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Maritime Skills Alliance response to the Maritime Growth Study Review, February 2017

The Maritime Skills Alliance creates and promotes apprenticeships and qualifications for the wider maritime sector. We are funded by our 18 members, a uniquely broad mix:

- Border Force
- British Marine Federation
- 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
- National Workboat Association
- Port Skills and Safety
- Royal National Lifeboat Institution
- Royal Navy
- Royal Yachting Association
- Seafarers UK
- Sea Fish Industry Authority
- Thames Skills Academy

The MSA now also chairs the People and Skills Steering Group within Maritime UK. The group has responsibility for taking forward Maritime UK's interest in the nine Growth Study recommendations which focus on skills and education.

We are responding to the Transport Select Committee's request for comments on the Maritime Growth Study, which is being looked at again in the light of experience and of events since publication, not least the vote to leave the EU.

We offer three general observations, then consider the recommendations made and how they might be updated.

We are making progress

Our first observation is that for those of us involved in next steps the Growth Study feels like a live document which *is* doing its job of influencing behaviour for the better. One indicator which supports that assertion is the close working between Maritime UK and the Department for Transport. It no longer feels appropriate (at least for the nine skills recommendations which are our primary interest) to divide lead responsibility for different recommendations between Government and 'the industry lead body' as the Growth Study did.

Taking a broad view of the sector

Our second picks up one of the two main points we made in our evidence to the Growth Study team, which we headlined “cast your net wider”. We were concerned that the original brief defined the sector too narrowly. The published report did take a notably wider view, particularly when it considered how employees move in an open labour market, and the work to implement the recommendations has continued that trend. There is much more to do, but we are encouraged.

Exporting our expertise

Our third observation picks up the other point we made in our evidence 18 months ago, which was that the UK should “cherish and promote maritime training”. With the spotlight now very clearly on exports in the wake of the referendum to leave the EU, we think it would be right to add a recommendation around exporting our world-renowned expertise in maritime training.

Given the nature of the opportunities overseas that would be best done by considering all of the UK’s ‘intellectual assets’ together – training, research and consultancy, across the full breadth of the maritime and marine sectors, and at every stage from initial training through continuing professional development to higher level qualifications. We have a great story to tell, and great opportunities.

Capitalising on that story, however, will require some work to overcome current obstacles. In particular, we will need to ensure that our colleges and universities can work within a stable and supportive visa regime which recognises the realities of a highly-mobile worldwide workforce.

The Recommendations

Taking each of the nine skills and education recommendations in turn:

7: Seafarer Projections Review. The immediate job (publishing the review) has been done. In the spirit of the recommendation, and with an eye to the longer term, we have set up a “Workforce Evidence Group” under the wing of Maritime UK. Convened by the MSA, it will “advance the use of robust evidence about the number and characteristics of the future workforce required by the UK’s maritime and marine sector”. We plan to start with a seminar on the Seafarer Projections Review.

8: Future Skills. On behalf of Maritime UK the MSA is taking the lead on the strategy recommended here, re-focusing it as a broader “People Strategy” rather than more narrowly on skills. It will sit with its own strategic ambition to ensure that “increased numbers of people enter and build their careers in the sector, at sea and on shore”. Publication of the Seafarer Projections Review gives us the central piece for our evidence base, and publication of Maritime UK’s Strategic Plan sets the strategic framework, so this work will start shortly.

9: SMarT Review. We support the SMarT+ proposal and await the Minister’s announcement.

10: Maritime Skills Investment Fund. The recommendation for a voluntary levy is the most difficult of these nine recommendations, not just because of the problems inherent in any voluntary levy, but also because the Government has instituted an Apprenticeship Levy since the recommendation was framed. There is something in the idea, however, and we think it would be wrong to give up too easily without at least some serious consideration of the options.

11: Apprenticeships. Though the process of creating new apprenticeships has been far more troublesome than it should have been, all the necessary work is in hand and the priority now is to shift the emphasis towards encouraging employers to employ apprentices. We are working towards the publication by DfT and Maritime UK of a short booklet on apprenticeships, reporting action to date, featuring three of the best examples as case studies (DFDS for ratings, ABP for Port Marine Operations, Berthon for boatbuilding), and telling the good story which is there to tell.

12 + 13 + 14: Mentoring / Education / Awareness. We think it would be better to treat these recommendations together, with the main focus on the *energetic* promotion of careers in the sector in order to attract and retain talented people to them. (We use the word 'retain' here deliberately to cover the agenda around helping people move ashore, recently illuminated by *Project Ulysses*, and certainly including work to improve connectivity at sea so that seafarers can do formal learning there if they wish to). Subsidiary actions then serve that bigger goal. We are pleased that Maritime UK is planning to promote a 'Sector Deal' in response to the Government's Industrial Strategy and see an opportunity within that to address the proper resourcing of careers promotion for the whole sector.

15: Royal Navy. It is a sobering fact that just 12% of former Royal Navy personnel go on to work in the wider maritime sector when they leave - and a real missed opportunity. The Royal Navy obviously does not wish to encourage anyone to leave prematurely, but we very much support their work to identify more effective ways to encourage personnel who are leaving to think about working in the civilian maritime and marine sectors.

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