

Maritime Futures: The Future People Agenda

1. Background:

The Maritime Futures programme, organised by Maritime UK in partnership with BMT, seeks to understand the future shape of the UK maritime sector through the exploration of a broad range of drivers of change and attempting to ascertain which factors will have the greatest impact.

A Maritime Futures workshop exploring skills in the maritime sector was last held in 2018 and informed the workstream of the Maritime UK People and Skills Forum. The report from the event concluded:

“The challenge is we need a sector-wide approach to the capabilities that we require for the future which encompasses new and emergent technologies, new production methods (for example robotics), a changing industrial base focussed on rapid innovation, arguably driven by highly agile and responsive organisations many of which will be SMEs. The future isn’t a straight line; we need to build a resilient and agile workforce capable of responding to changes.”

Since the previous Maritime Futures workshop on the subject, the maritime sector has seen fundamental changes in the ways people work, and in the working environments of maritime workers, both onshore and at sea. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 also has and will continue to have a significant impact within this area.

Both the impact of technological developments and the ongoing pandemic highlighted a need to, once again, examine the topic of ‘future people agenda’. A workshop titled ‘Maritime Futures: the Future People Agenda’ was held in July 2020 and sought to provide an overview of the range of initiatives focused on people and skills in the maritime sector and provide a forum for the initial discussion of key challenges in the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since the original workshop held in 2018, a number of initiatives and sector-wide programmes specifically focused on people and skills have been established, and the intention of the Maritime Futures programme is not to lead on, but to supply ideas for this work.

Significant initiatives include:

- Maritime Skills Commission
- Maritime Careers Taskforce and Maritime Careers campaign
- Diversity in Maritime Taskforce and associated networks
- Publication of the Department for Transport's Maritime 2050 Strategy and People Route Map
- Work underway in the Maritime Enterprise Working Group responding to the National Shipbuilding Strategy

In addition to these significant initiatives, people and skills is a significant component of the Maritime Sector Recovery Plan, published by Maritime UK as a response to the initial outbreak of the pandemic. The document, which details desired action from both government and industry, outlines necessary efforts to re-appraise labour needs and working practices, examining the effects of Covid-19 on working life and unemployment, as well as the need to enrich and diversify the workforce to tackle future challenges.

2. Maritime Futures: The Future People Agenda Workshop, 28 July 2020

a) Workshop agenda and objectives

Workshop agenda:

1. Introduction – Richard Westgarth
2. Workshop objectives - Richard Westgarth
3. Government context: DfT People Route Map - Kerry Hourihan, Department for Transport
4. Industry context: Maritime Skills Commission and related activity - Karen Waltham, Maritime Skills Commission
5. Short term factors of change - Richard Westgarth
6. Long term factors of change - Richard Westgarth
7. Discussion: The Future People Agenda

The objectives for the workshop were:

- To discuss and identify key priority areas for the UK's maritime sector related to people and skills over the coming years
- To identify recommended actions for those working within this area for the maritime sector, such as DfT and the Maritime Skills Commission
- Focus on COVID-19 recovery, but also the very long term, as set out in Maritime 2050

The intention of the workshop was to result in a post-event report setting out ambitions within this area that could inform the work of various cross-sector working groups.

b) Presentations:

Department for Transport

Kerry Hourihan, Head of Maritime Skills and Training at DfT provided an overview of the current work of the Department to develop a Covid-19 recovery plan ('Route Map'), and highlighted the following asks made by the maritime industries through the DfT-led Restart and Recovery Working and Steering Group as well as through Maritime UK's Sector Recovery Plan;

Fiscal:

- Funding for a study into the diversity of the maritime sector
- Funding for the Maritime Skills Commission and Diversity in Maritime programme beyond the year-one grants already granted.

Non-fiscal:

- Increased focus on skills and training
- Increase flexibility in MCA training requirements
- Extension of the apprenticeship levy period in which levy funds may be used from two to three years and explore whether apprentice salaries can be subsidised
- Undertake a SMarT Review (the MCA are currently exploring what such a review could entail)
- Understanding the sector's current and future skills needs. This work is already underway through the Maritime Skills Commission's first assessment.

Employment and workforce:

- Ensure the sector is able to attract the best global talent.
- Fast track flexible working visas for company sponsored individuals, widening the talent pool for UK shipping businesses and increasing flexibility for international companies relocating to the UK.
- Prioritise international travel for maritime workers and students to study in the UK.
- Develop a social framework that lays out UK expectations for welfare of the UK maritime workforce.
- At ILO propose reforms to the Maritime Labour Convention which strengthen international regulations governing seafarer fatigue, welfare, pay and mental health.

- Home Office to extend points-based immigration system for seafarer rating grades. – Already agreed under SOC Code 8232 for ratings and 3513 for officers.

Maritime Skills Commission

Karen Waltham, Commissioner in the Maritime Skills Commission, provided an overview of the industry context for the MSC and the aims of the group.

The aims of the MSC are:

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

c) Short and long term drivers of change

Richard Westgarth provided a brief overview of the short term challenges related to skills anticipated through Maritime UK's Sector Recovery Plan, which examines the recovery of the sector following the initial outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in three stages: restart, recover and renew. The document sets out recommendations for industry and government and makes explicit reference to industry initiatives such as the MSC, Maritime Careers and Diversity in Maritime programmes. 'People' is a key priority for the recovery of the sector alongside innovation, environment, regional growth and competitiveness.

An overview was also provided of some of the key drivers of change in the longer term, both for the maritime sector and for the economy as a whole. These were thought to be:

- Smart technology and autonomous systems, and changing workplace structures and needs related to the introduction of these technologies
- Digitalisation (impact on skills needs, shift patterns and so on)

- Diversity (opening opportunities to a broader base of people)
- Decarbonisation and sustainability (new technologies, skills needed to handle new processes)



The third decade of the 21st Century - a dynamic if not turbulent future



Impact of COVID-19 is causing everyone to revisit the "global norms"



Pandemic, coupled with Fourth Industrial Revolution technology will accelerate change



Changing trade policies, (BREXIT, US America First and China's belt and road)



An increasingly digital, interconnected cyber world



Volatility



Changing populations continue the move to cities - and most of the biggest cities are ports



Resilience and connectivity as new priorities as we adjust to this unpredictable future.



The green agenda, net zero challenge is driving society towards sustainable solutions.

3. Discussion and priorities

A discussion was held amongst workshop participants regarding important factors of considerations and potential issues when considering the future skills needs of the maritime sector in the UK. The following key points were raised:

International competition:

- There is a need to ensure that UK regulations and policy is created with an awareness of the ways in which policies in other countries differ, especially in regard to seafarers who work internationally. Salaries must be competitive, both domestically and internationally. Key to ensuring international competitiveness for the UK maritime sector is understanding the skills needs and gaps that currently exists and that will exist in the future.

Recommendation: The Maritime Skills Commission should consider benchmarking UK skills, salaries and future skills demand against other nations.

Transferable skills and career-level recruitment:

- Following the rising unemployment as a result of the initial outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, it will be important to understand how skills can be transferred across to the UK maritime sector, and how job-seekers can be attracted to the sector. This applies to roles both on shore and at sea. Skills should be taught to people so they can build a career within the maritime sector, this would also include cross-sector recruitment, i.e. seafarers coming ashore to work in maritime roles on land.

Recommendation: The Maritime UK People and Skills Forum should consider short term opportunities to engage with and recruit from adjacent sectors against current known shortages.

Digitalisation and COVID

- The outbreak of the pandemic in early 2020 has worked as an accelerator to digitalisation and associated changes. The maritime sector has been forced to adapt at a more rapid pace, but there are seen to be opportunities within this space to attract larger numbers of jobseekers to maritime roles across the sector. With the growing demand for digital skills across the sector, a survey should be conducted to establish the medium- and long-term potential demand across all areas of the sector, in a similar way that other sectors have developed national digital skills strategies.

Recommendation: The MSC should consider developing a national maritime skills strategy for digital skills.

Connectivity at sea:

- Better connectivity at sea would make seafaring roles more attractive to young jobseekers and has been proven to have mental health benefits and increase the time people spend in seafaring roles. Increased connectivity could also increase access to online training.

Recommendation: Maritime UK should request their Technology and Innovation Group / MarRI-UK to undertake a short study on the potential application of emerging technologies such as 5G and satellite solutions to establish future

seafarer connectivity requirements and develop a roadmap for implementing improved connectivity.

