

## **Bibby Line helps launch UK Seafarer Support Helpline**

Sir Michael Bibby helped launch a new free telephone referral service to support seafarers and their families get help in times of need. The aptly named 'Seafarer Support' Helpline directs callers to the seafaring charity that is best placed to help them. The service will also inform welfare professionals who work with seafarers where to find specialist help. There are nearly 150 maritime charities providing a wide range of important support services to UK seafarers from the Royal Navy, Merchant Navy and fishing fleets, and their dependants. Seafarer Support acts as the referral service for the entire maritime charity sector.

The Freephone service is be operated by the Merchant Navy Welfare Board and available between 9.30 - 4.30 Monday to Friday on 0800 121 4765 and outside these times a message can be left. The service can also be accessed through the Internet at: [www.seafarersupport.org](http://www.seafarersupport.org) Calls and emails will be responded to within one working day.

The service has been set up in response to research that found that seafarers are more likely to face poverty, homelessness, bereavement, loneliness, debt and marriage breakdown than other occupational groups and are often unaware that there are charities dedicated to helping them.



The service is being funded by the Maritime Charities Funding Group (MCFG), a partnership of maritime charities consists of ITF Seafarers' Trust, Nautilus International, Merchant Navy Welfare Board, NUMAST Welfare Funds, Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, Seafarers UK, Seaman's Hospital Society and Trinity House. The group are working together to deliver a range of efficient welfare projects across the entire UK maritime sector.

David Parsons, of the Merchant Navy Welfare Board and Chairman of the MCFG, emphasised that "this provides an outreach service to seafarers and their families who are looking for financial or non financial help and guidance. We have been concerned that too many within the maritime community, whether of working age or retired, are slipping through the net. This service is a means by which we can place those people in touch with the organisation best suited to help."