



## Department for Transport

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St I From the Parliamentary  
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1 July 2020

Dear Graham,

I am delighted to write to you and welcome you as Chair of the Maritime Skills Commission (MSC), a key recommendation of the Maritime 2050 strategy. The position of Chair will be a two-year appointment with the opportunity for reappointment. This is a critical time for the UK's maritime sector as we look towards recovery of the sector from the COVID 19 pandemic, and also build on the opportunities with emerging new technologies as we strive to deliver the ambitions of Maritime 2050.

At the heart of the strategy is a vision for the industry's workforce. Prior to the COVID 19 pandemic, our ambition was to grow our maritime workforce, ensuring we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time and the throughput of talent needed to serve all parts of the maritime sector. This ambition remains but we must also take stock of how the pandemic has impacted our current and future skills needs and what we need to do to ensure we maintain our position as a global maritime leader in this area.

The MSC's work and recommendations will be instrumental in helping to deliver this vision, building on the foundations made by Maritime UK's People and Skills Forum to improve the sector's understanding of its skills needs. The MSC will cover the entire UK maritime sector, bringing together leading maritime skills experts and academics, ensuring voices are heard from all parts of the sector – both at sea and ashore.

The MSC will report to both me, as the Maritime Minister, and the Maritime UK National Council. It will provide an annual report updating on the progress against the relevant Maritime 2050 people chapter recommendations (see annex A) and provide a stocktake of the skills needs of the sector, highlighting any parts of the sector with significant constraints in its ability to recruit and retain the talent it needs – particularly in light of the COVID 19

pandemic. These interim reports will identify actions and owners and the factors that might impact their delivery. In addition to this, and on a 5-yearly basis, the MSC will provide a state of the nation style report highlighting the opportunities and risks looking ahead to 2050 and what forward planning in the people landscape is needed in order to ensure the UK is able to capitalise on opportunities and mitigate against potential risks.

In terms of success criteria I want to see the Commission:

1. understanding the skills needs of the sector, including the effects of technological change, and making recommendations for action
2. ensuring that no part of the sector suffers from serious skills shortages or skills gaps
3. ensuring that the sector has the apprenticeships and qualifications it needs
4. ensuring that the sector has the training provision it needs (including the use of technology to engage learners and keep costs down)
5. providing employers and individuals with clear information about career paths and re-training options
6. ensuring that employers have good quality recruits for their vacancies through effective promotion of maritime careers
7. increasing exports of maritime education and training

I would be grateful if you would report progress against those criteria. I would be happy to consider any representations from you in due course on other areas you identify as suitable for consideration.

I do not wish to be prescriptive in setting out how the MSC should operate. Instead, I am asking you, as Chair of the MSC, to bring together Maritime UK and the existing Chairs of the People and Skills Forum, the Maritime Careers Taskforce, the Women in Maritime Taskforce (expanding to become the Diversity in Maritime Taskforce in time) and the Secretary of the Maritime Skills Alliance to discuss:

1. how the MSC should be structured and interact with other groups
2. the MSC's membership, which I recommend is kept to a manageable size so that meetings are meaningful and outcomes achievable,
3. how the MSC will operate in terms of meeting frequency
4. how the MSC will listen to and communicate with the rest of the sector
5. options for resourcing the Commission for the longer-term

I would welcome the MSC's first assessment of the sector's skills needs by October 2020. However, by the end of July 2020 I would welcome an update on the membership of the MSC as well as information on how it will operate. I would also like to invite the MSC to scope out a review of the Support for Maritime Training (SMarT) scheme and report back to me by the end of July

too. Brian Johnson, Chief Executive of the MCA, will write separately setting out further information on this and the priority areas to focus on.

Maritime UK will provide the secretariat for the MSC and to enable the MSC to commence work and recruit a programme manager, my Department paid a grant of £300,000 to Maritime UK. This grant was a one-off payment for the financial year ending 5<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

I look forward to meeting you in person in the future and working with you and the sector as we strive to create our maritime workforce of the future and recover from the COVID 19 pandemic.

I am copying this letter to Harry Theochari, Chairman of Maritime UK, whose assistance and support in the creation of the Maritime Skills Commission I very much welcome.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kelly Tolhurst". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**KELLY TOLHURST MP  
MINISTER FOR AVIATION, MARITIME AND SECURITY**

The Maritime 2050 People chapter contains three specific recommendations relating to the MSC. They are as follows:

1. Government aims to establish a Maritime Skills Commission bringing existing leading maritime skills experts together, to report on the existing and future skills needs of the industry on a 5-yearly cycle, to inform the maritime training curriculum and keep it up to date with the evolving needs of the sector.
2. The Maritime Skills Commission will be tasked with overseeing the identification of opportunities for the UK maritime sector to access reskilling programmes, ensuring the workforce can take advantage of a wide range of initiatives.
3. The Maritime Skills Commission will, working with maritime training bodies, consider how to ensure professional development plans are built into training programmes across all roles so trainees know from the outset the routes available to them and the qualifications needed.

The MSC will also want to monitor progress of the other People chapter recommendations, particularly those that will impact future training, in both delivery and design. I will ensure that my Department keeps you informed. These include:

1. Government, industry, and academia to jointly establish an internet connectivity working group to identify action needed to drive internet connectivity at sea in support of social care and continuous education. [Short term: 1-5 years]
2. Through to 2050, the UK to play a leading role at IMO and ILO, in setting the global framework for maritime training and skills, and positioning the UK as the world leader. [Long terms: 15+ years]
3. UK will develop cutting edge seafarer training maximising the use of future technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality. [Medium term: 5-15 year timeframe]

The MSC will also want to establish with the Maritime Careers Taskforce the best course of action for delivery of the following recommendation:

1. Put in place a clear and universally supported careers promotion plan that achieves an outcome of UK employees being listed in the top five maritime nations' listings.

The creation of the MSC will take, as one of its core elements, reporting on potential technological development across the sector and the implications

resulting from it for our maritime workforce. It will therefore want to consider progress against the following Maritime 2050 Technology Chapter recommendations:

1. Developing mentoring schemes between the maritime sector and technology experts from beyond the sector.
2. Support the launch of an industry marketing campaign to promote the UK maritime sector in schools as an exciting and innovative place to work.
3. Ensure the Maritime Skills Commission assesses training requirements and skills needs of the sector, in the context of technological developments such as maritime autonomy.