ANM18 Input paper

Agenda item 13

Task Number

Author UKHO

What is a major light

# Summary

The UKHO has posed a question, from a cheating perspective with regard to ‘What is a major light’? An initial response was given but it would be appreciated if the Committee could provide a definitive answer / way ahead that will help the hydrographers.

## Purpose of the document

The Committee is requested to respond to the UKHO.

# Question from UKHO

I would like to ask your advice on a matter, arising from a meeting in December. We discussed the charting of ‘major’ lights. Traditionally, a major light has been assumed to be one with a range of 15 nautical miles (15M) or more. Such lights are emboldened in the ‘List of Lights’. However, so far as I and colleagues have discovered, there is no actual definition, either in IHO or IALA publications (or anywhere else that we have found).

Users of ECDIS have expressed concern that major lights on the display are far less prominent than sectored lights with lesser ranges. In studying how to overcome this problem, the IHO WG dealing with the matter has opted to take 10M as a range to drive a more prominent depiction. Of course, ENC need a rules-based driver, which is not necessarily required for paper charts. One of the reasons for choosing 10M rather than the more traditional 15M is a perception that light ranges are generally being reduced.

With the increasing use of coloured sectors on paper charts, it is also becoming true that major lights are sometimes much less prominent than comparatively minor lights, so our WG has also been considering this question. We will be recommending the use of a surrounding coloured circle, instead of the small flare, on major lights. But the question that arises is how those lights should be selected or defined. Our thinking at present is that a major light is not defined by range, but by the importance of the light in the context of the chart; a matter of cartographic judgement. So, an 8M light, for example, may be a ‘major’ light on a large scale chart, but a minor light on a smaller scale chart covering the same area. It is even conceivable that a 20M light is a major light on a coastal passage chart, but once a vessel is close to harbour, it becomes almost an irrelevance while a much lower powered light could become more important.

It is also debatable whether the correct term is ‘major’, ‘important’ or ‘significant’ or whether these terms are simply interchangeable.

It would be very helpful to have your views on this subject, including whether there is any official IALA line.

## Initial response

Major and minor lights used to be terms used, with 15nm nominal range being the break point.  I don’t think these terms have officially been in use for a while and perhaps never in IALA.

From an IALA perspective it’s the categorisation of a light in terms of availability targets irrespective of light range that defines if it is primary navigational significance cat 1, navigational significance cat 2 or less navigational significance cat3.

I’m not sure that helps the charting at the moment because categorisation data is not (I think) given to the Hydrographer.

However under the auspices of S100 it could and probably will be part of the IALA data schema.

It may be possible to provide the data in advance of the S100 standard, for the a way to be identified of giving the categories the correct charting visibility.

# Action requested of the Committee

The Committee is requested to respond to the issue raised by the UKHO.