



Press Release

UKHO Chart Data Keeps the Arklow Crew – and the Accountants – Happy

Friday 07 August

SHORT-SEA dry cargo specialist Arklow Shipping is increasing its use of ECDIS in step with a major fleet expansion programme.

And company marine superintendent Dave Elliot says that cost savings of around 10-15% a year are far from being the only benefit so far. Investing in ECDIS has allowed Arklow to respond to changing trading patterns and cope with pressure on manpower.

With 25 years at Arklow Shipping under his belt, Capt Elliot has long been a keen advocate of ECDIS, even in the face of early teething troubles.

"There were a number of reasons for moving to ECDIS. Safety was a big factor, but paper was getting more expensive every year and chart-correcting skills harder to find. And we were sure that as take-up grew, costs would fall, so savings would come."

As it turned out, for the first couple of years ECDIS actually proved more costly. "I was getting grief from the accountants about that," he says. "But fortunately things turned around, and now I'd say we're probably saving about 10-15% against the costs of paper. And we expect those savings to grow, as ECDIS gets cheaper while the cost of paper continues to go up."

Arklow Shipping sails in the European short sea trade, from the Mediterranean to the Baltic. With 35 (20 Irish managed & 15 Dutch managed) vessels at sea and a further 10 under construction, the company is investing for the future, despite difficult trading conditions.

The competitive short-sea trade calls for flexibility, something which comes as standard with ECDIS. Using the Admiralty Vector Chart Service from the UKHO, Arklow ships have the complete chart database pre-loaded, with new charts and folios available on demand.

"Usually we work standard routes but with times being as they are, some of our vessels are finding themselves sent off to some weird and wonderful places," he explains. "One went to Madeira recently, way off our beaten track. But it wasn't a problem, all we had to do was get onto our chart agent, he emailed us the codes for the additional chart cells and we had a three month license just like that."

What the officers appreciate he says, is that navigating on ECDIS gives them flexibility too, for example using filters to keep the screen clean and uncluttered when visiting a familiar port or adding extra data layers on a maiden call to a new port.



Filtering has other benefits too, such as the ability to set the ECDIS to display only the draught relevant to the ship. "Officers of the watch and masters will have their own preferences for what information they like to have in front of them and the system makes it easy to set it up the way you like it, without interfering with the safety parameters of ECDIS " he adds.

This has paid huge dividends as ECDIS was deployed across the fleet and Capt Elliot says the greatest surprise has been the attitude of the senior crew. "We feared the young lads would approach ECDIS like another video game, and older mates and master who viewed the introduction of metric charts as the Devils work would be dragged kicking and screaming in front of an ECDIS screen"

But if the company had anticipated resistance elsewhere, then "mates in their 50s, masters of 65 and up" have been among the system's biggest fans. All Arklow vessels still carry about 20 paper charts – enough to ensure safe passage to an anchorage whatever happens but Capt Elliot says; "They tell me the paper never comes out these days. They love it!"

That willingness to work with change is crucial because of the squeeze on resources onboard ship and the need for new skills that emerge to complement the technology. Capt Elliot says Arklow had for some years noted the increasing scarcity of chart-correcting skills.

"It's the kind of thing you used to pick up on-board, just by watching and learning when things were quiet. But now, with reduced manning levels and fast turnarounds, you just don't get those quiet times any more. Obviously all those problems go away with ECDIS – you just stick in the CD and that's it – you're done."

Arklow took its first steps in electronic navigation 14 years ago, using raster charts on its newbuilding Arklow Castle and today has a type-approved dual-ECDIS and official Electronic Navigation Charts from the UKHO.

The company considered alternatives for its ENC data - "We're a business after all and we have to keep the accountants happy!" – but in the end followed the advice of long-time supplier Todd Chart Agency in Bangor, County Down to select AVCS.

Arklow now has Sperry Naviecdis running on most of its fleet, with SAM equipment going into the new ships being built in Korea, something Captain Elliot views as the next stage in the learning process. "We probably would have preferred to keep one system throughout but we don't have any major issue with it. There are benefits too – we'll be comparing the two systems as we go, learning more about strengths and weaknesses."

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. UKHO, which is part of the Ministry of Defence, has been charting the world's oceans for more than 200 years with the primary aim of providing navigational services for the Royal Navy and merchant mariners to save and protect lives at sea. In addition it also serves the small craft and leisure mariners and provides a range of consultancy services.
2. UKHO produces a worldwide series of some 3,300 paper nautical charts and 160 publications under the Admiralty brand and has a growing portfolio of Electronic Navigational Charts (ENCs). These charts are sold globally and used by nearly 70 per cent of international shipping.
3. UKHO is a Trading Fund which means it is a government agency owned by the MoD with the freedom to trade commercially to generate revenue and cover running costs.

4. UKHO also plays a central role, in support of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, in discharging the navigation element of the UK's Safety of Life at Sea Treaty obligations for waters of UK national responsibility.
5. AVCS brings together Electronic Navigational Charts (ENCs) from national hydrographic offices around the world and new ENC coverage produced by UKHO in co-operation with Foreign Governments to provide comprehensive, official, worldwide coverage.

www.ukho.gov.uk

Issued by Beattie Communications (www.beattiegrou.com) on behalf of UKHO

For further information please contact:

Neil McDonald
neil.mcdonald@beattiegrou.com

01698 787855 / 07725 466737

Kimberley Hamilton
kimberley.hamilton@beattiegrou.com

01698 78 78 58/ 07525 855 422

