

decision-maker

Southern rock



Gibraltar has a steady hand on the tiller as the port maps out a new course. **Jem Newton** talks to port captain Bob Sanguinetti to see which heading he's taking

> When *IHS Maritime* visits him less than two months into his new job, Commodore Bob Sanguinetti, CEO of Gibraltar Port Authority, was already enacting cuts in port fees in the hope of luring more business.

In response to increasing competition from neighbouring ports, the authority moved swiftly to implement a 75% reduction on tonnage dues for vessels calling at the eastern anchorage for provisions, stores, spares, and crew changes.

This complemented a proposed 75% reduction (previously 50%) on the completion of bunkers at the western anchorage within the time legislated.

These new tariff reductions followed other recently implemented measures enabling more bunker barges to operate in the bay as a result of the release of

two bunkering slots. This new policy not only allows operators to supply more vessels but also reduces even further any possibility of waiting time for bunkers.

"And the port authority is studying other long-term proposals to put bunkering on a firmer footing in the coming months," Sanguinetti tells *IHS Maritime*.

Resolute decision-making is second nature to the senior Royal Naval officer who spent the second half of his illustrious career in naval operations and intelligence, commanding ships, and squadrons of ships.

Before deciding to return home to Gibraltar, Sanguinetti was tasked with co-ordinating strategy for the Royal Navy and the UK defence ministry, most recently as head of intelligence at National Operations Headquarters in north London.

He believes the decision-making process on naval vessels is not so different from what happens in the commercial environment. "A good decision for some people would not necessarily be a good decision for others, and you need to take into account the wider benefit for the organisation on whose behalf you make that decision.

"You need to understand the negative impact of the repercussions on others," he adds. "If you want those people to continue

'A **higher** bunkering turnover **without** compromising safety'

Bob Sanguinetti decision-maker

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supporting you, they need to understand why you have taken the decision the way you did.

"So you need the engagement with those around you, for example on board a ship; preferably beforehand as you're coming to a view, but certainly once you've made the decision you need to make sure that you don't lose their support.

"It's important they understand the broader factors that you've had to take into account in taking the decision," Sanguinetti emphasises.

Gibraltar has made significant progress in the past five years in how its vessel traffic system (VTS) is configured; it now has comprehensive coverage of its territorial waters with a full suite of sensors and the technology to link it all together.

"We've also looked at how we manage the whole VTS operation with regard to bunkering, streamlining our operations, and making them more efficient to provide a higher turnover of bunkering activity without compromising safety – our number one priority," Sanguinetti explains.

The authority has also looked at other ways of improving the running of its VTS office and is discussing a move to a more prominent position at the southern end of the Rock. "We have also recently seen the return of an extra five VTS operators from training in the UK, doubling the number of operators we have available," he adds.

The VTS has now been complemented with a new vessel management system (VMS) and the IT system that links owners and charterers with ship agents. The VTS office provides for a much slicker and streamlined set-up and a consequent ramping up of efficiency, Sanguinetti tells *IHS Maritime*.

The VMS aids the traffic system operators in determining the order of ships coming into the western anchorage, an

alternative to the previous time-consuming process that involved countless phone calls and emails. This new system has also enabled the authority to drive down the numbers of ships waiting in the eastern anchorage for bunkering slots.

In addition, Gibraltar has passed legislation ending ship-to-ship (STS) transfers in international waters around the territory. STS now takes place exclusively in the western anchorage, while only husbandry operations such as replenishment or crew changes are carried out east of the Rock.

"All STS transfers are overseen by authority bunkering superintendents and we've freed up a couple of anchorage slots for deeper-draught vessels to carry out conventional bunkering," he notes.

"The quality control we are able to provide thanks to the management system gives a huge amount of reassurance to both suppliers and clients, who know they're coming into an extremely safe environment, with sufficient but not excessive oversight on the part of the port authority to ensure regulations are complied with."

Sanguinetti emphasises: "In terms of safety and protection of the environment, we continue to invest in kit and capability in the event of an oil spill or other incident. These measures, together with the recent introduction of legislation to deter polluters and participation in the Green Award

> Bob Sanguinetti

Key decision: Reducing anchorage fees to help restore competitiveness

Current position: Since May 2014 CEO and captain of the Port of Gibraltar

Origins: Born and raised in Gibraltar

Career: Served in the Royal Navy for three decades, rising to the rank of commodore. Commanded several Royal Navy warships and a multinational coalition task group before working at the UK defence ministry in strategic roles. Most recently intelligence chief at the UK's National Operations Headquarters in North London. Younger Brother of Trinity House and yacht master

Education: Graduated from Oxford University in 1983

Family: Married to Sylvia with three university-age daughters – Annabel, Helena and Christina – and an energetic springer spaniel, Tinto

scheme, underpin the government's stated commitment to a safe and clean port and waters."

Sanguinetti hails a good working relationship with Algeiras, the Spanish port across the Bay of Gibraltar, with both authorities monitoring each other's VTS. However, no one is planning a single VTS operation covering the whole of the bay.

He notes that Gibraltar is an extremely popular destination for English-speaking cruise passengers, pointing out that Carnival UK had recently named the port its third most popular among its regulars, after Southampton and Lisbon.

The value that Carnival and other cruise companies place in Gibraltar as a destination means the government, cruise operators, and agents are constantly looking for ways to renew its appeal as a destination. Sanguinetti says talks continue between the government and cruise

operators on the Rock's longer-term development ambitions as a cruise terminal and hub for Mediterranean itineraries.

Sanguinetti concludes by reflecting on the vibrant and dynamic environment in the port and "on the Rock's uniqueness and key strength as a highly efficient one-stop shop for the provision of a wide range of marine services at the junction of some of the world's busiest shipping routes".

✉ jem.newton@ihs.com

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