

## **Briefing note for Scientists, Technicians, Agency staff and Shore Personnel sailing or organising cruises on RRS James Cook and RRS Discovery**

### **Urgent change in procedure for cashless system 'pre-authorisation' for purchase of items from the 'shop', bar and bond for personal use or consumption**

Unfortunately, the procedure whereby we gave pre-authorisation for use of the Bar/Bond based on holding your credit and debit card details (in a safe) for charging at the end of cruises has had to be withdrawn due to circumstances beyond our control. As you no doubt know Card Providers have introduced new and increasingly rigid systems to reduce fraud. It is now compulsory that we use the new 3 digit security codes (on the back of credit/debit cards) when charging your card and it is against Financial Regulations to hold these card details in any written format.

Separately, the National Audit Office/Audit Committee will not accept us being exposed to the full risk of pre-funding the sale of alcohol and cigarettes, via the Bond and Bar. In effect we are using public funds to buy the stock and there have been many strong requests from Internal Audit for us to tighten security and procedures on this. To this end we had previously introduced the new procedures for holding card details, by way of a security measure and various behind the scenes reconciliations and checks; The new procedure was provisionally approved by Internal Audit in December last year and is due for review later this year. However separately we have also become aware that the Financial Services Authority (FSA) considers that our current procedure is illegal and we will be liable to prosecution and a fine if reported.

We have spoken at length to Streamline (our card service provider) regarding possible solutions, including a system of setting up pre-authorisation of cards similar to that done in hotels. Regrettably, they will not allow pre-authorisation by someone not registered as a hotel and point out that it actually ties up a credit card for other use. Their only suggested solution was pre-charging and top up and they suggested a process by which this could be achieved. In an attempt to avoid this we looked at the possibility of extending salary deductions, but the payroll systems do not have the flexibility to make the irregular deductions from pay that would be involved for non-marine staff.

We have had to act very quickly to stop ourselves being liable to prosecution and fines. Thus we introduced an interim, emergency, unfinished procedure via our Wedderburns cashless card system, and this has already affected some of you. We have listened to the feedback from this and taken it into account when coming up with this new procedure.

Longer term, despite, our desire to find alternative solutions we are sorry to say that our hands remain tied. The only viable solution open to us is to adopt a similar system to BAS and as suggested by Streamline, pre-charge a deposit to people who want to be issued with a swipe card to make use of the Shop/Bond/Bar facilities.

We have looked at average bar/bond bills and asked the Pursers for their valuable input based on 'front line' experience. From this we had initially looked at setting a minimum of £50 as the deposit (ie the same rate as BAS), but acknowledging that some people do not drink or smoke and so might spend less, we are now looking at setting the minimum at £10. However, do remember that the 'Bar/shop' sells T-shirts/rugby shirts and these are priced at over £20, while there are also additional supplies such as chocolate and soap available. Consequently, it's not just bar and tobacco purchases that you need to consider when deciding how much to 'charge up' your card with. How much you pre-charge is up to you, but it should aim to cover all your personal expenditure onboard during the cruise. The Pursers may request people who are getting close to their deposit to top up (which we will do within office hours) as set out in the policy.

This revised system enables us to meet our legal obligations, manage risk involving the use of public money and continues to provide an onboard service for sundry items, bar and bond. We will keep this new procedure under review and thus would welcome your feedback on it.

The full procedure and process documents for NOCS are available on request or from the NOCS Intranet. Please see below for an extract with what we consider to be the vital information:

- All Scientific, Technical, Agency and Shore personnel joining the RRS Discovery or RRS James Cook must 'charge up' their ship ID cards with credit prior to joining either vessel.

- This will be done by charging your credit or debit card and the credit being transferred onto the Ship ID card for use whilst on the Vessel.
- To charge your Ship ID card, you are requested to telephone the Senior Financial Assistant (Sue Parker) on 02380 596146 Monday to Friday between the hours of 10am and 3pm with your full credit or debit card details.
- We recommend a usual amount (per cruise) of £50, but how much you pre-charge is up to you, based on your experience and anticipated purchases from the shop/bar/bond. You will not, however, be able to charge up less than £10.
- When this credit runs out, the purser on board the Vessel will contact you to arrange a suitable time to 'top up' your Ship ID card.
- Any left over credit on your account at the time of disembarkation will be credited back to the same credit or debit card 10 working days after the cruise has finished.
- If you choose not to pre-charge your card you will not be able to make any purchases from the Vessel Bar/shop and Bond while onboard..

### **Timetable for New Procedure:**

We will need to continue with our current interim procedures until we have completed training and upgrading of the Wedderburns cashless system. The new procedure outlined above will replace the interim procedure as follows:

Discovery for Cruise D325 (Principle Scientist: Malin) starting on the 13th November 2007

James Cook for the next full Cruise JC18 (Principle Scientist: Palmer) starting on the 3rd December 2007 (some NOCS staff involved in the early Trials Cruises will be affected sooner but this will not be earlier than 1 October)