or to apply for the Funding Circle CBILS via Bathgate Business Finance, contact Gordon Andrews at proposals@bathgatebf.co.uk
Peel L&P and Your Housing Group (YHG) are reviving a high-rise residential development in Liverpool’s Princes Dock.

Called Patagonia Place, the multi-million pound scheme within the Liverpool Waters project, will see 278 apartments in a 31-storey tower. It replaces the £48m Hive City Docks tower, which was also due to be 31 storeys.

Initial works started on Hive City Docks in 2018 but came to a halt shortly afterwards. Two adjacent developments, Moda Living’s £82m, 34-storey skyscraper, the Lexington, and the £21m 16-storey Plaza 1821, are almost complete.

A planning application for Patagonia Place has now been submitted to Liverpool City Council. The scheme has been designed by Faulkner Chester Hall, with Arup providing planning consultation and Vermont in line to build the project.

Darran Lawless, development director at Peel L&P’s Liverpool Waters, said: “This is another major milestone for Liverpool Waters and despite the challenging environment that the world is currently facing as a result of COVID-19 we’re delighted to be able to submit the planning application for this new development.”
‘This wouldn’t have been possible without the support of Your Housing, our advisory team and contractor Vermont. Due to the current lockdown the application process itself has been a challenge.

‘The response from Liverpool City Council has demonstrated an ability and commitment to continue to function and unlock investment opportunities in the city and we are hopeful that should planning permission be secured work can start in the autumn creating significant investment and jobs as well as much needed homes for the region.”

Work has also started at Liverpool Waters on the new Isle of Man ferry terminal and it is hoped work will also begin soon on the new Cruise Liner terminal and Everton FC’s £500m stadium.

Lorraine Donnelly, development director at Your Housing, added: “This is a really exciting project for Your Housing, the scale and ambition of Liverpool Waters is something that we are proud to be part of.

“This development sits on the iconic Liverpool waterfront offering high-quality apartments with incredible views of the Mersey. It’s just a stone’s throw from the city centre and part of one of the city’s most exciting regeneration projects.”

Read more about Peel Land and Property here: www.peellandp.co.uk/
Two Merseyside maritime organisations have helped to reconnect an Indian seafarer with his family thousands of miles away.

Nishanth Sadaram, is the third officer on MV Seamec Gallant, a bulk carrier transporting grain from Argentina to the UK. Mr Sadaram had been keeping in touch with his family in India via his mobile phone.

However, the device was damaged by seawater and, despite the vessel berthing at the Port of Liverpool, Mr Sadaram was unable to come ashore to buy a new phone due to restrictions imposed during the current coronavirus epidemic.

Ecumenical charity Liverpool Seafarers Centre launched a social media appeal after hearing about his plight. The post was seen by a member of Propeller Club Liverpool, a networking group for maritime businesses. They rose to the challenge and immediately got in touch to donate an Apple iPhone to the stranded seafarer. John Wilson, chief executive of Liverpool Seafarers Centre, travelled to the Port of Liverpool to personally deliver the handset to a very grateful Mr Sadaram.

Mr Wilson said: "The smile on Nishanth’s face when I handed over the iPhone made it abundantly clear how much this generous gift from the Propeller Club means. The current crisis has left large numbers of seafarers in a worrying and precarious position, with all vessels on lockdown and no shore leave permitted.

"Travel and quarantine restrictions mean many are unable to return home when their contracts end, leaving them thousands of miles from home and their families. We all now take phone calls, email, messaging apps and social media for granted, but if seafarers lose that link with home it adds extra pressure to an already stressful situation.
“This gift will allow Nishanth to keep that vital connection. It’s another shining example of the generosity of this city’s residents, and of the respect Liverpool has for the critical work done by seafarers everywhere.”

Mr Sadaram added: “Thank you so much for the iPhone. It has saved my life by helping me communicate with my mother, brother, cousins and friends back home during COVID-19 times.”

Adam Whittle, president of the Propeller Club Liverpool, also said: “The Propeller Club is at the heart of a proud maritime community in Liverpool, and as such we are so pleased that we were able to assist.

“In these dark times we are all more reliant on seafarers than ever before, and so being able to extend the hand of welcome, generosity and support is vital.”

Liverpool Seafarers Centre, a partnership between Apostleship of the Sea (Liverpool) and The Mersey Mission to Seafarers, has been overwhelmed by the public’s response to its recent appeals.

Donations made through the charity’s website and by post are being used to provide other visiting seafarers with mobile handsets and internet-enabled SIMs, allowing them to speak to friends and family at home.

The organisation is also looking to purchase MiFi devices, which create an internet hotspot and allow up to 20 people to go online simultaneously. Each device costs £450 and Liverpool Seafarers Centre is aiming to buy 10 of the units to loan to vessels whilst in port.

More information about the work of Liverpool Seafarers Centre is available here:
http://liverpoolseafarerscentre.org/
A lecturer at Hugh Baird University Centre, part of Bootle's Hugh Baird College, has been doing his bit to address the demand for personal protection equipment (PPE) during the coronavirus pandemic.

Kevin Donnelly, an engineering lecturer at the centre, used the college's 3D printer to make more than 100 disposable face masks. He then distributed them to local pharmacies and hospitals. Some of Kevin's Engineering students have also been able to get involved by providing assistance in the design process for the visors using computer-aided design. He said: "There were discussions about how the College and University Centre could do their part to help the NHS with the current pandemic with the equipment we have available."

"It became apparent that we could assist in making visors for NHS staff, which they are in desperate need of, so I was more than happy to help. Given the circumstances with social distancing students were unable to assist in the physical printing of the visors but it was great to have them involved in the design process."

"It has been a pleasure to be part of this and has been good to give back to our NHS and to help in protecting the NHS staff who are doing a truly amazing job during this pandemic."

Kevin initially made 25 visors which were trialled at local pharmacies, GP surgeries and at the Knowsley Resource Centre based at Whiston Hospital. Tina Blease, a health and social care lecturer at the college, who is currently working at the Knowsley Resource Centre during the Coronavirus pandemic, took part in the trial.

She added: "The masks are fantastic quality and fit well on all of our staff as the headband is fully adjustable. This ensures they are well fitted and provide a good level of protection while we attend to the needs of our patients."

"The masks allow some of our expressions to be visible to our patients and due to their dementia diagnosis this supports reassurance and allows us to engage with them positively whilst protecting ourselves from COVID-19."

Read more here: https://www.hughbaird.ac.uk/
Wirral manufacturer Survitec is creating more than 100 new jobs after winning a contract to supply personal protective equipment (PPE) for the NHS.

Survitec, which operates a factory in Birkenhead is a specialist supplier of equipment to the maritime, defence and aerospace sectors. However, due to demand for PPE during the coronavirus crisis, the firm has become one of many to diversify production.

It has been selected by the UK Department for Health and Social Care to produce sterilised surgical isolation gowns in order to supply the NHS. The factory, which has continued to operate during the COVID-19 crisis, has been expanded to include a dedicated site for the production of the life-saving gowns.

The company will be hiring more than 100 additional workers from the local area to support this critical work. As an existing supplier of choice for the UK Government, Survitec already meets the high standards for such critical material production and will produce this new PPE to the standards required by the NHS and other health services.

The company worked closely with the Government in order to move quickly through the regulatory and procurement process, enabling it to begin production upon receipt of the specialised raw material and to ramp up production of the gowns as soon as it is able.

Martin Whittaker, chief executive for aerospace and defence at Survitec, said: “In these unprecedented times, it is critical that UK business steps up to support the NHS and other health services around the world.

“In doing so, we are also pleased that we can create a significant number of jobs in the North West to support the local economy. We are glad to be partnering with the Department of Health and Social Care, to produce critical PPE at a time when international demand and the disruption of global supply chains makes sourcing of these items very difficult.”

Read more about Survitec here: https://survitecgroup.com/
A ports industry leader is leading the call for the Government to expand its plan to create freeports across the UK.

Richard Ballantyne, chief executive of the British Ports Association (BPA) says the demand for freeports across the UK was such that the initial plan to create 10 will come nowhere near to satisfying that demand.

Addressing members of Mersey Maritime in a Face-2-Face online event during May, Mr Ballantyne said there were 125 cargo-handling ports across the UK as airports and rail hubs, many of whom may be expected to apply for freeport status.

He also said the introduction of freeports, fully backed by Mersey Maritime, presented a huge opportunity for the offshore wind sector as the UK Government looks to significantly increase the volume of energy generated from renewable sources.

During the session, Mr Ballantyne also talked about how the coronavirus epidemic and subsequent lockdown had impacted on the ports sector. Passenger ferry operations and container shipments from Asia were among the areas worst hit, he said.

Freeport benefits

Freeports are a designated zone where normal tax and customs rules do not apply. These can be airports or other hubs as well as maritime ports. At a freeport, imports can enter with simplified customs documentation and without paying tariffs.
Businesses operating inside designated areas in and around the freeport can manufacture goods using the imports and add value, before exporting again without ever facing the full tariffs or procedures. If the goods move out of the freeport into another part of the country, however, they have to go through the full import process, including paying any tariffs.

The Port of Liverpool was a freeport until 2012 when the zones were abolished by the then coalition Government. The idea has the support of Liverpool city region’s £4bn maritime sector. Representative body Mersey Maritime is backing the policy as is Port of Liverpool operator Peel Ports.

A report by consultants Mace, estimates a freeport in Liverpool could add £739m to Liverpool’s economy every year – equivalent to £1,500 for every household in the city - as well as creating 12,000 high-value jobs.

Consultation process

The Government has started a consultation process which has now been extended to July due to the coronavirus crisis. Following that, it is expected formal bids will be invited in the autumn. And Mr Ballantyne is calling on the Government to scale up its ambitions.

“We are calling for maximum ambition from the Government in terms of the scope and the scale of freeports. we are asking for the limit of 10 to be raised to take into account the level of interest,” he said. “We are looking for an open and inclusive policy.

“The Government is still committed to freeports so I also think there will be some financial support - some modest sums to make sure the policy is a success.”

And on the opportunity for offshore wind, he added: “The Government has said that 60% of future offshore wind production has to be rooted here in the UK so, together with the freeports policy, it provides an economic stimulus that offshore wind manufacturers can benefit from.”

COVID impact

Mr Ballantyne spoke to members about how the COVID-19 crisis had impacted on the ports and associated businesses sectors. He said ferry and cruise companies had been hard hit with the tourism market grinding to a halt.

He also added that Ro-Ro shipping operators had seen a reduction in business and had, in some cases. Made staff redundant or stood them down under the Government’s employee furlough scheme.

“We also saw a complete shutdown of container shipping from Asia for a time. There has been a 20% decline in volumes from Asia to Europe, mainly from China,” said Mr Ballantyne. “And we have also seen a big shutdown in manufacturing as well as (non-food) retailers closing. There was an impact on fuels, too. A lot of cargo traffic is oil and gas-related.”

Mr Ballantyne said all of the above had put pressure on port revenues and, in the initial weeks of the lockdown staff absence levels were as high as 8-12%, although this had now fallen back to 0-3%.

“Ports generally have good asset bases,” he said. “But there has been a lot of pressure on ports to waive rents for their commercial tenants and that has created cashflow issues for some.”

Details about the work and focus of the British Ports Association can be found here: https://www.britishports.org.uk/
It has been said many times in recent weeks that we live in strange times as we experience and work through the unprecedented and peculiar impact that the Coronavirus is having on us all. There's the physical impact of being, on the whole, removed from our office spaces and regular work environments, the inability to hold networking and training events in the regular and ‘normal’ way and then there’s the restrictions on the lighter times for socialising and relaxing with colleagues (and family and friends!) and all important ‘down-time’, be that for sports, meals out, or trips to the cinema. The ‘new norm’ is an interesting idea but it has some obvious draw backs too. But what matters isn’t just the physical environment in which we inhabit; there’s perhaps never been a more important time to shine a light on the very real challenges that people experience with their own mental health and well-being. Working within the maritime sector, we are very aware of the unique challenges our industry can present in this context too, not least for seafarers and their families.

This week is Mental Health Awareness Week (18-24 May). This year, the theme is the power and potential of kindness. Kindness is contagious and can strengthen relationships and develop communities, while also helping to reduce stress and improve our emotional wellbeing. Research suggests that kindness creates a sense of belonging, boosts self-esteem and improves feelings of confidence and optimism.

The Mental Health Foundation, the campaign organisers, have been asking people to get involved and talk about kindness and mental health. Many people have taken the opportunity to do this, taking to social media and sharing their thoughts, images and short videos using the hashtags #KindnessMatters and #MentalHealthAwarenessWeek. You can also share your ideas on how to build a kinder society that would support good mental health, using the same hashtags above.
Coronavirus has brought into sharp focus some of the most challenging times for individuals. The uncertainty of job security, the impact of working at home (particularly if there are challenges with personal relationships), health problems and worry about ‘shielding’ if you are in a vulnerable category and tragically for many the reality of dealing with bereavement and close family loss. A whole range of services and resources are available to support you during these times, with much valuable information available on the NHS UK website:

https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/

At our recent Face-to-Face event with our occupational health partners, Kays Medical, they left us with five key well-being ideas which offer some neat pointers to sound principles for staying well at this time:

- Connect with other people
- Be physically active
- Learn new skills
- Give to others
- Pay attention to the present

Find out more about Kays’ important work in this area by visiting their website: https://www.kaysmedical.com/

These principles apply during this strange time of Covid-19 crisis, this week as we reflect particularly on mental health awareness but also more generally all year round, of course. Here at Mersey Maritime we pride ourselves on being a port of call or friendly ear for many of our members and we are delighted that so many of you have continued to engage with our regular public facing events and also our smaller and informal member surgery events each week. We are always available to you all, if needed. Let’s continue to engage in a positive way in the months ahead and support each during this pandemic challenge. But if you are struggling at the moment, don’t forget it is #OkayNotToBeOkay and there is a range of support out there to help you during this time.

Stay alert, stay well and stay safe!
Liverpool Seafarers Centre (LSC) is reporting the urgent plight of seafarers from India and the Philippines who ‘feel like prisoners’ aboard ship as they are unable to return home.

LSC CEO John Wilson said he has seen a large number of Filipino and Indian seafarers under huge strain as a result of flight bans into and out of their home countries. He said the Filipinos alone account for a quarter of merchant seafarers with an estimated 40,000 awaiting crew change according to the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS). Meanwhile India’s Maritime Association of Shipowners, Shipmanagers and Agents (MASSA) estimates the number of stranded Indian crew members to be approximately 40,000. In total ICS says 150,000 seafarers will need crew changes by May 15.

“These seafarers may already have been at sea for six to nine months and they want to go home, they want to see their families especially during this period of crisis but are being told they cannot,” he said. “They are effectively prisoners on their own ships. The pressure on their mental health is huge and this exacerbates the risk of accident. We urge the major organisations that are fighting for seafarers, such as the International Maritime Organisation (for long list see notes to editors), which have already done so much to champion and protect seafarers, to continue to exert pressure on India and the Philippines to allow seafarers to fly home. With so many seafarers coming from these countries they simply must not be forgotten about.”

Mr Wilson said he welcomed reports of testing for seafarers able to return to the Philippines by ship enabling them to forego 14 day quarantine periods if given a clean bill of health. On May 6 The Manila Times reported 13 cruise ships were at the Manila Bay anchorage area as of May 4 and eight more ships are expected to arrive with 4,179 Filipino seafarers onboard. Meanwhile, in India the Government is now allowing crew changes of Indian national seafarers for vessels docked or anchored at its ports. However, it has made no comment on the repatriation of Indian seafarers stranded on ships in various overseas locations.
Mr Wilson further reported that crew changes for European seafarers are starting to work well. He said this week he has helped welcome five seafarers to Liverpool from Ukraine, Croatia, Romania, Poland, and Sri Lanka. He said the five had a smooth transfer flying into London Heathrow before travelling to Liverpool by taxi. He said they maintained social distancing on the flight, used face masks and experienced no holdups. The same was the case on the return journey for the crew they relieved.

“The global shipping community has really come together to ensure seafarers are recognised and appreciated as key workers,” he said. “The lobbying from NGOs, ship management companies and shipping lines has resulted in Governments in Europe and the European Commission, at least, taking the common-sense approach recognising the huge strain being put on seafarers and the need for regular crew changes.”

Mr Wilson said seafarers’ mental health was already a growing issue before the crisis and pointed to a study by Yale University, published last October. After consulting with 1,572 seafarers of different ranks around the world the survey found that within the two weeks prior to being surveyed, 20 per cent had contemplated suicide or self-harm, 25 per cent had suffered depression and 17 per cent had experienced anxiety. Key factors were violence and bullying, a lack of job satisfaction and not feeling valued.

Mr Wilson said LSC is increasing its ship visits to vessel-bound seafarers after temporarily closing its centres in Crosby and Eastham to crew and visitors following Government advice on March 20 2020. He appealed for cash donations as well as toiletries, confectionary, puzzles and games, warm clothing, fresh fruit, recently released CDs and DVDs. He said donated goods can be left in the porch of LSC’s Crosby headquarters or Eastham base from where the LSC team will then take them to ships direct.

**Fact file**

There are more than 50,000 merchant vessels in the world, including 5,150 container ships, each with an average crew of 22 persons – accounting for a workforce of over one million people, responsible for delivering 90 per cent of the world’s goods and 95pc of the UK’s imports and exports. Seafarers, men and women, are continuing to work seven days a week through the pandemic, many with their contracts extended because they are unable to disembark their ships.

Read more about Liverpool Seafarers Centre here: http://liverpoolseafarerscentre.org/
JPMA have been working with the MCA for the last few weeks, and we’re happy to announce that we have been granted accreditation to take our written Small Vessel & Yacht Engineering modules online.

The following courses are now available to book:

- SV 2nd Engineer Auxiliary Equipment I
- SV 2nd Engineer Marine Diesel Engineering
- SV 2nd Engineer Operational Procedures & Basic Hotel Services
- Y3/SV Statutory & Operational Requirements
- SV Auxiliary Equipment II
- SV Applied Marine Engineering

As the courses are running online, there will not be a written exam at the end of the course. The MCA & SQA have looked at every possible way they could offer the exams online, but there is no solution. Written exams will be available as soon as the lockdown regulations are lifted, and JPMA will ensure that each student is able to access the written exam as quickly and simply as possible.

We are also offering Deck & Engineering oral prep and some 1-2-1 tutoring online. For seafarers who are in the middle of their studies, and don’t know when their oral exam will be, or for seafarers who are planning to do their modules when lockdown is over, but struggling with a certain subject - we can help!
Our instructors are available to offer hourly, half or full day 1-2-1 sessions.

JPMA are a group of experienced marine professionals and small craft practitioners, most of whom are Master Mariners or Chief Engineers who hold, or have held, senior positions within the Marine Industry.

We offer training and tuition to Superyacht, Workboat and Merchant Navy professionals to all levels. Our speciality is preparation for MCA Oral exams for both Deck and Engineering, with a high pass rate on first attempt. We offer most of the written Yacht modules for Deck up to Master <3000gt and Engineering up to Y2/SV Chief Engineer

Contact: Anna Percival-Harris
Tel: +44 (0) 151 632 4000
Email: mate@hss.ac.uk
Website: www.sailorsworld.co.uk
Pipe and cable safety seal manufacturer Roxtec UK has moved to increase its presence in Britain’s maritime sector with the appointment of a new marine and offshore manager.

Mark Whelan joins the Swedish-owned company having spent 10 years at another international manufacturer, most recently as a project manager for naval and commercial shipbuilding sector contracts. At Roxtec, Mr Whelan will have responsibility for business development in the south of England.

Roxtec’s transits are used to seal cables and pipes aboard a wide variety of ships including naval vessels (see: Roxtec naval), cruise liners and ferries, superyachts, offshore support vessels, carriers and cargo ships (see: Roxtec commercial marine). They are designed to protect people and assets from multiple hazards including fire, flooding, the risk of explosion and electromagnetic disturbances.

Mr Whelan said: “Roxtec is a worldwide leader within the marine sector and this opportunity represents an exciting challenge. I will be bringing my contacts to the fore and looking to educate the market about the impact Roxtec’s products can have on cost-saving, time management and the overall cost of labour.

“The firm’s cable and pipe transits are safe, secure and well suited to the harshest environments. Their flexibility and long life-cycle also ensure they offer value over the lifetime of a ship, and can play a key role in future-proofing vessels.”
Rigorous testing programmes and a broad collection of standards and accreditations with the likes of ABS, DNV GL and Bureau Veritas have helped Roxtec become a pioneer in the marine and offshore markets.

Mr Whelan added: ‘The UK’s naval sector is in growth, with a focused plan for the build programme of the Type 26 frigates and the Type 31 coming through. Additionally, Britain’s new Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers will continue their maintenance and enhancement programmes towards 2021. Naval projects are run under strict budgetary requirements and Roxtec is ideally positioned to provide solutions that offer innovation and opportunities for cost reduction.

“Specialist shipbuilders are looking at continued improvement on GRP products and Roxtec fits into that arena as well. We work with the smallest to the largest of the yards, getting involved in the specification and build stages, as well as the reduction of costs through maintenance. I’ll be working to increase awareness of Roxtec’s varied solutions and educating businesses as to how we can bring those cost savings to the front line.”

Roxtec’s seals are also an industry standard in the offshore sector, used in a broad range of oil and gas infrastructure, in some of the biggest projects in the world, including on drill ships, FPSOs, jack-up rigs, offshore support vessels and semi-submersible rigs (see: Roxtec offshore).

Roxtec entered the marketplace in 1990 and is now active in more than 80 markets worldwide. The British subsidiary of the £173million Swedish group recently reported a record financial year with turnover surpassing £6million for the first time.

For further details contact Roxtec UK at Waterfold Business Park, Bury. Tel: 0161 761 5280 Email info@uk.roxtec.com or go online at: www.roxtec.com
The MTC Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre are rolling out some free of charge online training during the COVID crisis. There is plenty of subject matter in the list from learning about robotics to leadership at distance. With many companies looking at training for staff furloughed at moment, there may well be something in the list for everyone and staff at all levels can catch up with their learning.

The courses listed below don’t have any attached marketing material other than that on the website.

The courses were primarily offered to support the MTC member network, however these are also being made available to all. The courses will only be available for a limited time - this has also been communicated on the landing page.

A discount code has been created for the online Digital Manufacturing course (DMFREE). This applies a 100% discount at the checkout. Clients will be required to opt in for future correspondence if they take up the free training support packages on offer:

https://the-amtc.co.uk/training/leadership-management-support/
https://the-amtc.co.uk/training/courses/online-member-support/
https://the-amtc.co.uk/training/courses/introduction-to-digital-manufacturing/
(This will require the code DMFREE to be entered at checkout.)

More details are available from:

Mark Sutherberry
Business Development Manager - Manufacturing Support Services
Direct: +442476701829
Mobile: +447973616441
Email: Mark.Sutherberry@the-mtc.org