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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Press Release

UK maritime industry feeling impact of immigration cap

The British government's drive to lower net migration by reducing the availability of Tier 2 visa certificates is already having an impact on a wide range of UK based shipping companies and maritime services providers, according to specialist shipping industry recruiter Faststream. On 19 July 2010, the UK Border and Immigration Agency introduced a temporary cap on the total number of Sponsored Skilled General (Tier 2) visas that will be issued whilst it consults on a permanent limit.

"This move has effectively rendered many shipping companies' sponsor licences useless and a number of our clients are expressing serious concerns that they won't be able to fill crucial UK based vacancies in the coming months. Two large ship owners have told us they have been issued with a zero quota, meaning they will not be able to employ any new non European Economic Area (EEA) citizen in the coming months as well as having to worry about going to appeal for existing non EEA employees whose visas will shortly expire," said Mark Charman, Faststream's Group CEO.

He added: "We have heard of candidates having their job offers withdrawn as companies find that they cannot recruit them. The system is a mess and is having an impact on the ability of companies to utilise mobile, highly skilled labour. Whether for technical or commercial job roles, there are simply not enough qualified EEA candidates to fill all of the positions in the UK shore based maritime job market. We can expect to see a knock on effect in a rise in costs for businesses as they are forced to pay higher salaries for EEA candidates."

With the exception of marine civil engineers, the UK government's Skills Shortage List does not currently classify any shorebased maritime role as exempt from the licence system. Seafarers for UK flagged vessels are on the list.

The temporary cap limits the number of visas for the most highly skilled workers in Tier 1 to 5,400 – the same levels as 2009. Tier 2 workers – skilled migrants who fulfil a specific UK job offer – will also be reduced by 1,300 to 18,700 until April 2011.

The consultation period for views on what level the permanent cap should be set next year closes in September.

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Notes to editors

Faststream is an international recruiter which specialises in the shipping, marine and offshore industries. Headquartered in Southampton (UK), the company has offices in Singapore and Fort Lauderdale. The company was founded in 1999 and has enjoyed rapid year on year growth.

www.faststream.co.uk