



Maritime Skills Alliance evidence to the Transport Select Committee's Maritime 2050 inquiry

The Maritime Skills Alliance is a partnership of 18 organisations, formed in 2004, chaired independently, and covering all of the 'wet side' of the industry. We create and promote skills standards, including apprenticeships and qualifications, and support a wide range of other activities to increase commitment to investment in people and skills across the sector. We also convene Maritime UK's People and Skills Forum.

We are funded wholly by our members and receive no financial support from the Government.

Our members are: Border Force Maritime Command • British Marine • British Tugowners Association • Company of Watermen and Lightermen • International Jack Up Barge Operators' Association • International Association of Maritime Institutions • Maritime and Coastguard Agency • Marine Society and Sea Cadets • Merchant Navy Training Board • MYBA The Worldwide Yachting Association • Port Skills and Safety • Royal National Lifeboat Institution • Royal Navy • Royal Yachting Association • Sea Fish Industry Authority • Thames Skills Academy • The Seafarers' Charity • Workboat Association

[Maritime 2050 remains relevant](#)

Much has happened since our then Chairman, Nigel Palmer, gave oral evidence to the Committee in 2013. We welcomed the Maritime 2050 strategy and in particular the strong recognition of the importance of "people" to the sector, both in the main document itself and in the subsequent People Route Map. That focus has helped both to raise the level of activity, and to improve its effectiveness. The framework set out through Maritime 2050 remains right and relevant, and helps to focus effort while providing sufficient flexibility to enable both us and our partners to tailor our work as circumstances change.

[The Commission has got off to a very good start](#)

The then Maritime Minister provided the Maritime Skills Commission with a clear remit, derived directly from the Maritime 2050 People Route Map, and initial funding of £250,000. With good leadership by Prof. Graham Baldwin the Commission has got off to a very good start, producing a series of reports which focus attention in the right places, with a strong mix of challenge and recommendations. It will be important to keep up the momentum, and that requires effective resourcing.

[Resourcing "the people side" remains a challenge](#)

Between us we have made good use of the limited funding available, for the Maritime Skills Commission, and for the careers and diversity work coordinated by Maritime UK. Grateful as we are, however, we are conscious that this work has relied on a series of one-off grants, with no certainty about the future.

Though the MSA itself is paid for entirely by members' subscriptions we think that the prospects for business finding hard cash to support a more substantial maritime skills body on the lines that other sectors like rail have, are very limited.

The Committee should note, however, the large amounts of time committed by employers, for example in the painstaking work needed to define, refine and keep up-to-date skills and apprenticeship standards. None of that contribution is quantified, but it is substantial, and given willingly.

[The sector's "People" bodies work well with each other](#)

We were pleased that our Secretary was appointed as a Commissioner with the Maritime Skills Commission and that both he and our Chair are members of the Commission's Chairs' Group. Through that group all the various "people" bodies in the sector, including the Department for Transport, ensure that their work aligns, complements and supports each other. Arrangements may look complicated from the outside, but the coordination works and levels of cooperation and joint working are very high. The Maritime Skills Alliance has been successful in bringing, what can be very different parts of the sector together to ensure that our voice is a common one. This has helped to develop a positive working relationship with bodies such as the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, the Department for Transport, the Maritime Coastguard Agency and many other essential bodies.

[We have developed a good working relationship with the Institute for Apprenticeships](#)

The MSA has done a good deal of work in recent years to create new apprenticeship Standards with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, an agency of the Department for Education. The Institute is a new body, and a new regulator, and it has taken a lot of effort on all sides to ensure that we have a workable relationship between the IfA's requirements for assessing competence, and the existing requirements of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. This is not work which lends itself to headlines, but the Institute for Apprenticeships has proven itself a strong partner, listening carefully to us when we said that we need something tailored to our circumstances – which is exactly what we said we needed in our evidence to this Committee in 2013. The IfA's predecessors were not listening then, but they are now. They have used the maritime sector (alongside nursing) as a model in changing their approach to assessment in regulated sectors, and we commend them for their work.

[We are wary, however, of the constant need to protect our qualifications](#)

We have a constant challenge to protect the regulated qualifications we use from challenges to their existence (strictly, their funding). Whatever the merits of the Department for Education's challenge to the range and nature of qualifications in other parts of the economy, those challenges do not fit at all well the relatively small volumes, and certainly niche nature, of maritime provision.

[Winning widespread commitment to investing in people remains a challenge](#)

The big challenge in skills is, as it has been for decades, how to get the "long tail" of companies to see the value of investing in their people. The best employers do it very well, and there are some exceptional examples in the maritime sector which would stand comparison with any in the economy. But the maritime sector, like all others, and especially other heavily-regulated sectors, has too many employers who rely on short-term palliatives rather than long-term investment.

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Chair
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