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Maritime Education and Training in Scotland

**A report to
Glasgow College of Nautical Studies
and its partners**

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Research House, Fraser Road, Perivale,
Middlesex, UB6 7AQ

020 8537 3240

iaian@themackinnonpartnership.co.uk

www.themackinnonpartnership.co.uk

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Maritime Education and Training in Scotland project, funded by the Scottish Funding Council for Further and Higher Education, sought to research both the supply and demand sides of the education and training market in Scotland for the maritime sector, very broadly defined. The project was managed by the Maritime Skills Alliance (the UK-wide Sector Skills Body, recognised by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills) and guided by a broad-based Steering Group convened by Glasgow College of Nautical Studies. Membership of the Steering Group is listed at Appendix A.
- 1.2 The partners commissioned The Mackinnon Partnership to undertake this research on their behalf. Our work consisted of three stages, each of which was preceded and followed by a meeting of the Steering Group:
- April / May 2008: mapping the supply side: education and training across Scotland supplied to maritime employers in the Merchant Navy, ports, fishing and maritime leisure sectors;
 - May / July 2008: qualitative interviews with a sample of maritime employers;
 - July / August 2008: analysis, to draw out conclusions and recommendations, followed by discussion of the draft report at the August Steering Group meeting, subsequently incorporated into this report.
- 1.3 In this document we report the whole project. The 'map' of the supply side is published separately as an appendix to this document, as it is so large, and this document therefore primarily consists of the report of our employer interviews, and our subsequent analysis, conclusions and recommendations.
- 1.4 We are grateful to members of the Steering Group for their guidance, and to those whom we have contacted, for their willingness to be helpful to the project.

2. The Supply Side Map

- 2.1 The supply side 'map' extends to over 200 pages, and is printed separately as an annex to this report. In the 'map' (a categorised list) we have attempted to identify publicly-available training provision based in Scotland, or (for e-learning only) available to employers based in Scotland. It is very clear that many Scottish employers within the maritime sector source training from outwith Scotland, particularly from specialist maritime colleges in England and notably Warsash Maritime Academy and South Tyneside College – but we have excluded providers outside Scotland from this review.
- 2.2 We followed two processes to collect and categorise robust data on the supply side:
- collection of data from published sources, including the internet;
 - requests to education and training providers to verify the data we collected that way, with an additional request to fill gaps, for example for drop-out rates. (As there are well over 200 training centres in Scotland affiliated to the Royal Yachting Association we did not attempt to go to each of them individually, but simply reported information from the Association's comprehensive website).
- 2.3 The Steering Group has designed this review as a once-only exercise to inform this wider review of the current supply and demand for maritime education in Scotland, and does not plan to keep the information in the document up-to-date.
- 2.4 The map will, however, be made publicly available on appropriate websites.

The mapping document summarised

- 2.5 The map outlines the main providers of maritime training and education within Scotland. It provides information on each provider's location, contact details and a summary of each course that is offered. In addition, available course details are also included relating to qualification type, entry requirements, course duration, numbers of starters, numbers of completers, drop-out-rates as well as information about where participants go after completion.
- 2.6 This list does not claim to be exhaustive as the maritime training sector is constantly shifting. However it does provide a current snapshot of the major educational, vocational and leisure providers in the sector.

- 2.7 In total this map gives an overview of 107 training providers from a range of locations within Scotland. Table 2.1 shows the number of providers by region. These figures do not take into account the relative size of each institution. *[Note: if a provider has two training locations they have been counted in both regions, hence the total by region (109) exceeds the total number of training providers (107)]*

Table 2.1: Number of providers by region

Region	Number
Strathclyde	44
Grampian	14
Highlands	12
Central & Fife	11
Tayside	8
Lothian & Borders	8
Dumfries & Galloway	4
Northern Isles	4
Western Isles	4
Total	109

- 2.8 This document divides maritime education and training in Scotland into four distinct groups:

- **Higher education and further education colleges** - dominated by specialised departments offering a wide range of maritime courses ranging from lengthy officer training courses through to single day first aid and leisure courses. They tend to be located in rural areas with a specific catchment area for local maritime employees to access education. For more specialised courses, the catchment area is national or even international. There is very little provision of maritime education from universities in Scotland. Whilst there are significant contributions from a number of universities in subjects such as naval architecture and marine biology there are few courses run in the area focused on in this study.
- **Industry and vocational trainers** - comprising private training providers, group training associations and companies providing in-house training. These are training organisations that provide courses specifically tailored to meet the vocational requirements of employers. Many of these organisations provide multi-purpose training programmes found in other sectors (eg first aid, RYA powerboat qualifications). They also provide courses directly relating to a specific maritime industry (eg offshore working with dangerous goods, offshore crane operating).

Courses provided in this section are often legal or industrial pre-requisites for working in the sector, such as OPITO approved courses. Course lengths vary from a half day Minimum Offshore Training Standards Certificate to a nine-day General Operators Certificate. Due to the vocational nature of the courses they are also more likely to be designed to fit into employers' shift patterns (either full or part-time) as opposed to around a weekend period as can be seen in the leisure sector.

- **Leisure training providers** (subdivided into private, government and not-for-profit, and other RYA trainers) - Royal Yachting Association (RYA) courses are undertaken both for personal leisure / holiday purposes and as commercial vocational training. The RYA provides some guidance as to whether a course is most suited for professional or leisure purposes. If a course is being undertaken for professional purposes it is likely that it will be done in conjunction with another commercial course, for example MCA First Aid or Sea Survival courses. These courses combined provide the necessary skills for professional usage which would not be required in a leisure context.
- **e-learning providers** - includes courses that are taught using CD-Rom or online without a requirement for face-to-face learning. This list is not exhaustive because the potential scale of the list is worldwide. However, it does give a sample of the types of provision available.

2.9 Table 2.2 shows the numbers of each type of training provider. Although there are relatively few educational and vocational establishments (14 and 9 respectively), these tend to provide a larger number of courses and often with a longer duration than others.

Provider type	Number
Leisure - RYA	56
Leisure - Government and not-for-profit	16
HE and FE colleges	14
Industry and vocational trainers	9
Leisure - private-training-providers	9
E-learning	3
Total	107

3. Employers' Views

- 3.1 At its inaugural meeting on 10 April 2008, the Steering Group agreed that the second stage of the project would involve interviews with a sample of employers from the different sectors of the maritime industry in Scotland. The purpose of this stage of the project was to identify:
- future workforce skill needs
 - skills shortages, and reasons for them
 - skills gaps, and reasons for them
 - the relevance of existing qualifications, and their 'fitness for purpose'
 - the type of provision needed to address current and future skill needs.
- 3.2 At the second steering group meeting on 21 May members agreed that this stage of the research should be qualitative (ie with no attempt to identify a representative sample of employers which would enable quantitative conclusions to be drawn), suggested which employers might most helpfully be contacted, and subsequently helped with contact details and further suggestions. We conducted our interviews during June and July 2008, through a combination of telephone and face-to-face interviews designed to get maximum value for money from the budget allotted. We used the discussion prompts which are in Appendix B.
- 3.3 We are very grateful to all those who gave their time so willingly, especially those whom we interviewed face-to-face.
- 3.4 In this section we take in turn different parts of the maritime sector to report the views of employers we interviewed on education and training and the development of their workforces. We then look more analytically at the trends in what employers have said.

The Merchant Navy

- 3.5 Scotland faces the same issues around recruiting officer trainees (colloquially 'cadets') as the rest of the UK, but has in the recent past taken active steps to encourage interest in careers at sea, which has greatly increased numbers coming forward for training.

- 3.6 In time, this is likely to put pressure on colleges managing this training because there is a shortage of suitably-qualified instructors who are willing to accept the salary of a college lecturer (the current maximum of the salary scale is around £32,000 pa) when there are plenty alternative shore-based jobs in the booming maritime sector which pay better. Colleges are therefore increasingly relying on lecturers from overseas to fill vacancies, and effectively running with permanent vacancies.
- 3.7 Some employers of officer trainees are concerned that they are not taught sufficient practical skills. This covers both having sufficient sea time¹ as part of their training, and also a wide range of ‘soft skills’ such as communication and time management, much of which traditionally came through spending sufficient time at sea. Because these ‘soft skills’ are not recognised as part of STCW95 they do not get funded through Government training subsidies, and employers have to deal with them after the formal training has ended. There is therefore a view that the continuing training of junior officers deserves some state subsidy, because former officer trainees still require a good deal of expensive training before they are fully useful. (This is, of course, a UK-wide issue, not one particular to Scotland).
- 3.8 There are particular difficulties recruiting Merchant Navy officers with some specialist experience. We heard, for example, of one major company which received no responses when it sought to recruit tanker officers.

Simulators

- 3.9 Employers we interviewed were particularly interested in the availability of high quality training simulators, and especially their availability within Scotland. There was a powerful message that the simulator at South Tyneside College had the capability to link both engine-room and bridge simulators to enable ‘whole team’ training exercise to be undertaken, replicating much more realistically conditions on board ship. However, there is no equivalent opportunity to pair simulators in Scotland, and the South Tyneside simulator has to be booked three years in advance, which is obviously very inconvenient.
- 3.10 GCNS has considered upgrading its existing simulators (there are four: bridge, engine room, tanker and GMDSS²) to enable the linking available in South Tyneside, but has held back while plans for the college’s estates upgrade are settled. (The necessary upgrade would require a major increase in the physical space required: it is by no means just a software issue). This may mean that the opportunity is not realised until perhaps as late as 2015, and that interim upgrades are put in place in the meantime.

¹ And “recognised” sea time too: ie time at sea which meets MCA requirements: not all does.

² GMDSS: Global Maritime Distress and Safety System

Shore-based employment

- 3.11 In an interesting initiative, an employer-led, Scottish Enterprise-inspired, partnership has produced a Diploma in Ship Management, designed with and piloted by Glasgow College of Nautical Studies, competitively priced, and delivered and assessed remotely as e-learning. Staff within Caledonian MacBrayne who have taken up the opportunity are very positive about it and the company is keen to see all the modules of the qualification developed, as well as the link with Lloyds Register for external accreditation³ - and to have more employees within the company take it up. It is surprising therefore that it is only CalMac which has supported the pilot course.
- 3.12 The work on this Diploma complements work currently being co-ordinated by the Maritime Skills Alliance and the Merchant Navy Training Board to develop National Occupational Standards at management level for 'shore-based activities in the management and operation of ships'. This work draws on a recognition that there are fewer and fewer people available for senior management roles ashore which have traditionally been done by former Merchant Navy officers with considerable sea-going experience. It has therefore become increasingly important to identify the precise requirements for these roles, to support the effective training and development into them of employees from non-traditional backgrounds.
- 3.13 As with so much of this review, however, there are many small pockets of particular need which are hard to aggregate into sufficient numbers to make a viable training course. The recent development of the Maritime Studies suite of qualifications may be a useful contribution to this need once they become well known.
- 3.14 Western Ferries is a good example. It employs 58 staff to run a ferry service between Gourock and Dunoon. Three are directors and five administrators: the rest work on the boats or at the two terminals. Each ferry is crewed by a Master, an engineer and two deck hands. The company has no training department.
- 3.15 With such tight staffing it has taken some scheduling to enable two of the Masters to go on a two-day safety managers course at Warsash Maritime Academy this autumn – and that arrangement is subject to short-term change to meet operational requirements. The company thinks that the course is available in Scotland, but on dates which are not suitable.
- 3.16 Because the company's needs are low volume, irregular, and very specific, it has not attempted to build a relationship with any particular college or training provider, and it sees prospect of being able to get courses tailored to its needs.

³ We understand that GCNS is also exploring SVQ/NVQ accreditation

3.17 Immediate considerations are training in ‘disability awareness’ (recognising that scope for action is very much less on these small ferries), and ‘crowd management’ – recognising with the latter that even on the busiest days the crowds concerned are much smaller, and less troublesome, than those for whom existing ‘crowd management’ courses are designed⁴. The company made an arrangement with Clyde Marine in the end to tailor an existing course.

Other sub-sectors

3.18 We heard a number of concerns that existing Merchant Navy training does not properly recognise the particular needs of different sub-sectors, such as workboats, tugs and the off-shore sector. Much training, and the MCA requirements on which it is based, rely on a rather traditional model of how ships work which is drawn from the deep sea Merchant Navy and does not fit the reality of many sub-sectors. Consequently, we heard training for the off-shore sector, for example, described as ‘fragmented’, much to employers’ disadvantage.

3.19 For most members of the Emergency Response and Rescue Vehicle Association (ERRVA), Banff and Buchan College provides a reliable and well-respected solution to training needs, particularly for their officer trainee schemes. Members are aware of the many private training providers active in the sector, but tend to be rather sceptical of them, seeing too much emphasis on volume and too little on effective teaching.

3.20 However, ERRV jobs are less appealing than others in off-shore sector as they do not pay as well as jobs in oil and gas, and require 28-day off-shore shifts. Operators are therefore reluctant to spend money on training staff only to lose them to more lucrative jobs. Increasingly, therefore, employees come from Eastern Europe. They are reported to have good English and to be better trained than British colleagues.

3.21 Where training is done, operators are keen that through steadily-increasing intensity it should get as close as possible to the reality of the situations in which workers will find themselves.

3.22 The workboats sector, too, is keen to see training designed with its particular needs in mind, and employers note that few trainers have experience of workboats. Employers and their representative organisations in the tugs and workboats sectors plan to meet in the autumn, with the MCA, to discuss new certification appropriate for the sector.

⁴ The principles are likely to be the same, of course, and fewer crew are available to handle these smaller numbers. As so often, *perceived* difference of training need matters as much as reality.

- 3.23 There is interest in developing intermediary certifications or modular courses to fill the gap between the basic Officer of the Watch and Master Mariners, and to explore the scope for e-learning, in recognition of the practical difficulties of releasing senior people in small companies.
- 3.24 Workboat employers use a variety of colleges across Britain - GCNS, Warsash and South Tyneside were named - typically using one rather than another simply to meet a pressing need at short notice. The National Workboats Association is conscious that some courses struggle to get sufficient numbers to make them commercial propositions for the colleges involved.
- 3.25 One development which may affect the scale of the UK market is the growing interest in off-shore windfarms. Though the market is developing more slowly than some predicted, workboats are being designed and manufactured specifically for this market. The Association would therefore like to see appropriate training developed in parallel.
- 3.26 The Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency made a similar point to us about the importance of urgency in determining how and where training is undertaken. If a need is particularly pressing, the Agency will use any college anywhere in Britain to get the course it needs at the earliest opportunity. However, if time is not a constraint, the Agency prefers to buy training locally, which typically means (because most marine staff are based in Greenock) Glasgow College of Nautical Studies, and sometimes Lews Castle College in Stornoway (which is a cheaper flight away than Southampton).
- 3.27 The Northern Lighthouse Board, as another modest-sized employer requiring a range of specialist skills, typically recruits highly-qualified and experienced mariners, and tops up through short courses as required.

Ports

- 3.28 Scale and location make a huge difference when considering the needs of employers in the ports sector. Forth Ports, for example, is the largest ports company quoted on the London Stock Exchange, a £165m turnover business which owns six ports in Scotland including Grangemouth and Leith, plus Tilbury in England, runs graduate and apprentice programmes, and employs over 300 trained stevedores in its Scottish ports alone. Aberdeen Harbour Board, by contrast, employs a total of 130, and Scrabster Harbour Trust 17.

- 3.29 Forth Ports is committed to training and has designed what it calls “progression routes” to cover both statutory requirements and other training which the company deems to be valuable. The company uses a mixture of colleges, private companies and in-house training to fulfil its needs under this regime, and has designed a good deal of the competence matrix itself. The company currently brings in external trainers to save on costs (‘tens of thousands of pounds’) of sending large numbers of employees to colleges.
- 3.30 Forth Ports would prefer to be able to work with a smaller number of providers, particularly if a single college was able to provide most of what it wants and was willing to develop standards and courses in partnership. A relationship with a college in Scotland would enable the company to save much of the money it now spends sending employees to England (South Tyneside and North Kent colleges).
- 3.31 The great majority of Aberdeen Harbour Board’s ports employees previously served in the Merchant Navy. Because they have a good deal of relevant experience, training is primarily carried out in-house on working ships, with little additional formal training. Aberdeen harbour also has a low turnover rate: employees tend to stay a long time, and the harbour typically employs only one new person a year, replacing someone who has left.
- 3.32 Aberdeen Harbour Board has bought its own training simulator as there was no satisfactory alternative locally. The Board also hires out the simulator to two private training providers, Seacraft Marine and Petrofac (previously RGIT Montrose), selected through open tender. Training is also bought in through trainers visiting the harbour.
- 3.33 The Board has recently trained half a dozen employees on a two-week course in Vessel Traffic Services at South Tyneside College. We were told that the college struggles to fill these courses even though it recruits internationally to do so. The market for the course is very limited, and once staff have been trained the only continuing need is for a three day refresher course every five years.
- 3.34 For the future, the Harbour Board is concerned about its continuing ability to compete for labour with higher-paid oil and gas sector employers. It is also looking forward to new Standards for harbourmasters (on whom see more below), and consequential new courses.
- 3.35 Scrabster Harbour Trust told us that (despite its remote location) it has no difficulty recruiting experienced labour. There is no shortage of people in the area with relevant experience, and as a result demand for training is relatively low, and typically managed internally through in-house training. Experience counts for more than formal qualifications and employees are very much expected to learn on the job rather than go to college.

- 3.36 Where training is undertaken, Scrabster is typical of the ‘mixed economy’ in which employers “pick’n’mix” different training solutions for different needs. Perhaps three or four times a year the harbour authorities bring in a private training company to train small groups of employees in a range of short courses, both accredited and non-accredited, and both specifically maritime and not (eg fork lift truck skills). The harbour also requires every employee to do a first aid course, which they do locally, off-site, at Thurso College.
- 3.37 Scrabster Harbour told us that it is unlikely to make greater use of provision further afield primarily on grounds of cost. Because of its remote location, attending a one-day course beyond Thurso requires two days out of work, usually with accommodation costs on top of the cost of the course itself. This applies even if the course is in the north of Scotland (Shetland, Orkney, Inverness or Aberdeen) and not just for Glasgow-based provision. The cost of the course itself is therefore less of a problem than the total cost, including working time lost.
- 3.38 As managers of the islands’ harbours, Shetland Islands Council has a close relationship with the North Atlantic Fisheries College (NAFC) in Scalloway, which the Council set up, and which has long since expanded beyond its fishing core to other maritime sectors. In practice the relationship is so close that there is hardly any use of other training providers though, in exchange, NAFC offers the islands’ harbours a particularly flexible service.
- 3.39 Occasionally, when NAFC either does not run a course, or is not likely to do so for a period, SIC has brought in a trainer from Lloyds Register to teach a group of employees.
- 3.40 Although the Islands’ Council has no significant skills gaps (which it attributes to strong succession planning and careful use of training to meet future needs), it has recently instituted a scheme designed to ensure the long term supply of adequately trained staff. For the past two academic years, it has sponsored four students through both engineer and deck officer trainee programmes at NAFC. The idea is that these students will get five to ten years seagoing experience before settling in Shetland and taking up a job with SIC (though there is no contractual or financial obligation on the trainees for this to happen). The Council supports the scheme by close liaison with local schools, including arranging work experience, in an attempt to maintain a steady supply of interest in the industry.
- 3.41 Future changes to the industry will include the impact of further legislation in this area. This will include being able to deal with environmental, security, oil and health and safety concerns. The training provision must reflect these extra managerial needs.

- 3.42 A recent inescapable pause in activity by Ports Skills and Safety may have lowered the profile of training and skills development work, and therefore reduced the extent to which employers in the sector identified issues to us, and were well-informed about developments such as the forthcoming Foundation Degree. We therefore do not presume that what we report above encompasses everything which ports employers have to say on the matter.

Harbourmasters

- 3.43 We heard a good deal of concern from ports employers that the experience base from which they have traditionally drawn their workforce is shrinking, and the legislative requirements are increasing, especially on harbourmasters. There are new and increased requirements in health and safety, the environment, oil pollution, waste management and security, including anti-terrorism.
- 3.44 The reduction in the numbers of people available through traditional routes for harbourmaster roles has been one of the main rationales behind Forth Ports' development of progression routes: people who join the company on the marine side are encouraged, and funded, to do courses which will eventually give them enough experience to become harbourmasters.
- 3.45 There was a good deal of interest in the new harbourmaster qualification which is being developed (and some misunderstanding that it would be available much sooner – this autumn – than we believe to be the case). One employer was particularly keen that it should be available through e-learning, to recognise the difficulty of releasing experienced harbourmasters from their jobs.

Fishing

- 3.46 Training for the fishing sector in Scotland has traditionally been managed through the network of seven Group Training Associations (GTAs) supported by the Seafish Industry Authority. One of the GTAs – the North East Fishermen's Association – has an arrangement with Banff and Buchan College to deliver all its training, but the remainder work as traditional, non-profit, GTAs, arranging training for members from within the group. Details are included in the appendix to this report. Seafish is in the process of changing the way that it supports the GTAs, but does not expect this to change the volume of training undertaken.
- 3.47 There is an interesting initiative in Eyemouth designed to address some of the practical difficulties faced in trying to arrange training for fishermen.

- 3.48 Fishermen have always adapted their working pattern to the weather, staying safe in harbour when the weather is poor, and fishing on the other days. Current EU rules permit fishermen to fish for only 15 days every month, which adds to the pressure to make the most of those days when the weather is fine. The practical implication for training is that it is hard to be sure to arrange training in advance for a day when the weather is poor – and, if it happens to be fine on a day that training has been arranged, fishermen are likely to go out anyway – and leave a trainer with an empty training room. If that trainer has had to travel to Eyemouth from Banff and Buchan College, a substantial cost has been incurred, which will need to be paid for in some way.
- 3.49 In the Eyemouth pilot, the Seafish Industry Authority is training two local men to be trainers, both of whom have substantial sea-going experience, one in the Merchant Navy, the other in the Royal Navy. Because they are local, there are no travel costs to pay for an abortive journey, and they can be told at almost no notice that training has been postponed because the men are out fishing. And because they have agreed to it in advance, the two trainers will take part classes – perhaps two or three men only – *and* accept a pro rata fee for their work, instead of expecting a flat rate regardless of how many trainees turned up. This is about as flexible, and as ‘demand-led’ as it is possible for training to be.
- 3.50 If the pilot works, it should be of widespread interest, not just within the fishing industry, but well beyond, in other sectors which struggle to provide guaranteed numbers of learners at fixed, and predictable, points in time.

Marine Leisure

- 3.51 Employers in the leisure market are typically small, and widely distributed across Scotland. We heard that most recruit locally, typically on grounds of personality and experience, rather than formal qualifications, and that turnover is low. Our sample of employers was limited, of course, but we were told that existing arrangements for training within the sector meet current needs.
- 3.52 One issue particular to the leisure sector is that many staff in responsible positions are volunteers, which makes it harder to require them to do training, which in turn can lead to a lack of professionalism, or to use of unqualified instructors.

- 3.53 This issue is linked to the worries we heard about the current difficult economic situation might depress interest in marine leisure activities, hence depress the earnings required for investment in training. In previous economic downturns people took their holidays closer to home, which helped the sector, but this is no longer the case with flights abroad still relatively cheap. The latest Industry Trends research from the British Marine Federation (autumn 2007) – which does not distinguish between different types, or location, of members – reports that for most employers workforce levels are broadly flat, which supports this note of caution. (Our interviews took place before the Olympics, and it may be that Britain’s continuing success in sailing and other water-based sports will enthuse people in ways which at least make up for any economic downturn).
- 3.54 Lack of skilled labour is a low concern for BMF members reporting nationally – an issue for just 4%, ranking eight in a list of issues – and we heard no different message from Scotland.
- 3.55 The SportScotland-funded National Watersports Centre on the Isle of Cumbrae, for example, which delivers RYA (Royal Yachting Association) courses, would ideally take on more full-time and year-round staff, and understands that many existing part-time staff would be keen to take on these roles, but the financial constraints associated with the seasonal nature of watersport training currently prevent such a development. Numbers are modest: there are three full-time, year-round instructors, and between six and 12 summer-only seasonal staff.
- 3.56 New regulatory requirements, particularly when working with children, are having the effect of limiting the scope for expansion. For example, it is harder now to take children for a watersports activity in the morning and a cycle ride in the afternoon, as the two activities require separate risk assessments and qualifications.

Transferability of Qualifications

- 3.57 An issue raised by a number of employers in different sectors was their frustration that the MCA does not recognise key qualifications issued by others – most notably the Seafish Industry Authority, and OPITO (the training body responsible for the oil and gas sector, operating as part of COGENT, the Sector Skills Council). For example, the OPITO Personal Survival Techniques course is not recognised by MCA, which means additional costs for employers if they re-train people who have successfully completed the OPITO course. The issue is one commonly raised, and it relates to the whole of the UK, not just to Scotland – but there is no reason why a Scottish group should not take the initiative in seeking a better way forward.

A National Centre of Excellence?

3.58 We heard a range of views from employers about the possibility of establishing in Scotland a national centre of excellence for maritime training, with a generally very positive welcome, and the following particular comments:

- such a centre already exists - in Glasgow College of Nautical Studies;
- such a centre should market itself internationally, and not limit itself to the Scottish market – with a consequent need to offer truly world class services, and accommodation (both of which would also suit the domestic market);
- a strongly-voiced concern (from the North East) that a ‘national’ centre should not be dominated by GCNS, and should embrace other centres of expertise such as Banff and Buchan College;
- the national centre should also have a role as a single point of contact, to give information, particularly about career progression and certification.

4. Analysis and Conclusions

- 4.1 In this concluding section we draw out some of the trends and main messages from the report above, and indicate policy options for the Scottish Funding Council, Glasgow College of Nautical Studies and others.
- 4.2 We have sought to keep a distinction between issues which are distinctively different in Scotland from elsewhere in the UK (or indeed beyond), and issues which are not particularly different in Scotland, but where there is scope, and maybe appetite, for a distinctively Scottish response (such as recent initiatives to market maritime careers to young people and to increase recruitment of officer trainees).

Conclusions

- 4.3 We offer 12 conclusions. :
1. the market for Merchant Navy officer trainees is very buoyant, having grown in response to recent initiatives. That is very much to be welcomed, of course, but we heard worries that this growth is placing increasing pressure on colleges in terms of their ability to recruit sufficient qualified and experienced lecturers, and in crowding-out scope for initiatives on other fronts. We also heard related concerns that the national and international reputation of GCNS in its field is not reflected in a funding regime designed for much more broadly-based colleges;
 2. the long-term fall in numbers of Britons in the Merchant Navy has reduced the supply of people with sea-going experience available for jobs ashore, notably harbourmasters (and even if the recent reversal of that trend is permanent, it will take a long time to make good the current deficit), leading to debate about the best way to tackle the deficit: by “marinising” people with appropriate skills but who lack sea-going experience, or by training-up people who have sea-going experience;
 3. a number of employers are sourcing training from England, but would prefer to use Scottish providers. It is important to note that use of English colleges is not on grounds of quality: they are not deemed to be better (though they are recognised to be very good)⁵. Preference for Scotland is simply on grounds of cost: taking up courses at English colleges costs more because of the travel and accommodation costs, and takes more time out of work. There is a special case with the training simulators at South Tyneside College, which link bridge and engine room in a way which is not available within Scotland;

⁵ Everything in this report presumes that Scotland’s maritime colleges work continuously to maintain and improve high standards of quality, measured both objectively and in the eyes of learners.

4. much of the footloose and unmet demand is very fragmented, (and consequently hard to serve on a commercial basis), characterised by:

- a stable workforce with low turnover, recruiting typically from people with relevant experience (especially in ports and the leisure sector) – which means low demand for initial training. Much of what training is required is for short courses, either to meet new (eg legislative) requirements, or as refresher courses;
- geographical remoteness from training provision, which adds to costs (both directly, because a day's course will typically require an over-night stay, and indirectly, through the opportunity cost of absence and perhaps of paying for cover) and reduces the incentive to buy external training;
- very particular requirements with small numbers of potential learners (eg the whole ERRV and workboat markets; requirements for tailored courses for Western Ferries in crowd control; or courses for boatyards in slinging boats);
- severe constraints on when potential trainees are available for a course (eg because of problems of release in small organisations, of the weather-dependent working life of fishermen, and of the seasonal nature of much of the leisure sector), which makes it harder to gather a group to make a viable course, and more likely that an employer will shop around to get a particular need met *when it suits* rather than following a more stable relationship with a training supplier;

That favours peripatetic trainers (who travel to meet their learners on site, whether self-employed or employed within the public or private sectors), in-house training and development, e-learning, and a “pick’n’mix” approach to training and development, rather than a long-term relationship between employers and a single preferred provider. (The close relationship between Shetland Island Council and NAFC is an exception);

5. there is a substantial part of the Merchant Navy which falls outside the traditional model of recruitment and initial training, and for which the model does not fit well. This applies, for example, to the workboat, tug, ERRV and off-shore sectors;

6. the market for maritime education and training in Scotland is mature and stable: most employers appear to have a settled way of doing things and there are no signs of significant changes in the volume or nature of employer demand – *but* this does not mean that the status quo meets the needs of employers. It means that providers challenging the status quo may have some work to do to encourage employers to try alternative approaches, but also that many have probably settled for a way of doing things because they see no alternative. Once one is provided, and well sold, new options are likely to open up. (This conclusion also tells us nothing about the international market for Scotland's education and provision, about which more below).

An example of employers and providers working together to find pragmatic ways round issues which they face is the practice of collaboration in order to draw down what funding there is for SVQ-based training. Government funding favours *training* rather than *qualifications* (the opposite of the English model) and collaboration between the different parties enables them to maximise the funds available through a collaborative arrangement. It is, however, an example; of a pragmatic partnership to find ways round a problem: lack of funding for SVQs;

7. we heard relatively little from employers about skills shortages or skills gaps. The most significant current skills shortage identified to us was for harbourmasters. There is no doubt that there are other occupations where employers struggle to get the people they want, especially in higher rank professions such as ships surveyors and shore-based ship managers, and there are recurring issues about the adequacy of the training regime for officer trainees, particularly with regard to the amount of sea time which trainees get;
8. there was little discussion of the effect of recruiting them, but is clear that all sectors apart from leisure are addressing shortages and plugging gaps by recruiting East Europeans. The implications could be profound: if needs can be met this way (and the market may change), where is the incentive to pay for training (especially expensive, long-term, training) – but what will be the result if training volumes slump?
9. we heard no interest in development of new qualifications not already under way – or criticism of qualifications already in use. There was keen interest in the new harbourmasters qualification;
10. recent innovations and developments look promising: the sector is far from being ignored. For example:
- the employer-led, Scottish Enterprise-inspired, partnership which produced the Diploma in Ship Management designed with and piloted by Glasgow College of Nautical Studies, delivered and assessed remotely as e-learning;

- the fishing training pilot in Eyemouth which is making two Seafish-trained trainers available entirely ad hoc to train local fishermen entirely on a demand-led basis (eg when the weather is too poor to go out), and regardless of class size;
- development of National Occupational Standards for management level staff involved in shore-based activities in the management and operation of ships, led by the Merchant Navy Training Board and Maritime Skills Alliance;
- development of a new harbourmaster qualification.

11. there was a good deal of interest in the possibility of developing a national Centre of Excellence – with some reservations that it should be international, not national, and should embrace sectoral expertise across the whole of Scotland, not just within GCNS.

12. the international market. It was beyond our remit to explore what further opportunities lie in the international market for Scottish providers, but we note, first, that GCNS and others are already very active in the international market, and second, that many of those whom we interviewed see considerable further potential for Scottish colleges in developing the international market. Everyone agrees that the international reputation of the British maritime sector stands high, and some see the opportunity to use greater international investment to help drive the development of the highest standards, which can only help Scottish employers.

Recommendations

4.4 What might the Funding Council, GCNS and others do about these issues? We are conscious that there will be little, if anything, in the above which is a surprise to Steering Group members, and that action is well in hand to address most of the issues we have considered. Focusing this in the context of a Maritime Centre of Excellence, however, we offer the following seven recommendations:

- Recommendation 1: That a specific Scottish marine training forum be formed (most straightforwardly as a development of the Steering Group for this project) under the auspices of an appropriate industry organisation such as the Maritime Skills Alliance to take forward the issues and recommendations of this study;
- Recommendation 2: The forum should consider how far the position of GCNS (and other colleges in the Further Education system) as specialist centres of expertise in the maritime sector can be sustained and nurtured within existing funding rules and constraints – and, if the answer is not satisfactory, the forum should consider what might be done about it;

- Recommendation 3: The forum should explore further the need for and market opportunities stemming from the enhancement of the existing (substantial) simulator capacity at GCNS, and to an earlier timescale than is currently in prospect and consider the methods for funding any such enhancement;
- Recommendation 4: The forum should invite the Maritime and Coastguard Agency to discuss how it might tackle rigidities in the recognition of seafarers' qualifications, which add to employers' costs and hinder the free flow of workers between occupations. (The issue is UK-wide, but there is a particularly Scottish need to focus on it because of the prominence of the oil and gas sector);
- Recommendation 5: Development of a national Centre of Excellence in maritime training for Scotland should give high prominence to the international market. That has many advantages: competing in the international market will keep quality high, which is to the advantage of Scottish employers; it will lend weight to the work that the Scottish maritime industry, with the support of Scottish Enterprise, is doing to promote and enhance the expertise and strength of the maritime sector as a thriving part of Scotland's economy; and it will provide (strings-free) income for re-investment;
- Recommendation 6: Development of a national Centre of Excellence in maritime training should promote all of the excellence available within Scotland (private and public), as the best way to enhance quality for the Scottish employers, and to attract interest from employers outside Scotland and overseas. Promotion should focus round a clear Scottish identity, enabling existing providers to maintain their independence while providing complementary elements of training and training capacity such that Scotland is able to offer an integrated and cost-effective solution to training needs;
- Recommendation 7: The Steering Group should encourage open debate about the best way to tackle the shortage of people with sea-going experience available for senior land-based roles – in order to focus attention on existing initiatives, and to increase the potential market for alternative approaches.

Appendix A: Steering Group membership

Philip Wells	Maritime Skills Alliance – in the Chair
David Baudains	Scottish Funding Council
Jim Evans	Scottish Fishermen’s Association
Nick Fleming	Royal Yachting Association
Glenys Jackson	Merchant Navy Training Board
Norman Jones	Caledonian MacBrayne
Ian McMahon	Scottish Enterprise
Colin McMurray	Clyde Marine
Douglas Marshall	Forth Ports
Simon Potten	Sea Fish Industry Association
Deborah Ready	Ports Skills and Safety
John Ross	Forth Ports
Richard Speight	Glasgow College of Nautical Studies

Secretariat: Ciona Buchanan, Glasgow College of Nautical Studies

Appendix B: Interview Discussion Guide

Scottish maritime sector employer interviews

1) Current training provision

1. **What training is currently undertaken by your staff?** Formal qualifications / e-learning / other?
2. **Who does what training?** Numbers trained? Does this depend on job role? How is this decided?
3. **Where is the training done?** On site / local college / other training provider / outside of Scotland?
4. **Why was it decided to do this particular training by this particular provider?** An industry requirement / a good provider / a good course / a lack of alternatives?
5. **When is this training undertaken?** Whenever it is needed / when the provider can offer it?
6. **How successful is the training?** Drop-out rates / feedback from staff / increased standard of work?
7. **How important is vocational training for your company?** Is it valued throughout the sector?
8. **How do you find out about what training is available?** How is the communication between industry, training providers and government agencies?
9. **What training providers are you aware of that currently provide an 'excellent' service?**

2) Current training requirements

10. **Is there a problem of skills shortages among candidates who apply to work for you?** If yes, how do you overcome this?
11. **Among your own staff, are there any particular skills gaps that have become apparent?** If so, what are they and how do you resolve them?
12. **Do you consider existing vocational qualifications as being relevant to the Scottish maritime sector?** If not, how could they be changed?
 - *A skills 'gap' implies an area where individuals within the existing workforce have lower skill levels than are necessary to meet business or industry objectives, or where new entrants lack some of the skills required for them to perform effectively. A skills*

'shortage' is where there is a lack of adequately skilled individuals in the labour market.

3) Future workforce skills needs

- 13. Are there currently any changes occurring to training requirements for a) your own company b) the wider sector?**
- 14. Do you think this situation will change in the next 2 years? How are you anticipating these changes?**

4) Looking forward

- 15. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being not at all important and 5 being very important) how important are the following categories for selecting training for your staff?**
- a) A provider that is convenient to travel to
 - b) The cost of training
 - c) The reputation of the provider
 - d) Whether or not the provider is based in Scotland
- 16. Is it important to you that your staff's training is carried out in Scotland? Why is this?**
- 17. What would your ideal training provider be like? Which facilities would it provide? What courses would it run?**
- 18. What would make you change the way you currently train your staff?**