

UK Transport Minister asks ports to refuse all Russia-associated ships

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UK Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has written to all UK ports asking them “not to provide access to any Russian flagged, registered, owned, controlled, chartered or operated vessels”. He has then said that there will be “prohibiting legislation to follow”.

Tim Morris, chief executive of UK Major Ports Group, said that “we must all play our part to stand against an unprovoked, premeditated attack against a sovereign democratic state”.

The letter to all UK ports said that the DoT did not consider it appropriate for “Russian vessels” to continue to enter UK ports.

The DoT defined Russian vessels as a ship which the port in question has reason to believe is:

Owned, controlled, chartered or operated by any person connected with Russia

Owned, controlled, chartered or operated by Designated Persons

Russia-flagged

Registered in Russia.

The letter stated that the DoT would “seek to support UK ports in identifying ships within scope of the above and will communicate directly with relevant ports when we identify ships bound for ports who fall within the scope of the above”.

The letter concluded by stating that “further detailed sanctions against Russian shipping are being developed and further details will be shared very shortly”.

The matter arose after it emerged that an oil tanker owned by Sovcomflot, Russia's largest shipping company, was scheduled to dock in Orkney this week. Concerns were expressed by the Orkney authorities that nothing could be done to prevent a Russian-controlled vessel from docking at Orkney.

The **NS Champion** (IMO 9299719) is a Liberian flagged crude oil tanker built in July 2005. The ship's beneficial owner, Sovcomflot, is majority-owned by the Russian state.

The Guardian reported that "to the dismay of politicians and islanders the UK government had advised that at present the vessel cannot be refused permission to dock. A UK government spokesperson indicated there were a number of Russian vessels scheduled to dock at British ports, despite the intensifying trade embargos against Russian businesses and state entities."

Scotland's cabinet secretary for external affairs Angus Robertson said on Sunday that "the UK authorities have got a big decision to take on whether we are going to allow Russian-owned or chartered vessels to dock in UK ports. The Scottish government is in discussions with the UK authorities about this particular case but there will be others."

Orkney and Shetland MP Alistair Carmichael wrote to Boris Johnson urging him to take action.

A spokeswoman for Repsol Sinopec, which operates the Flotta oil terminal, had told the BBC that the NS Champion was due to arrive today, Tuesday March 1st. Presumably that will not now happen.

At a protest against the Russian invasion of Ukraine in Orkney on Saturday, demonstrators spoke of their anger over the Russian tanker plans.

2005-built, Liberia-flagged, 57,248 gt NS Champion is owned by Sterling Shipping Inc, care of manager SCF management Services of St Petersburg, Russia. It is entered with Gard AS on behalf of JSC Novorossiysk Shipping.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-60541028>