IHMA CELEBRATES ITS FIRST 20 YEARS

IHMA, the International Harbour Masters’ Association, celebrated its 20th anniversary at its congress in Vancouver where more than 100 delegates gathered from 30 May to 2 June 2016 to consider the theme of port expansion. This meeting was supported by an extensive industry exhibition.

Keynote presentations at the congress included the expanding role of VTS and the impact of e-Navigation from the Secretary-General of IALA-AISM, Mr Francis Zachariae, with the e-navigation theme also reflected by Captain Simon Pelletier, President of the International Maritime Pilots’ Association, who spoke about megaships and advanced pilot technology.

The origins of the International Harbour Masters’ Association can be traced back to the 1950s when harbour masters of the major ports of north west Europe began to meet regularly. Despite working in ports of diverse scale and operation, there was a strong thread of common purpose and a view that their shared interests could be developed for the benefit of all. The European Harbour Masters’ Association (EHMA) was established in 1985.

Agreement to work towards an international association led to the inauguration of the IHMA on 21 June 2006 with Captain H-J Roos, harbour master of the port of Bremen, elected as first President of IHMA.

Reflecting on the past 20 years, IHMA’s President, Captain Kevin Richardson (formerly Chief Harbour Master Dover), recognised a debt of gratitude to IHMA’s founding members and how the role of the harbour master has expanded and evolved.

Captain Richardson said: ‘The role of the harbour master is no longer a purely technical role, it much wider than that and today harbour masters must be commercially astute, strategically focused, business aware and risk averse.

‘At our tenth biennial congress in Vancouver as we tackled the theme of ‘port expansion; the challenges’, we considered models for port infrastructure development, port amalgamation, climate change considerations for port infrastructure, the latest on dynamic under-keel clearance and the recurring theme of social acceptance. Port expansion affects people and communities, and the efforts of ports and harbours to engage with and work with their local communities is high on the harbour master’s agenda. This was very well illustrated in Vancouver where case studies demonstrated just how important social acceptance has become when dealing with port expansion and how harbour masters and harbour authorities must now invest considerable time
and money consulting with port and local communities affected or potentially affected by changes to port infrastructure or trade.

‘Many of the subjects under discussion at the IHMA’s inaugural meeting twenty years ago remain on our agenda today including the relentless advance of maritime technology and the availability and training of port marine personnel. We have made progress on the latter through the development of the International Diploma for Harbour Masters and the UK’s Harbour Master Certificate, with continuous professional development for harbour masters also discussed in Vancouver. But this is unfinished business. Our founding members resolved to develop and draft an International Standard on Training and Certification of Port Marine Personnel with the aim that it should be adopted at the International Maritime Organization. The international recognition of the role of the harbour master and their knowledge and skills is a challenge to which we should now return if the role and its contribution to the success of a port business is to be fully developed and recognised.’

About IHMA
The International Harbour Masters’ Association aims to unite those responsible for the safe, secure, efficient and environmentally sound conduct of marine operations in port waters into one professional body. IHMA is a not-for-profit organisation with more than 240 members in 42 countries and has non–governmental consultative status at the International Maritime Organization and International Hydrographic Organization.

IHMA works to develop and foster collaboration and good relations between its members, and promotes the professional views, standing and interests of harbour masters worldwide.

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Picture caption
Captain Kevin Richardson addresses IHMA’s Congress, with Mr Chris Wellstood, Harbour Master, Port of Vancouver.