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NEWS RELEASE

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ATTORNEY GENERAL DELIVERS OPENING ADDRESS AT RE-HEARING OF FORMAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE LOSS OF THE GAUL

Addressing the Wreck Commissioner at the conclusion of his opening speech at the Re-Hearing of the Formal Investigation into the loss of MV Gaul today, the Attorney General Lord Goldsmith said:

“Although the tragedy occurred nearly 30 years ago, it has not been forgotten.” He reminded the Wreck Commissioner, Mr Justice Steel, that the purpose of the Inquiry is to establish how the Gaul was lost. “As Attorney General, I have no interest in the outcome of the Formal Investigation other than to seek to ensure that you are able to arrive at the truth, whatever the truth may be.”

He outlined the evidence to be called. In the course of his opening address Lord Goldsmith summarised the evidence of two surveys in 1998 and 2002, which findings had not been available to the original Formal Investigation. He said that the public open hearing was the culmination of all the extensive investigative work carried out. He went on to say:

“I would like to say a few more personal words. Whilst the purpose of this Inquiry is to try to find out how the Gaul was lost, that loss, first and foremost, was and remains a tragedy for the bereaved families. I cannot conclude this opening without extending my own personal sympathy to them. I have already mentioned how they have campaigned for the wreck of the Gaul to be investigated and for their questions about the loss of the ship to be answered. That we are here today is in part a tribute to their determination to find an explanation for a loss which seemed inexplicable. The purpose of this Inquiry is to discover the truth behind the loss. In doing so, you will be assisted both by Mr Meeson and by Counsel appointed to represent the Master, Mate and crew and I know that you will examine the matter thoroughly.” Lord Goldsmith told the Commissioner that new evidence, not available to the original Inquiry, would enable him now to reach a conclusion

about how the ship was lost. "My hope is that this will provide some comfort to the relatives of those sadly lost with her."

Notes for editors

1. The Attorney General, Lord Goldsmith, opened the Re-Opened Formal Investigation into the loss of MV Gaul at 10.30 on Tuesday 13 January 2004 at Europa House in Hull. A transcript of the Attorney General's address will be available on www.fv-gaul.org.uk For further information, call Trish O'Donnell, Senior Press Officer at the Attorney General's Chambers, on 020 7270 2465, or Martin Green, Government News Network, Leeds on 0113 283 6594.
2. The re-hearing of the Formal Investigation was ordered by the then Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions John Prescott on 14 April 1999.
3. The Inquiry is being held under Part 11 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 Section 269 re-hearing of and appeal from investigations.
4. The Merchant Shipping (Formal Investigations) Rules 1985 defines that, where the Secretary of State has directed a Formal Investigation to be held, he shall remit the case to the Attorney General, and thereafter the preparation and presentation of the case shall be conducted by the Treasury Solicitor under the direction of the Attorney General.
5. Mr Meeson is Counsel to the Inquiry.