



MERCHANT NAVY WELFARE BOARD

PORT WELFARE COMMITTEE (PWC) TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. BACKGROUND

Port Welfare Committees (PWCs) provide a forum where all those involved in seafarers' welfare can meet regularly, share information, provide mutual support and generally network at a local and regional level. They also provide an opportunity to brief members on wider issues that may affect seafarers and their families visiting or resident around their ports. In accordance with International Labour Organisation Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (ILO MLC, 2006) 4.4., the Merchant Navy Welfare Board (MNWB) acts as the independent co-ordinator for the maritime charities in the United Kingdom and Gibraltar. As the national seafarers' welfare board, MNWB is responsible for all administrative aspects of UK welfare boards.

Under ILO MLC, 2006 there are clear guidelines for the establishment and maintenance of Welfare Boards and Port Welfare Committees. The Convention lays down under "*Regulation 4.4 – Access to shore-based welfare facilities*", that *Members should "take measures to ensure that adequate welfare facilities and services are provided for seafarers in designated ports of call and that adequate protection is provided to seafarers in the exercise of their profession"*. It also emphasises under *Guideline B4.4.3 – Responsibilities of Members* that: -

"1. Welfare boards should be established, at the port, regional and national levels, as appropriate. Their functions should include:

- (a) keeping under review the adequacy of existing welfare facilities and monitoring the need for the provision of additional facilities or the withdrawal of underutilized facilities; and*
- (b) assisting and advising those responsible for providing welfare facilities and ensuring coordination between them.*

2. Welfare boards should include among their members representatives of shipowners' and seafarers' organizations, the competent authorities and, where appropriate, voluntary organizations and social bodies.

3. As appropriate, consuls of maritime States and local representatives of foreign welfare organizations should, in accordance with national laws and regulations, be associated with the work of port, regional and national welfare boards."

For more than seventy years the MNWB has administered Port Welfare Committees (PWCs) and thus, in reality, both the United Kingdom and Gibraltar already comply with ILO MLC, 2006 principles.

The MNWB recognises the unique strengths of each organisation subscribing to the PWCs and the great value of their local knowledge in understanding seafarers' needs. In addition to providing a meeting forum, membership of a committee provides a regular opportunity to meet and better understand the work of others involved with maritime welfare in that area. This can be invaluable in times of crisis or even when dealing with day-to-day problems. The Committees, and through these, the MNWB are pleased to welcome, as members, those who have a contribution to make to the welfare of seafarers.

2. OBJECTIVES

Each Committee is established to review, encourage, co-ordinate and help improve the efforts of its members to provide welfare support and facilities for active and retired seafarers, and their dependents within its area.

3. MEMBERSHIP

Membership is drawn from organisations that contribute to the welfare of merchant seafarers, fishermen and their dependants within the area covered by the local Committee. Members must be nominated by their parent organisation and approved by the MNWB's Chief Executive, when appropriate, in consultation with the local members. Nominees may include representatives of ship owners, managers,

crewing agencies, ships agents, maritime trade unions, voluntary societies (charities), port authorities, port health authorities, Maritime & Coastguard Agency, UK Border Force, port police, local government and any other organisation actively involved in seafarers' welfare. Membership is not available to private individuals although they may be invited to attend meetings when appropriate.

4. MEETINGS

4.1 Frequency

Committees are encouraged to meet at regular intervals which should ideally be three times per annum, one of which will be an Annual General Meeting. The AGM will be used to confirm changes in the membership and elect or re-elect a Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

4.2 Location

Whenever possible, members are encouraged to hold meetings at different venues connected with the welfare of seafarers and fishermen within their area. This enables members to familiarise themselves with the work of their colleagues. Where appropriate, MNWB will meet reasonable costs of providing refreshments although the host should agree this in advance of the meeting. Travel and other costs of members are borne by members' organisations.

4.3 Agendas

Agendas will be circulated by the MNWB via email (and hardcopy for those members that request it) at least one week prior to a meeting. These will include any reports received from members, the MNWB update report and details of any grant application seeking the support of members.

4.4 Quorum

A quorum normally consists of not less than four members representing four separate organisations. Notwithstanding the Chairman, in consultation with the secretariat, shall have the right to decide whether the numbers attending are sufficient to allow a meeting to be effective.

4.5 Absence

Members are requested to notify their Port Welfare Committee Manager, giving as much notice as possible, if they are unable to attend a meeting. This will enable the MNWB to consider meetings logistics such as venue and catering arrangements and, if there are only a small number of members available, consider an alternative date.

Any member who has missed three consecutive meetings without apology will be approached by the MNWB to confirm their willingness to continue to represent their organisation. Any member who has not attended for five successive meetings, with or without apologies, will be considered to have retired and a replacement nomination shall be sought from their parent organisation.

4.6 Declaration of Interests

If a matter requiring a decision by the Committee concerns, or affects, one of the organisations represented at the meeting the representative/s must declare an interest.

4.7 Voting

On occasions where Committees are required to vote, such as at the election of a Chairman or Vice Chairman, or in considering grant applications, there will be one vote only per organisation present. The Chairman or acting Chairman, shall have a casting vote in the event of a tie. The election of Chairman and Vice Chairman will be conducted on behalf of MNWB by the PWC Manager.

4.8 Secretariat

The MNWB will provide a secretary for all Committees from among its staff. This will normally, but not exclusively, be the remit of a PWC Manager whose duties include the timely preparation and distribution of agendas, recording and distribution of minutes and liaison with members. In the unexpected absence of a staff member the Chairman may appoint another committee member to act as secretary for that meeting.

5. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

The honorary posts of Chairman and Vice Chairman are elected, or re-elected, on an annual basis from among the members by majority vote, normally at the start of the Annual General Meeting (AGM). There is no maximum term of office for Chairman and Vice Chairman and all nominations must be proposed and seconded by a member of the Committee. Notice of the AGM will be circulated to the Committee at least 21 days in advance of the meeting, inviting members to forward nominations for the honorary officer posts. Nominations must be received in writing (email is acceptable) prior to the meeting confirming that the nominee has agreed for their name to be put forward for election. If there is more than one candidate for either post, members will be invited to vote for one nominee. If a Chairman or Vice Chairman leaves the organisation they represent in between elections they may remain in post, in an independent capacity, until the next AGM.

6. DUTIES OF PORT WELFARE COMMITTEES

The primary objective is to endeavour to ensure that both serving (including those from overseas) and retired seafarers and fishermen (and/or their dependants) are receiving the highest level of welfare support from the resources available. In undertaking this objective, the Committee should review the welfare needs of seafarers taking into account any relevant issues both nationally and within the locality of their area, keeping in mind that duplication of effort is often wasteful.

6.1 Members' Reports to the Committee

Organisations are encouraged to report briefly on their recent activities and draw to the attention of the PWC any issues that they consider may have local, national or international significance, ideally by submitting a written report in advance. Such reports will be attached to the agenda in order that other members may consider the issues and/or make recommendations. In the absence of a written report members will be encouraged to give a brief verbal report on matters of interest.

6.2 MNWB Reports to Committees

The MNWB will disseminate information at meetings about its own activities and those of the Maritime Charities Group as well as other matters it considers will be of interest. Issues of a more urgent nature will be circulated to all members between meetings, wherever possible by email.

6.3 Consideration of Grant Applications

All those maritime organisations making grants to other charities welcome, and will almost certainly require, the views of the local Port Welfare Committee on any proposed local capital or start up project. Those organisations include the MNWB, ITF Seafarers' Trust, Seafarers UK and Trinity House. This might include proposals for the opening, closing or major refurbishment of any seafarers' or fishermen's facility within the area such as seafarers' centres, fishermen's missions and port welfare vehicles. The recommendations and/or comments of a Committee will be forwarded to the appropriate potential donor charity, or charities. Additionally, the Committees should monitor the progress of any application and subsequent work until completion.

It is important to understand that the various charities that award grants to organisations often have different deadlines and criteria. It is therefore recommended that details are submitted at an early stage in order to prevent any delays in the grant process. As a consequence, 'Grant Applications' is a standing agenda item for all PWC meetings. Member organisations should submit any proposal that requires a capital grant, to the PWC Manager at least 21 days before the next meeting in order that it can be included in the agenda. This will provide members with sufficient time to provide considered feedback. The local member, or a representative of their parent organisation, should also make every effort to attend any PWC meeting at which their application will be discussed in order that they can answer any questions or note suggestions.

When requested to comment on a grant application, PWC members should consider the following:

- Whether the proposal will benefit the welfare of seafarers, fishermen and/or those domiciled in that area.
- Whether there may already be sufficient existing alternative welfare coverage provided either by the applicant or from another source.
- Whether there are any alternative suggestions or recommendations.

- Whether the members can make any suggestions to improve the project outlined within the application. If an application is unsuccessful, whether local seafarers' welfare provision will be adversely affected.
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The PWCs are not empowered either to approve or veto any grant application as the ultimate decision will always lie with the charity or charities and the organization to which an application has been made. Nevertheless, the maritime funding charities recognise the unique value of local knowledge and will always take PWC comments into account as part of their decision making process.

7. Conclusion

The MNWB places great emphasis on the importance of its PWCs and the management and support of local welfare boards is a key MNWB objective. The ongoing hard work, support of the many members and the time given in support of seafarers' welfare is greatly valued and appreciated. Therefore, any constructive criticism or comment to improve and enhance the role of the MNWB or a particular Committee is always welcome.

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