Balaena

Last update: **17 Jun 2026**

Bulletin Updates

BALAENA TAKE OVER OF APCL 'GIVES CERTAINTITY AFTER MONTHS OF SPECULATION' - GMB

Posted on: 17 June 2026

GMB Union has welcomed the long-anticipated deal for Balaena - the company behind Gibraltar's Gibdock - to acquire the major UK shipbuilding and repair company APCL has been agreed.

Matt Roberts, GMB National Officer and President of the Confederation of Shipbuilding & Engineering Unions (CSEU), said:

"This deal gives certainty after months of speculation and allows our members and the yards at Cammell Laird, A&P Falmouth and A&P Tyne to move forward together.

"GMB has been clear our members want a solution that kept the three yards together as a strong and complimentary group, so we welcome this deal. There is great capability and delivery across these yards.

"We look forward to working with the new owners to ensure we continue to grow UK sovereign capability and increase local jobs and apprenticeships in Merseyside, west Cornwall, and on Tyneside.

"GMB continue to demand an end to the inexcusable sending of British shipbuilding and repair work overseas.

"The Labour Government must fully make good on this change, and ensure all domestic work goes to the UK shipyards, including these yards now owned by Balaena."

Matt Roberts

National Officer

WORKPLACE EXPOSURE (FUME & DUST, ETC.) REGISTER

Posted on: 31 March 2026

Dear GMB Union Member,

Workplace exposure to hazardous substances, particularly fumes, dusts, vapours, mists, and airborne particulates, remains a significant occupational health concern across UK industries. As part of our commitment to safeguarding health, safety, and welfare at work, this Workplace Exposure Register has been created in partnership with our law firm Unionline to ensure that workers have a clear, accessible means of recording and evidencing exposure to potentially harmful airborne contaminants.

This register is designed to complement, not replace, the legal duties placed upon employers. Employers are required to assess, control, monitor, and review employees' exposure to hazardous substances. However, we recognise that workers themselves are often best placed to identify when exposures occur, especially where controls may be inadequate, inconsistent, or poorly implemented.

In February 2019 the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) reclassified all welding fume, including mild steel, as a Group 1 human carcinogen, with no safe level of exposure. This includes both the visible particulate fume as well as the invisible gases generated during welding operations. Welding fume exposure has been linked to lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), occupational asthma, metal fume fever, and long-term neurological, renal, and cardiovascular harm. For these reasons, welding fume is given specific emphasis in this register.

Workers across manufacturing, engineering, shipbuilding, construction, fabrication, and maintenance roles are routinely exposed to welding fume, often in challenging real-world environments where ventilation, extraction, and respiratory protection may be inadequate. Documenting these exposures is essential to ensure early intervention, enforce employer compliance, and protect workers' long-term health.

The purpose of this Workplace Exposure Register is to:

Provide workers with a formal mechanism to record instances of exposure to hazardous fumes, dusts, and airborne substances, including but not limited to welding fume, metalworking fluids, silica dust, wood dust, solvents, and combustion products.

Create a contemporaneous record that may assist in enforcing workplace safety improvements and ensuring employers meet their statutory duties under COSHH.

Support members in the event of future industrial disease claims handled through Unionline, by preserving evidence of exposure that may otherwise be lost over time.

Strengthen our ability to challenge unsafe work practices and advocate for better engineering controls, extraction systems, health surveillance, and training.

Who Should Use This Register

Anyone who may be exposed to hazardous airborne contaminants - whether regularly or occasionally - is encouraged to complete this register whenever exposure occurs or when controls fail. This includes welders, fabricators, apprentices, maintenance technicians, cleaners, machine operators, labourers, and any worker who may be unintentionally exposed through bystander contamination or poor segregation of workspaces.

Entries in this register will be securely held and may be used by GMB or Unionline to:

- Identify patterns of unsafe practice
- Support collective bargaining around health and safety
- Strengthen grievances and health & safety reports
- Assist with legal claims relating to industrial disease

By completing this register, members help ensure that exposure risks—especially those as serious as welding fume inhalation—are properly recognised, challenged, and prevented.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PD9HL6M

We urge all members to use this new Register as appropriate.

In solidarity,

Charlotte Brumpton-Childs, Acting National Secretary

Matt Roberts, National Officer