STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2025 No. 278

MERCHANT SHIPPING

The Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) Regulations 2025

Made - - - -	*5th March 2025*
Laid before Parliament	*10th March 2025*
Coming into force - -	*1st April 2025*

The Secretary of State, in exercise of the powers conferred by section 205(5) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995(**a**), makes the following Regulations.

Citation, commencement and extent

1.—(1) These Regulations may be cited as the Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) Regulations 2025 and come into force on 1st April 2025.

(2) These Regulations extend to England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Interpretation

2. In these Regulations—

"fishing vessel" means any fishing vessel registered under Part 2 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 (registration of British ships) or registered as a fishing vessel under the law of another country;

"general lighthouse authority" means a general lighthouse authority set out under section 193(1) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995;

"light dues" means general light dues within the meaning of section s.205 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995;

"load line length" means the greater of the following distances measured at and along the waterline—

(a) the distance between the foreside of the stem and the axis of the rudder stock, or

(b) the distance measured from the foreside of the stem, being 96 per cent of the distance between that point and the aft side of the stern,

where the waterline referred to in this definition shall be at 85 per cent of the least moulded depth of the vessel and in the case of a vessel having a rake of keel, the waterline must be parallel to the designed waterline;

"pleasure vessel" means—

(a) any vessel which at the time it is being used is—

(i) in the case of a vessel wholly owned by—

(**a**) 1995 c. 21.

(aa) an individual or individuals, used only for the sport or pleasure of the owner or the immediate family or friends of the owner, or

(bb) a body corporate, used only for sport or pleasure and on which the persons on board are employees or officers of the body corporate, or their immediate family or friends, and

(ii) on a voyage or excursion which is one for which the owner does not receive money for or in connection with operating the vessel or carrying any person, other than as a contribution to the direct expenses of the operation of the vessel incurred during the voyage or excursion, or

(b) any vessel wholly owned by or on behalf of a members' club formed for the purpose of sport or pleasure which, at the time it is being used, is used only for the sport or pleasure of members of that club or their immediate family, and for the use of which any charges levied are paid into club funds and applied for the general use of the club,

where, in the case of any vessel referred to in paragraphs (a) or (b), no other payments are made by or on behalf of users of the vessel, other than by the owner; and in this definition "immediate family" means, in relation to an individual, the spouse or civil partner of the individual, and a relative of the individual or the individual's spouse or civil partner; and "relative" means brother, sister, ancestor or lineal descendant;

"tonnage" means—

(a) the net tonnage of a ship assessed in accordance with the International Convention on Tonnage Measurement of Ships 1969 and entered on its International Tonnage Certificate (1969); or

(b) if the International Tonnage Certificate for a ship is not available, and—

(i) that ship is registered as a British ship for the purposes of Part 2 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995, the ship's gross registered tonnage, or

(ii) in the case of an unregistered ship or a ship measured only by load line length, the tonnage reckoned in accordance with the Thames Measurement adopted by Lloyd's Register;

"year" means any period of 12 months beginning with 1st April.

Light dues

3.—(1) Subject to paragraph (2), light dues levied in accordance with these Regulations must be paid—

(a) by way of periodical payments in respect of a ship which is a tug, fishing vessel or a pleasure vessel, or

(b) per voyage for a ship in all other cases.

(2) Light dues are not payable in respect of exempt vessels of a type set out in Schedule 1 (vessels exempt from light dues).

Periodical payments

4.—(1) For the classes of ships included in this regulation, light dues must be levied by a general lighthouse authority, or its authorised collector, by way of periodical payments according to the procedure and in the amounts set out in this regulation.

Tugs and fishing vessels

(2) Unless paragraph (5) applies, a general lighthouse authority, or its authorised collector, must inform the registered owner of a tug or fishing vessel kept in the area for which that lighthouse authority has responsibility that light dues must be paid by means of—

(a) a single payment in accordance with paragraph (3)(a), or

(b) two equal payments in accordance with paragraph (3)(b).

(3) The required payment to be made by a registered owner in accordance with paragraph (2) is—

(a) an annual rate per ship comprised of a fixed charge of £190 plus £20 for each metre of load line length in excess of ten metres, or

(b) a payment per ship of £110 plus £12 for each metre of load line length in excess of ten metres for each six month period commencing on 1st April and 1st October.

(4) For the purposes of paragraph (3), where the load line length that is in excess of ten metres is not a multiple of one metre, any excess less than half a metre must be rounded down and any excess greater than half a metre must be rounded up to the nearest integer value.

(5) This paragraph applies if the registered tug or a fishing vessel is kept for a part of the year in the area for which a general lighthouse authority has responsibility.

(6) If paragraph (5) applies, the light dues payable are one-twelfth of the appropriate annual rate calculated under paragraph (3)(a) for each month or part of a month for which the registered tug or fishing vessel is kept in the area for which the general lighthouse authority has responsibility subject to a minimum payment of £60.

Pleasure vessels

(7) The payment for a pleasure vessel which is kept for the whole year in the area for which a general lighthouse authority has responsibility is £77 for the year.

(8) The payment for a pleasure vessel which is kept for a part of the year in the area for which a general lighthouse authority has responsibility is the lower of—

(a) £77 for the year, or

(b) £26 for each month or part of a month that the vessel is kept in that area.

Vessels declared a total loss

(9) If any vessel to which this regulation applies is declared a total loss during a period for which it has paid or is liable to pay light dues, that vessel must be deemed by a general lighthouse authority, or its authorised collector, not to be liable to such dues from the last day of the month in which the said loss occurs.

(10) If paragraph (9) applies, liability to pay a periodical charge with respect to such a vessel is one-twelfth of the annual amount under paragraph (3)(a) or (8)(a) as the case may be for each month for which a periodical charge is payable, subject to a minimum payment of—

(a) £60 in the case of a tug or fishing vessel, or

(b) £26 in the case of a pleasure vessel.

(11) Any amount paid in excess of the amount reassessed in accordance with paragraph (10) must be repaid to the person who paid the excess amount.

(12) In this regulation, where the amount payable is not a multiple of a penny, the excess must be rounded down to the nearest penny.

Payments per voyage

5.—(1) A ship which is not a tug, fishing vessel or a pleasure vessel is liable to pay light dues in accordance with paragraph (2) in respect of a voyage which ends at a port in the United Kingdom.

(2) The amount of light dues per voyage must be calculated on basis of the tonnage of the ship at the rate of 45 pence per ton subject to a—

(a) minimum charge of £60, and

(b) maximum charge of £22,500.

(3) Where a ship has paid light dues under paragraph (1) in respect of a voyage it is not required to pay light dues in respect of any subsequent voyage in any period of one month commencing with the last preceding relevant date.

(4) In any year, a ship must not be required by a general lighthouse authority, or its authorised collector, to make payments of light dues for more than nine voyages in total.

(5) A voyage of a ship must be reckoned from port to port.

(6) For the purposes of this regulation—

(a) where a ship's tonnage is not a multiple of one ton, any excess not exceeding half a ton must be rounded down and any excess over half a ton must be rounded up to the nearest ton;

(b) where an amount payable is not a multiple of a penny, the excess must be rounded down to the nearest penny;

(c) "month" means a month commencing with the relevant date;

(d) "relevant date" means the date on which a ship arrives at a port or place on a voyage in respect of which light dues have been paid or are payable.

Payment of light dues

6.—(1) Any light dues payable under these Regulations must be tendered at the port where the liability arises except as the general lighthouse authority otherwise allows.

Common provisions

(2) A general lighthouse authority or its authorised collector may serve the invoice for any light dues by post, and the invoice is duly served—

(a) if it is served on any one of the registered owners who, at the commencement of the period to which the invoice relates, appears in the register; or

(b) if it is served on a consignee or agent within the meaning of section 207(1) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995.

(3) For the purposes of section 7 of the Interpretation Act 1978(**a**) (service of documents by post) an invoice is deemed to be properly addressed to a registered owner if it is addressed to that owner at the address for the time being recorded in relation to that owner in the register.

(4) Any arrears of light dues payable under these Regulations may be recovered in accordance with sections 207 (recovery of general light dues) or 208 (distress on ship for general light dues) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995.

Tugs, fishing or pleasure vessels

(5) Unless paragraphs (7) or (8) of this regulation or paragraphs (3)(b) or (8)(b) of regulation 4 (periodical payments) apply, periodical payments must be paid not later than 28 days after service of an invoice for the amount of the payment by a general lighthouse authority or its authorised collector.

(6) If regulation 4(3)(b) applies and—

(a) the first instalment is paid not later than 28 days after the service of the invoice, the remaining payment must be paid before 29 October, or

(b) the first invoice has not been paid 28 days after the service of the invoice, a general lighthouse authority or its authorised collector may require the annual amount payable under regulation 4(3)(a) to be paid.

(7) Any payment under regulation 4(3)(a) or (b) in respect of a tug or fishing vessel which a general lighthouse authority is satisfied is ordinarily registered and kept outside the United Kingdom must be paid at the commencement of the first visit in the period to which the payment relates by that vessel to a port in the United Kingdom.

(8) Any payment in respect of a pleasure vessel in accordance with regulation 4(8)(b) must be paid at the commencement of the period to which it relates.

(**a**) 1978 c. 30.

Other vessels

(9) Except where paragraphs (5) to (8) apply, light dues must be paid within 28 days after service of an invoice by a general lighthouse authority or its authorised collector showing the amount to be paid.

Revocations

7. The provisions listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 2 (revocations) are revoked to the extent specified in column 3 of that table.

Signed by authority of the Secretary of State for Transport

Mike Kane
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department for Transport

5th March 2025

SCHEDULE 1

Regulation 3(2)

Vessels exempt from light dues

1. Ships on charter to His Majesty or used by a Government department or a foreign Government other than for commercial purposes.

2. Ships other than tugs or fishing vessels with a load line length of 24 metres or less.

3. Ships used for sail training purposes by—

(a) a registered charity or a subsidiary company of a registered charity where—

(i) in England and Wales, the relevant charity is registered under section 30(1) of the Charities Act 2011(**a**);

(ii) in Scotland, the relevant charity is registered within the meaning of section 13(1) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005(**b**);

(iii) in Northern Ireland, the relevant charity is registered under section 16(2) of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008(**c**), or

(b) a community interest company as referred to in section 26 of the Companies (Audit, Investigations and Community Enterprise) Act 2004(**d**).

4. Vessels registered by National Historic Ships UK(**e**) on the—

(a) National Register of Historic Vessels;

(b) UK Replica List, or

(c) Overseas Watch List.

5. Tugs and fishing vessels of less than ten metres in load line length.

6. Ships putting in solely for bunkers, stores, crew changes, embarkation or disembarkation of pilots, a medical emergency, or for provisions for their own use on board, provided that they are not otherwise engaged in, or awaiting, any commercial activity or service and if the general lighthouse authorities are satisfied that the ship is not ordinarily kept at the port to which the arrival relates.

7. Ships putting in from stress of weather or because of damage or on voyages solely for the purpose of damage or running repairs, where they are not otherwise engaged in a revenue earning or commercial activity or service, provided they do not discharge or load cargo other than cargo discharged with a view to such repairs, and afterwards reshipped.

8. Ships navigating solely and entirely within the limits of a harbour authority; except in the outer areas of the Port of London Authority where aids to navigation are maintained by the general lighthouse authorities.

9. Any ship (including a pleasure vessel) which is laid up, and—

(**a**) 2011 c. 25.
(**b**) 2005 asp 10.
(**c**) 2008 c. 12 (N.I.).
(**d**) 2004 c. 27.
(**e**) National Historic Ships UK are based at Park Row, Greenwich, London, SE10 9NF and their telephone number is 020 8312 8558. The National Register of Historic Vessels, the UK Replica List and the Overseas Watch List are available at the address given and from the following link: https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/registers.

(a) where the ship has opted to make annual payments under regulation 4(3)(a), the exemption only applies if the ship is laid up for the whole year for which the annual payment is due, or

(b) where the ship has opted to make payments over two periods of six months each under regulation 4(3)(b), the exemption only applies for each six month period if the ship is laid up for the whole of that period.

10. Vessels engaged solely in harbour maintenance, dredging, building or maintenance of sea defences or land reclamation on behalf of a statutory or harbour authority.

11. Vessels engaged solely in pollution control, prevention, or recovery on behalf of a statutory authority.

12. Vessels engaged solely in the transportation of sewage waste to spoil grounds by or on behalf of a statutory authority.

13. Vessels putting in or departing in ballast for the purpose of modifications, alteration, scrapping or departing as new buildings from a shipyard, not otherwise engaged in any other revenue earning or commercial activity or service.

14. Dumb barges, lighters, hulks, or other vessels specifically designed and built without a means of propulsion.

SCHEDULE 2

Regulation 7

Revocations

Column 1 *Regulations revoked*	*Column 2* *Reference*	*Column 3* *Extent of revocation*
The Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) Regulations 1997	1997/562	The whole instrument
The Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) (Amendment) Regulations 1998	1998/495	The whole instrument
The Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) (Amendment) Regulations 2002	2002/504	The whole instrument
The Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) (Amendment) Regulations 2004	2004/610	The whole instrument
The Civil Partnership Act (Amendments to Subordinate Legislation) Order 2005	2005/2114	Schedule 15, columns 1 and 2, entry in relation to the Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) Regulations 1997
The Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) (Amendment) Regulations 2006	2006/649	The whole instrument
The Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) (Amendment) Regulations 2009	2009/1371	The whole instrument
The Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) (Amendment) Regulations 2010	2010/629	The whole instrument
The Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) (Amendment) Regulations 2014	2014/527	The whole instrument
The Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) (Amendment)	2015/458	The whole instrument

Regulations 2015		
The Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) (Amendment) Regulations 2016	2016/269	The whole instrument
The Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) (Amendment) Regulations 2017	2017/543	The whole instrument
The Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) (Amendment) Regulations 2021	2021/280	The whole instrument
The Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) (Amendment) Regulations 2022	2022/240	The whole instrument
The Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) (Amendment) Regulations 2023	2023/297	The whole instrument

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Regulations)

These Regulations revoke and remake with amendments the Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) Regulations 1997 (S.I. 1997/562) ("the 1997 Regulations").

Principal changes to the 1997 Regulations

Regulations 2 and 4 to 6 remake the 1997 Regulations with some clarifications and modifications so that the provisions can be applied in a clear and consistent way.

Regulation 3 and Schedule 1 provide for vessels that are exempt from light dues under these Regulations. The main changes included in the list of exemptions in Schedule 1 are as follows.

— The exemption for ships of less than 20 tons, other than ships liable to pay light dues by reference to their load line length has been amended so that it will only apply to ships other than tugs or fishing vessels with a load line length of 24 metres or less.

— The exemption for sailing ships used exclusively for sail training purposes, operating as travelling museums or vessels of historical interest has been amended so that it will apply to sailing ships used for sail training purposes by a registered charity.

— There is a new exemption for vessels registered on the National Register of Historic Vessels.

— The exemption for ships putting in solely for bunkers, stores, crew changes, embarkation or disembarkation of pilots, a medical emergency, or for provisions for their own use on board has been amended so that the exemption will only apply if the vessel is not otherwise engaged in any revenue earning or commercial activity or service and if the general lighthouse authorities are satisfied that the vessel is not ordinarily kept at the port to which the arrival relates.

— The exemption for any ships that are laid up has been amended so that it cross-refers to the correct regulation.

Regulation 7 and Schedule 2 provide a list of instruments to be revoked in these Regulations.

A full impact assessment has not been produced for this instrument as no, or no significant impact on the private, voluntary or public sectors is foreseen.

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