Admiralty Information Overlay

Introduction
As a part of the Admiralty Vector Chart Service (AVCS) product package, UKHO offers their customers the product called Admiralty Information Overlay (AIO). The AIO is an overlay service produced to inform ENC users of temporary and preliminary (T & P) updates to their products. The AIO service is produced and distributed as an additional layer (S-57 format) to ENCs, usable only on compatible equipment. For more details, see
https://www.ukho.gov.uk/ProductsandServices/ElectronicCharts/Documents/AVCS/Admiralty-Information-Overlay-User-Guide-v1-0.pdf

Description/Analysis
Based on guidelines from the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), regarding updates of ENC, the Norwegian Hydrographic Service (NHS) distributes all updates (including T & P) to our customers. NHS produces updates based on guidelines from the IHO (IHO S-65) with updates integrated in the products. This makes the ENC a better product, and all T & P updates have the same quality check as ordinary updates.

T & P updates were included as an official part of NHS's service 1ˢᵗ April 2012. All NHS ENCs are updated with still valid updates set in force earlier than 1ˢᵗ April 2012

NHS has assessed a few AIOs related to ENCs issued by Norway. We discovered some misleading or erroneous information in the overlay, in addition to some layout solutions making the chart display less readable. However, our main concern related to the AIO service is that the users must respond to duplicated information, which can be confusing and might create dangerous situations due to a mismatch in presentation.

SHOM has conducted an equivalent exploratory assessment for ENCs issued by France, and also by other nations, and has detected some anomalies. A comprehensive document was presented at the IRCC6 meeting in May 2014, see
http://www.iho.int/mtg_docs/com_wg/IRCC/IRCC6/IRCC6-08B-Relevance_of_AIO.pdf
The following is copied from the conclusions made by France:
"The relevance and the quality of the Admiralty Information Overlay service is becoming a matter of concern for the IHO ENC Producers as this service challenges the quality of the official ENCs. Priority should be given to ensure that the mariners do not face ambiguities in the global official IHO ENC Service. Stakeholders (HOs, End-User Service Providers, mariners, ECDIS manufacturers), should be invited to consider at a larger scale whether or not information overlay services should be either improved or generalized to become an IHO standard or at the end abandoned as soon as all T&P NtM are coded in ENCs."

Conclusion
Based on the evaluation of the AVCS overlay service NHS has concluded that the AIO is an unnecessary product for the NHS ENCs. Consequently, NHS has requested the UKHO to stop producing and distributing AIO for Norwegian ENCs.

Action required of NHC:
The NHC is invited to:
- note this paper
- express any experience or opinion about a overlay service for P&T messages.