

UKHO Announces Intention to Withdraw from Paper Chart Production



The UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) has announced its intention to develop options for the withdrawal from global paper chart production by late 2026 to increase its focus on digital navigation products and services.

Plans to withdraw the UKHO's portfolio of ADMIRALTY Standard Nautical Charts (SNCs) and Thematic Charts are in response to more marine, naval and

leisure users primarily using digital products and services for navigation. The ADMIRALTY Maritime Data Solutions digital navigation portfolio can be updated in near real time, greatly enhancing safety of life at sea (SOLAS).

The phased withdrawal of paper charts from production will take place over a number of years and is anticipated to conclude in late 2026. In parallel, the UKHO will develop viable, official digital alternatives for sectors still using paper chart products. This will be a carefully managed process, conducted in close liaison with all customers and stakeholders, including the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) as well as other regulatory bodies, hydrographic offices, industry partners and distributors.

SOLAS-mandated Transition

Peter Sparkes, chief executive of the UKHO, said: "The decision to commence the process of withdrawing from paper chart production will allow us to increase our focus on advanced digital services that meet the needs of today's seafarers. As we look to the future, our core purpose remains the safety of shipping operations and delivering the best possible navigation solutions to achieve that. Whether for the Royal Navy, commercial vessels or other ocean users, our focus is on developing and delivering ADMIRALTY digital services that promote safe, secure and thriving oceans.

"We understand the significance of this announcement, given the distinguished history of the UKHO's paper chart production and the trust that mariners have placed in ADMIRALTY charts over the generations. We will support users of SNCs during the withdrawal of our paper chart portfolio and work with our distributors to help users switch to digital alternatives between now and our planned date of 2026."

The move to digital navigation solutions has been accompanied by a rapid decline in demand for paper charts, driven by the SOLAS-mandated transition to ECDIS and the wider benefits of digital solutions, including the next generation of navigation services, Peter Sparkes explained.

"Shipping is moving quickly towards a future underpinned by digital innovations, enhanced satellite connectivity at sea and optimized data solutions, supporting the next generation of navigation. The UKHO aims to be at the vanguard of this digital transition, continuing to provide the assured and globally trusted ADMIRALTY navigation services that seafarers the world over depend on."

New Era of Maritime Navigation

Baroness Goldie, Minister of State at the UK government's Ministry of Defence, commented: "The world has changed unrecognizably in recent years, driven by digitalization and rapid technological advancement. When it comes to maritime, one of our priorities at the Ministry of Defence is to make shipping as safe as possible; to achieve this, the industry must continue transitioning to digital tools and technology that share data almost instantly from ship-to-ship or ship-to-shore.



From 2026, the UKHO will fully focus on its digital navigation products and services.

"As one of the world's leading authorities on navigational charts, the UKHO is well positioned to recognize the need to deliver a range of digital solutions that enhance safety and data accuracy. The decision to focus on digital products and services makes strategic and

commercial sense, helping usher in a new era of maritime navigation, which will be powered by digital innovations.”

Official Equipment and Data

Richard Bell, assistant director for UK Technical Services Navigation at the MCA, stated: “The MCA recognizes the benefits of official digital navigation products for safe navigation, at a time when paper products make up a minority of navigation products being used at sea. This announcement by UKHO represents a clear vision for the future of navigation, which will need to be supported by official equipment and data suited to the needs of the different maritime end users.

“We are committed to working closely with the UKHO, stakeholders and industry to make this vision a reality. Close liaison will be essential, to ensure that the technical and legislative barriers to the proposed change are overcome in advance of the UKHO’s 2026 timeline.”

More information on UKHO’s carefully managed approach for the phased withdrawal of paper chart production can be found here: www.admiralty.co.uk/sunsetting-paper-charts.

<https://www.hydro-international.com/content/news/ukho-announces-intention-to-withdraw-from-paper-chart-production>
