

"United Front for UK Overseas Territories in the South Atlantic: GSGSSI and Workboat Services Limited Chart a Course for Continued Environmental Protection"

In a significant step towards supporting marine conservation efforts in the South Atlantic, the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI) is pleased to announce the successful transition of ownership of Pharos Marine Limited (part of the Falklands based Byron group) to Workboat Services Limited (WBS), ensuring the continued operational presence of the vessel *MV Pharos SG* in the South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands Maritime Zone.

On 15 December 2023, Her Excellency Alison Blake CMG, Commissioner for South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands, signed a new Charter Party Agreement confirming the continued service of *Pharos SG* under the operation of WBS until 2028. The successful transfer of ownership to WBS, a Falklands company, will ensure a seamless continuation of maritime operations out of the city of Stanley. This strategic move not only guarantees the operational continuation of *Pharos SG* but also strengthens the existing bond between GSGSSI, Falkland Islands community, and Falkland Islands businesses. The vessel's highly professional and experienced crew, essential to the operation, are offered continuing employment.

Alison Blake CMG, Commissioner for South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands, said: *"This agreement enables continuity of maritime operations by the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands in this globally significant area. It is possible because of our longstanding partnership with the Falkland Islands and the longstanding cooperation between UK Overseas Territories in the South Atlantic. We are confident that this new relationship with Workboat Services Limited will help us ensure the highest standards of maritime and environmental protection in this incredibly special and remote part of the world."*

Laura Sinclair Willis, Chief Executive of SGSSI says: *"Protection of this unique ecosystem, including over 1.2 million square kilometres of biodiverse ocean, would not have been possible without the long-term support of Byron Marine over the past 2 decades. We would like to extend our thanks to Lewis Clifton and fellow Directors for successfully facilitating South Georgia operations up to this point, and look forward to working with Workboat Services into the future."*

Adam Cockwell, Director of Workboat Services Ltd said: *"We feel honoured to provide vital maritime support to the unique island of South Georgia and look forward to working with the Government in all their operations in the area, building on the success of our Falklands ferry and outer island shipping operation for the Falkland Islands Government. We appreciate GSGSSI's recognition of and commitment to local Falklands expertise and experience in placing their trust in us to continue the exemplary work of our predecessors, with the continued support of the excellent and well proven crew."*

GSGSSI would like to thank everyone involved in supporting this transition. In particular, the support of the UK Government Blue Belt Programme via Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, which enabled provision of specialised maritime legal and drafting advice from UK-based firm Stephenson Harwood.

For media inquiries, please contact:

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About GSGSSI:

The Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI) is committed to the sustainable environmental management of the unique and diverse ecosystems in this UK Overseas Territory. Through responsible governance and international collaboration, GSGSSI strives to protect the region's biodiversity for the benefit of current and future generations. Learn more at www.gov.gs

About Workboat Services Limited (WBS):

Workboat Services Limited (WBS) is a Falkland Islands-based company with a strong reputation for operating maritime services, including the Concordia Bay inter-island ferry. With a focus on professionalism and efficiency, WBS brings significant experience to maritime operations in the South Atlantic region. Learn more at www.workboat.co.fk

About Byron Marine:

Byron Marine has been at the forefront of supporting GSGSSI with logistics support, fisheries patrol and the provision of fisheries and oceanic science platforms, since October 1998 initially through the provision of MV Dorada, MV Sigma and latterly MV Pharos SG. In August 2003 MV Dorada participated in the longest Antarctic chase of an illegal fishing vessel in maritime history culminating in successful apprehension. MV Sigma was involved in the recovery of several crews from a number of shipwrecked vessels, and successful arrest of a poaching longliner in March 2005. MV Pharos SG was key to delivering the Government's successful invasive rat and reindeer eradication programmes on South Georgia over a number of austral summer seasons. Recently modified, she now undertakes krill surveys for the Government's fisheries research. From commencement of her delivery journey from Greenock on 29 September 2006 and until 12 December 2023, MV Pharos SG has steamed 559,790 nautical miles in support of the Government of South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands. With a focus on responsible and ethical practices, Byron Marine remains dedicated to contributing to the protection and preservation of the world's oceans. Learn more at www.byronmarine.com

About UK Government Blue Belt Programme:

The UK Government Blue Belt Programme is a pioneering initiative committed to the conservation and sustainable management of marine environments in the UK Overseas Territories. By supporting collaborative efforts with local governments and organisations, the Blue Belt Programme aims to safeguard the biodiversity and ecological integrity of these unique and precious marine ecosystems. Learn more at www.gov.uk/guidance/conflict-stability-and-security-fund-blue-belt-programme