**MNWB Constituents Conference 29-30th November 2016**

**Breakout Group Responses**

**Suggestions & comments for the future**

MNWB responses

**General**

1. Congratulations to MNWB and all its staff.

Very much noted and greatly appreciated

1. MNWB should send an annual questionnaire to all its members seeking suggestions for its strategy.

Point well noted and will be actioned.

1. Use the IPWP Programme to disseminate new ideas from other countries and ports.

Point well noted and will be actioned.

**Grants to charities**

1. Applaud common application forms.

Positive feedback welcome.

1. Looking for more information on how to apply.

Each charity has different procedures and guidelines. Once the common application form, with its guidelines, comes on-line this will provide an opportunity to review guidelines.

1. More need to understand the differences between the Merchant Navy community (scattered) and fishing communities (local to ports).

This is felt to be well understood by most charities.

1. MNWB – could grants of <£5,000 be delegated to CE?

This proposal will be submitted to MNWB Council.

1. Could MNWB resume start up grants?

Start-up grants are, effectively, revenue grants, but for a fixed period at the beginning of a new initiative. The Board took the view such grants were more revenue orientated therefore would be better submitted to SfUK. New capital project applications are, however, always welcome.

1. Could MNWB award revenue grants?

Commonly the Board awards round £200k in capital grants. Over the last few years it has been oversubscribed with good quality applications, which would otherwise need to be sourced from elsewhere. If the Board agreed to revenue grants, a large number of maritime charities, including many of the seafarers’ centres, could apply for these and it would be impossible to prioritise. Furthermore, recipient charities of revenue grants tend to return year after year. The Board takes the view that, because Seafarers UK’s primary task is to raise funds for the sector and currently awards around over £2m in total, it is better that they concentrate on revenue grants and leave many of the capital grants to us.

**Grants and support to individuals**

1. Need for better promotion of existing services with external agencies such as Social Services

and

1. Need for better national support through CABs.

Much effort has recently been, and continues to be, made to promote the maritime charities, via Seafarer Support, at conferences and exhibitions. It is unlikely that any such organisations will give special recognition to the maritime sector over other occupations.

1. There are too many different means of assessment.

This is widely understood by MNWB welfare staff and will be raised at the working groups for discussion. The Board will accept applications on any other organisation’s forms.

1. Need for better access to non-maritime charity funding.

and

1. Need for more interaction between outside agencies.

This is widely understood by MNWB welfare staff and will be raised at the working groups for discussion

1. Is there enough support to assist seafarers in debt through SAIL (UK) and ISWAN Seafarer Network (International)

For the UK this will be raised with the working group. Debt advice for international seafarers will vary according to their country of residence.

1. Try to identify needs before a crisis.

Agreed whenever possible.

1. Many seafarers are often reluctant to seek help.

This, perhaps, needs to be better understood by charity staff and caseworkers and will be raised with the working group.

**Promotion of maritime charities to clients**.

1. Current numbers of beneficiaries are very small and is there a need for wider promotion via internet, mail shots (e.g. pension funds) and TV advertising?

* Increasing numbers of enquiries come from the internet.
* Mailshots through pension funds etc. are helpful, but most recipients, by definition, will have a reasonable income and therefore will have little impact.
* Seafarer Support is advertised in the maritime media.
* When Seafarer Support was first launched MNWB promoted the service, over one month, on several local radio stations in key port areas. Careful monitoring demonstrated that this provoked a very small response. TV advertising is hugely costly and there are numerous commercial channels. This is not felt, by MNWB, to be practical or a good use of limited funds.

Despite the potentially large numbers of eligible beneficiaries, it appears that most are managing without needing to seek support. Seafarers can be extremely resourceful and are often proud, and thus reluctant to seek help.

1. Need to promote welfare support to seafarers whilst they are working.

and

1. Suggest better engagement with shipowners to disseminate information.

In ports where there are maritime colleges, some of the chaplains address the students and there may be a role for MNWB to promote all the maritime charities.

Most vessels now, except RFA’s, have multi-national crews making it very difficult to promote UK centric charities. The work of the ICMA members, in ports around the world, is widely understood and appreciated by international seafarers from almost all faiths.

1. There are too many different dates for various promotion campaigns. In particular, there is a desire, by many, to coincide Seafarers Awareness Week (SAW) in the lead up to Sea Sunday.

SAW is based around the IMO’s Day of the Seafarer, which the conference demonstrated was largely unknown among the sector. SAW was established, by Seafarers UK, as an opportunity for all maritime charities to promote their work, with a view to increasing support for themselves. Merging these two events has been raised on many occasions by the PWCs and the Board would like to encourage a proper dialogue wherein these two initiatives can be merged.

1. Recent Nautilus promotion video *What have seafarers ever done for us?* is widely regarded as excellent. It is available on their website and YouTube <https://youtu.be/NPLoJEJxXQE>

The delegates agreed that this was an excellent promotional product and encouraged societies to set up links within their websites and via social media.

**Financial**

1. Is there room for collaborating with reserves in common investment funds (CIFs)?

Some years ago one of the Board’s working groups examined whether there was benefit in using CIFs. The advice, from investment managers at the time, was that any savings in costs would be minimal, whilst there were often diverse interests such as ethical investment policies. Furthermore, by spreading investment managers across the sector, it diluted the overall risks.

**Serving seafarers needs**

1. Is there more need for research into the needs of seafarers both national & international?

Much has been done in very recent times. MNWB undertook a review in late 2015 of serving seafarers’ needs and aspirations when in UK ports. ITF Seafarers Trust have undertaken a similar review internationally and KVH Media (Liverpool based) undertake regular surveys under their Crew Too initiative.

MCFG/MCG has conducted a number of research projects including *Supporting seafarers & their families* report in 2007. It has recently commissioned an independent review of the ***UK Maritime Charity Sector*** - the findings of which will be published in the latter part of 2017.

1. Should there be better access to IT at sea?

Access to the internet is improving at sea, with a reduction in cost (to the shipowner) and improved bandwidth. Increasingly seafarers are seeking employment on vessels which allow internet access. A world shortage of seafarers will probably necessitate owners providing this as part of the conditions of service. In many cases usage is restricted by the owner and/or master to keep down the cost and also ensure that seafarers do not engage in access at the cost of proper rest periods.

This is impacting, of course, on the need to visit seafarers’ centres specifically to use the internet.

1. Could MNWB establish an emergency fund for abandoned seafarers social and recreational use?

This proposal has considerable merit and will be submitted to MNWB’s Council. In cases of abandonment the vessel should, thanks to an amendment of ILO’s MLC 2006, be properly fuelled and victualled and crew basic wages and repatriation costs covered. This fund would allow access to occasional recreational trips, or provide some on-board entertainment.

1. Formalise better communications between chaplains globally.

The Sailors Society has developed an App to allow chaplains, from all societies, to better communicate. In any event chaplains commonly advise their opposite number in the next port, whatever the denomination, when they believe a visit should take place.

**Mergers**

1. When considering mergers interim measures should be put in place to consider end users.

Almost certainly no mergers would, or could, take place without ensuring that end users continue to be supported seamlessly.

1. If MNWB and Seafarers UK progress towards a merger members will need to understand benefits.

MNWB’s Council have openly stated that, if a merger is to be considered, there must be clear benefits to itself and, most importantly, its Constituents and all other stakeholders.

**Retirement.**

1. Are the needs of retired seafarers understood?

and

1. Is there an opportunity for putting in place better support for seafarers both pre and post retirement?

Nautilus International, in 2015, set up an open day for seafarers close to retirement in Wallasey. This was rather sparsely attended and there are probably two reasons for this. The first is that, by definition, many were working and even of those that were not, but living in other regions, were deterred by distance. There may be opportunities to do more on-line and this will be reviewed by the working groups.

1. Should more consideration be given to helping seafarers resettle ashore?

For resettling ashore on retirement see 2. above. For resettling into alternative careers, most seafarers are resourceful and thus utilise their many skills ashore. The cost of retraining would be prohibitive within the limited resources available. Ex-armed services personnel have access to the Regular Forces Employment Agency (RFEA), which is a recruitment agency that makes no charge to an employer. The working groups will discuss whether it is felt there would be value in trying to “tap into” this service for merchant seafarers and fishermen, taking into account that there would almost certainly be a cost to the maritime funding charities.

1. Should there be language learning packages for domiciled non-English seafarers?

The majority of domiciled BEM seafarers are long retired as employment of most ceased in the early 1980’s. Most are of Somali origins and live in communities in Cardiff, London, Liverpool and Tyneside. In each case they have access to interpreters within their community and, almost certainly, their age would preclude them wishing to improve their English. For younger working seafarers from elsewhere but living in UK, English is the international language for seafarers and this, plus their education, probably negates any language problems. Evidence would be needed of a demand.

1. Suggest looking at Salvation Army retirement resettlement programme for those in maritime charity sector.

This will be researched and raised in the working groups

**Health**

1. Suggest more support for those suffering from stress.

Seafarers’ Hospital Society is undertaking a considerable amount of work on this aspect of seafarers’ health. Combat Stress will assist MN seafarers diagnosed with mental health problems, inc. stress, regardless of whether, or not, they have been in combat or under “Admiralty Charter”.

**Volunteering**

1. Too many regulations deter volunteers e.g. CRB checks.

This is a national problem for all volunteers. There is, perhaps, a need to emphasise that no potential volunteer should see this as a threat, but rather a bureaucratic necessity, which can be overcome and the rewards make this worthwhile.

1. Volunteers need a skill set that understands seafarers.

Good training, which is a necessity, has seen many very successful volunteer ship welfare visitors (and most chaplains) with no seafaring background.

Most SSAFA caseworkers, who are all volunteers, manage to undertake assessments very well.

MNWB is researching the possibility of establishing a “Volunteers Hub” project. This is intended to better assist its members, recruit, train, support and retain volunteers.

**Training**

1. Could MNWB re-establish trustee training for the maritime charity sector?

Some years ago this was tried by MNWB but was not well enough supported to justify the costs. A number of organisations, such as NCVO provide training courses in various locations and MNWB will look at disseminating information about these.

1. Could MNWB begin to run understanding the Merchant Navy training?

This course is aimed, primarily, at staff in the various seafarers’ homes and elsewhere, who encounter retired seafarers in their day to day business. It gives an outline primarily into the Merchant Navy of 20 to 50 years ago, to allow them to better understand the background of some of the residents. It is intended to be launched in the latter part of 2017.

1. Could MNWB establish more enhanced training packages for caseworkers who support seafarers with more complex and holistic needs?

This will be discussed with the working group.

**Working Groups**

1. Could MNWB delineate its Working Groups to better target specialities?

This refers to the *Older Seafarers & Families Working Group* and if the members wish to devolve this, which does make a lot of sense, then this will be actioned after the next meeting.

**Support Services**

1. Welcome MNWB’s initiative to offer back office services e.g. HR support, H&S, IT

This is to be explored in 2017.

1. Better use of Skype for communications.

This is encouraged particularly for overseas calls or video links.

1. Could MNWB provide 3 newsletters yearly?

This will be investigated.

1. Could MNWB Constituents conference be annual?

A show of hands, later at the conference, demonstrated little current support, although this can always be reviewed. The Constituent’s conference will therefore remain biennial with a PWC conference in alternate years.

**Port Welfare Committees**

1. PWCs could help encourage group ship visits and build relationships.

Arranging ship visits for large groups is never easy due to security constraints, health & safety issues and the need to obtain the master’s consent. In the event an opportunity is found then this should be encouraged.

1. Value of PWCs noted for networking.

and

1. Improve networking among PWCs.

Networking is one of the most useful benefits of PWCs and the Board feels that, in the main, this is properly achieved. The only means to improve this is, in some cases, widen membership among other appropriate organisations.

1. Use PWC to disseminate more information.

The Board endeavours to provide all information considered relevant and disseminates issues and concerns from other PWCs also.

1. Open a PWC page on MNWB website to post messages and new ideas.

This will be investigated.

**IT**

1. Need for more linkages between websites.

MNWB’s website has links to all its Constituents with a website, plus many other organisations. This is something that all charities should try and achieve.

1. Improve signposting with non-maritime charities.

MNWB’s welfare department is extremely proactive in trying to access the most appropriate sources of help, including outside the maritime sector.

**Ends**