



MERCHANT NAVY WELFARE BOARD

# MERCHANT NAVY WELFARE BOARD STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2021

Peter Tomlin MBE MNM  
Chief Executive

# INTRODUCTION



**Supporting the provision of quality welfare services for seafarers and their dependants**



## **ORGANISATION**

MNWB, also known as 'The Board', is a unique, secular and financially self-sufficient organisation that acts as the umbrella charity for the Merchant Navy & Fishing Fleets. The Board operates 16 Port Welfare Committees covering all UK ports and Gibraltar, and acts as the National Seafarers' Welfare Board (NSWB). The Board will seek formal recognition as the NSWB from the UK MLC, 2006 Tripartite Committee and ultimately the Government during 2021.

## **COUNCIL**

The Board's trustees are collectively known as its Council. Trustees are appointed by sector, on the basis of the skills and experience required to carry out their responsibilities effectively in the best interest of the charity. Trustees represent Ship owners, Trade Unions, maritime charities and specialist advisers with meetings observed by a Government representative. Each Trustee is appointed for a three-year term of office but can seek reappointment. The Chairman and Vice Chairman are elected by Council.

## **CONSTITUENT ORGANISATIONS**

These consist of 44 maritime charities/organisations involved in the welfare of serving and retired seafarers, and their dependants. The Board works closely with its Constituent Organisations to monitor and develop seafarers' welfare. During 2021, following research, the Board will continue to create and/or manage collaborative projects that continue to assist and enhance welfare services, providing efficient delivery solutions for its Constituent Organisations and the maritime charity sector.

# OBJECTIVE 1



**Help improve the effectiveness of all those charities caring for merchant seafarers, fishermen and their dependants, irrespective of nationality, religion or ethnic background**



## **SEAFARERS' WELFARE WORKING GROUPS**

Working groups are an important means of bringing together those maritime charities with common aims, to review requirements, collaborate and promote recommendations. The working groups provide a two-way channel of communication between front line service providers and industry. Pre Covid-19, the Board chaired and administered 2 working groups: Serving Seafarers and Older Seafarers & Families, the latter includes accommodation providers. Each working group normally meets biannually. These groups share information of common interest, review levels of need and consider priorities, particularly in relation to funding arrangements, monitor the impact of changes, make recommendations on best practice, act as a co-ordinating lobbying force to make representation to maritime funding charities and other appropriate organisations. During the pandemic both working groups were merged into the MNWB Covid-19 Seafarers' Welfare Working Group that includes Government, ship owners, Trade Unions and key maritime charities. The current working group meets monthly and is under constant review to maximise collaborative impact. In 2021, post pandemic, the Board hopes to revert to biannual meetings but will review the relative benefits of physical and remote meetings.

## **INTERNATIONAL PORT WELFARE PARTNERSHIP (IPWP) PROGRAMME**

Funded by ITF Seafarers' Trust, TK Foundation, Seafarers UK and MNWB, the IPWP is a major project operated by the Board in partnership with ISWAN and supervised by an industry wide Executive Committee. The project encourages the establishment of welfare boards, also known as Port Welfare Committees, under the auspices of MLC, 2006, in order to review, support and improve seafarers' welfare in ports worldwide. A digital platform, called Port Visitor, has been specifically designed to support the project and will be populated in 2021 utilising local PWC knowledge. Following beta testing, mainly in the UK, the IPWP software package will be made widely available for use in other parts of the world. The Board will continue to use its extensive welfare board in 2021 to support ISWAN in order to support and improve provision of welfare to seafarers' globally.

## OBJECTIVE 2



**Strive to ensure that all welfare needs are met through the most effective deployment of resources**



### **CO-ORDINATION & COLLABORATION**

The Board endeavours to improve the level of co-ordination and collaboration amongst maritime charities in order to avoid any unnecessary duplication, identify any gaps in service provision and improve the effective use of charitable funds in the maritime charity community. The Board will continue to carry out this core role in 2021.

### **MARITIME CHARITIES GROUP (MCG)**

The Board is an active subscribing member of the MCG consisting of key maritime funding charities and regularly attends meetings. The Board will review its strategy in relation to MCG during 2021.

### **PORT LEVIES OR CONTRIBUTIONS TO WELFARE PROVISION**

The ILO MLC, 2006 guidelines on financing of welfare facilities (B4.4.4) states that financial support for port welfare facilities should be made available through one or more of the following: grants from public funds, levies or other special dues from shipping sources, voluntary contributions from ship owners, seafarers, or their organisations, and voluntary contributions from other sources.

Furthermore, where welfare taxes, levies and special dues are imposed they should be used only for the purposes for which they are raised. To help welfare providers improve seafarers' welfare in ports, the Board created a modern levy system that is currently in use in partnership with the Port of Tyne. MNWB considers the levy to be an excellent example of a partnership scheme between ship owners, ports and welfare providers that can be adapted for use in a variety of ports. The Board will continue working with ports and welfare service providers to promote the system, particularly where there is a welfare need and no existing levies, through its PWCs and working groups.

## **FUNDRAISING**

The Board is not an active fundraiser and whilst it welcomes contributions and legacies, it is largely reliant on investment income. However, in 2012 the Board set up the 'Merchant Navy Fund' in partnership with Seafarers UK using the combined expertise of both charities. The Board provides its unique knowledge and understanding of the Merchant Navy whilst Seafarers UK utilises their fundraising expertise. The aim of the MN Fund is to raise money from MN associated personnel and their families specifically to support those with an MN background. The Board financially supports, promotes and monitors the operational effectiveness of the MN Fund on an annual basis and is a member of the Seafarers UK Grants Committee.

## **DIGITALISATION**

The Board has an ambition for digitalisation of business processes, support systems and service offerings that improve efficiency, increase brand profile and value, and offer a positive impact on the welfare of seafarers' and their dependants. New technologies can drive efficiency and effectiveness if adopted at a strategic level. The Board has already made significant investment and progress in this area, and the benefits of adopting a 'lean' approach where appropriate can be enabled by new technologies. Being more intentional and planning for future technologies will ensure that the Board maintains a leading role in UK maritime. The Board will conduct regular horizon scans to identify what new technologies are emerging so that it can be a leader in digital strategy.

The Board already has an online presence through its websites and social media activity. During 2021, it will continue to invest in online activities and the promotion of its services in order to drive engagement with its defined audiences. Key to this objective will be social media engagement – paid and organic – as we build our online audiences.

Development of its digital assets will continue to be a Board priority, particularly where benefit to serving and retired Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleet personnel and their dependants can be identified. In 2021, where appropriate, the Board will partner with third party service providers, technology companies and maritime charities to develop platforms that have high impact from shared investment.

## OBJECTIVE 3



Facilitate the work of Constituent organisations through the provision of grants and specialist support services



### PROVISION OF GRANTS

The Board currently provides an online, primarily capital, grants programme.

#### Minor Grants

These are available for grants of up to £5,000 (up to an agreed overall maximum of £50,000 in any one year) at any time during the year, subject to the approval of its Chief Executive and Chairman. Applications can be made by local organisations, but where applicable they must be supported by their parent organisation and the local Port Welfare Committee. This programme has proved extremely successful and is expected to continue in 2021.

#### Major Grants

These are available for grants over £5,000 towards capital projects and 'start up' projects for its Constituent members. In order to improve responsiveness and flexibility, starting in 2021, Constituent Organisations may submit major grant applications throughout the year, which will be assessed at the next available MNWB Council of Management meeting.

### VEHICLE REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME (VRP)

The Board in partnership with three other funders: ITF Seafarers' Trust, Seafarers UK and Trinity House continues to fund and manage the port based vehicle replacement programme on an annual basis. Recognising the programme's importance to many Constituent members, the Board continually reviews the VRP in order to modernise and optimise the chance of project longevity. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on vehicle usage and fundraising, the Board has postponed the programme for one year in order to catch up with the replacement of deferred vehicles. As in previous years, only vehicles on the VRP master list that are used on a full time basis will be replaced and any proposed new vehicle will require a full port welfare review.

## **TRAINING**

Normally, subject to demand, the Board provides its Constituents and PWC members with a wide range of training courses. However, due to the pandemic, the following classroom courses have not taken place during the pandemic: Advanced Safeguarding, Mental Health and Bereavement Awareness, Welfare Guidance Workshop, Casework: Managing Volunteers, Managing Aggression & Violence, Understanding the Merchant Navy, and Substance Abuse Awareness. Notwithstanding, numerous E Learning and/or Instructor led video conference courses have taken place in 2020 and will continue in 2021 that include: Ship Welfare Visitor Course (to be revised in 2021), Seafarers' Mental Health & Wellbeing Awareness (created in 2020), ISPS Awareness (created 2020 to be updated 2021), Health & Safety E Learning & Personal Safety at Work. The Board remains open to suggestions for other training packages that will be of benefit to its Constituents.

Investing in digital technologies requires proportionate investment in staff development to ensure that the skills of the organisation are maintained at the right level. The Board recognises the value of its people and is committed to providing development opportunities that are aligned with its strategy.

## **IT SUPPORT FOR OLDER SEAFARERS**

In 2018, the Board ran the "Sea-Shed Digital" project with Aberdeen Seafarers' Centre (ASC) providing IT equipment, training and support to enable retired, local seafarers to get on-line and develop computer skills through a weekly computer club. It has been proven that connectivity through social applications does lessen isolation and loneliness, a factor aligned to higher mortality rates. As the project was a success, the Board is interested in supporting other affordable projects of this nature.

## **GDPR & CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS**

The EU GDPR became regulation in May 2018 and, following the engagement of an external consultant, the Board undertook an audit of its IT practices and databases to ensure compliance. GDPR requires continuous compliance and the Board has achieved 'Cyber Essential' accreditation. To assist its Constituent Organisations to comply, the Board has reviewed GDPR training and awareness software platforms to develop staff understanding and consciousness around cyber security. The Board will continue to provide cyber security training in 2021

## **UK MIFI PROJECT**

Jointly funded by the Department for Transport, Seafarers UK and MNWB, the MiFi project has provided a communications lifeline for seafarers during the pandemic. With numerous vessels and crews stuck in ports across the UK, the need for further access to free and reliable internet access remains high. MNWB will manage and review the project in 2021.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

The Board, on behalf of its Constituent Organisations, publishes and distributes the following:

### **‘Remembering those left behind’**

This booklet provides advice for those seeking to make funeral plans before their death, and for people who are faced with making the arrangements with no plan in place. Further copies will be printed on demand and the booklet will be reviewed regularly.

### **Port Information Leaflets**

The Board has a catalogue of 43 Port Information Leaflets for ports across the UK. These important leaflets are produced in collaboration with volunteers from the local Port Welfare Committees in order to make them as accurate and relevant as possible for the seafarer coming into that port. The national and regional lockdowns, local port restrictions, furloughing of staff by some societies and the temporary closure of the printing company have all had a negative impact on leaflet production in 2020. Production will resume with the lifting of restrictions.

### **C188 Work in Fishing Convention (2007)**

During 2021, the Board will work with its Constituent members, in particular with MCA & Fishermen’s Mission, to produce a user friendly training manual for front line welfare providers and fishers to better understand the convention.



## OBJECTIVE 4



**Provide a dedicated welfare support and referral service for UK seafarers and their dependants**



### **WELFARE CASEWORK, BENEFICIARIES REGISTER & CMS PLATFORM**

During 2020, MNWB created a Beneficiaries database specifically to monitor and help improve the casework system for Merchant Navy & Fishing Fleet beneficiaries. The Board will continue to assess and co-ordinate casework with SSAFA and other organisations throughout 2021.

### **SEAFARER SUPPORT**

The Board funds and maintains an online search platform on behalf of the UK maritime charities sector. Entitled '[Seafarer Support](#),' the website enables any person seeking assistance to quickly search and identify the maritime charity, or charities, best suited to help. It acts as the online central source of information for over 140 maritime charities who provide a broad range of welfare services throughout the UK and beyond. Completely rebuilt in 2020, the new platform incorporates the latest technology and will be used as the central point of contact in a comprehensive social media campaign to increase awareness and outreach throughout 2021.

### **UK CASEWORKER HOME & HOSPITAL VISITS**

The Board arranges SSAFA trained volunteers to carry out casework involving new MN/FF applicants and reviews of annuitants on behalf of those nautical charities that are responsible for making financial grants to individuals. During the pandemic, home visits had to be replaced with interviews over the phone. The Board covers the cost of all MN/FF cases undertaken by SSAFA, which enables appropriate charities to review their existing annuitants. The Board, through its Working Group, continues to review case working models to identify any gaps in the quality of provision. The Board has set aside funds to allow visits by trained caseworkers including a grant to the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society to assist with covering their costs. The Board also covers the cost of hospital support visits undertaken by the Defence Medical Welfare Service. The Board intends to increase and enhance the service in tandem with its social media awareness and outreach campaign throughout 2021.

# OBJECTIVE 5



**Encourage and enable closer collaboration amongst both Constituent organisations and Port Welfare Committees**



## **CONFERENCES FOR ITS CONSTITUENTS AND PWCS**

The Boards normally holds separate conferences for Constituent Organisations and Port Welfare in the UK on alternate years. The next Conference will be a UK Port Welfare Conference, held in Southampton on 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

## **MANAGE & SUPPORT PWCS**

The Board will continue to manage and support Gibraltar Seafarers' Welfare Board, Falklands Port Welfare Board and 15 UK Port Welfare Committees to develop local welfare services. PWC membership is taken from local maritime organisations with a direct or indirect role in the provision of seafarers' welfare services. Each committee or Board usually meets three times annually, one of which includes an AGM. A Chairman and Vice Chairman are elected by the members at the AGM. The PWCs' role is to review and support the provision of seafarers' welfare locally, share expertise and make recommendations for changes and improvements.

The Board ensures that membership of its PWCs and the GSWB is, where possible, representative of the maritime community and consists of organisations concerned with issues of seafarers' welfare within the designated geographical area. In 2020 the majority of the 48 planned meetings were held on a remote basis, the same overall number of meetings are planned for 2021. Welfare issues and ideas that have a wider impact are shared between all the PWCs and, when appropriate, the Council. The Board visits the Falklands on a biennial basis.

The Board has created the Port Visitor IT platform to help establish local, regional and national welfare boards in accordance with MLC, 2006 in countries and ports worldwide. In 2021, under the leadership of PWC Chairman/Vice Chairman & Port Welfare Managers, the UK PWCs will help populate port welfare information on UK ports in order to better support, review and improve seafarers' welfare in UK ports.

## **ENCOURAGE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW PWCS IN RED ENSIGN GROUP STATES**

The Board will investigate the establishment of PWCs in UK Protectorates and provide on-going support if appropriate. The Board will remain open to further requests for support from other UK Dependencies within the Group throughout 2021.

## **MNWB VOLUNTEER AMBASSADORS PILOT PROGRAMME**

A small number of volunteer MNWB Ambassadors have been selected to promote and profile the work of the Board and its Constituent members across the maritime industry, government and wider public audiences around the UK, Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands. Working in collaboration with MNWB Constituent members and PWCs, the Ambassadors will support the delivery of a specialist in-house volunteering programme aimed at spotlighting the role and value of the MNWB. Subject to Covid-19, the first 3 to 6 months will involve the development of a 'roadshow' presentation and a 12-month visits programme, commencing 2021.

# OBJECTIVE 6



**Represent and raise awareness of seafarers' welfare issues at national level**



## **SERVING SEAFARERS' WELFARE IN PORTS**

Changes in the maritime industry and advances in technology have led to quicker vessel turn arounds in port, greater automation and, with the exception of the cruise industry, smaller more multinational crews. As a result, the quality of seafarers' welfare in ports has slowly deteriorated and the need for a more bespoke, integrated approach to port welfare services has increased. To help address this in 2021, the MNWB intends to work with Government to create a voluntary 'Code of Practice', specifically related to seafarers' welfare in port. MNWB would provide an accreditation service under the auspices of MLC, 2006 4.4.4 as an integral part of its IPWP programme.

## **NATIONAL SEAFARERS' SUPPORT OUTREACH & AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

Primarily utilising social media and the Seafarer Support search platform, the Board intends to conduct a nationwide 'Seafarer Support' campaign to improve the outreach of the UK maritime charity sector throughout 2021. Unlike the Armed Forces, the MN/FF sector has no central register of personnel. The MN have Discharge Books for proof of service but maritime charities find it difficult to reach out to those in need. To improve awareness and outreach, MNWB intends to produce a short, free 'online' training film that highlights the work and support of the UK MN/FF maritime charity sector. In collaboration with Government, the course could be included within College induction courses, which would cover new recruits, and would be promoted through certification and social media channels to target serving seafarers.

## **MEETINGS & PROMOTION**

The Board actively continues to promote and raise awareness of the work of the maritime charities sector, both on its own and as part of the Seafarer Support programme. The Board is normally represented annually at 'The Gathering' – a Scottish annual charity fair in Glasgow, social worker's conferences and at various venues during Seafarers' Awareness Week. The Board promotes and profiles the services available through all forms of media, both regionally and nationally. It also cascades information through its Constituent members and PWCs. It makes available small grants for each PWC to enable them to promote and raise awareness regionally.

In 2017, the Board presented an overview of the MN & FF charity sector to the Maritime and Ports All Party Parliamentary Group in the House of Commons. In 2020 MNWB briefed the Shipping Minister. In response to the pandemic, MNWB formed the Covid-19 Working Group, which initially met on a weekly and later a monthly basis. The working group has brought together the Department for Transport & MCA, UK Chamber of Shipping, maritime Trade Unions and the maritime charity sector for the first time in a unique, collaborative manner. In addition, the Board will:

- Monitor the impact and effectiveness of the ILO's Maritime Labour Convention 2006 by the governments of the UK and Gibraltar
- Maintain membership of appropriate charity umbrella organisations
- Continue active participation, as a member of the International Seafarers' Welfare & Assistance Network (ISWAN)
- Initiate and support agreed campaigns to improve awareness of the maritime sector

### **MERCHANT NAVY MEDAL FOR MERITORIOUS SERVICE**

The Board, on behalf of the maritime sector, administers the Merchant Navy Honours Consultative Committee (formally Merchant Navy Medal Committee). In 2015, HM The Queen graciously signed a Royal Warrant that established a National Honour for the Merchant Navy and the first such awards were presented in 2016. The committee, by agreement with the Department for Transport, acts in an advisory capacity and can recommend awards to persons from the maritime industry, which will include higher Honours and medals for acts of courage. The Board will continue to provide the Committee secretary, administer the MNM website and the MNM restricted fund. In 2021, the Board will seek recognition for those personnel who have made an outstanding contribution to the welfare of seafarers and qualified for the original MNM but fall outside the current MNMMS criteria.

### **NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM - MERCHANT NAVY CONVOY GROVE**

In 1998, MNWB raised funds to plant a wood in the National Memorial Arboretum to commemorate all those personnel from the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets who have sacrificed their lives in conflicts from the beginning of the 20th Century. The wood is known as the 'Merchant Navy Convoy' representing vessels and more importantly the seafarers lost in World War II. The Arboretum is managed by the Royal British Legion and the Board monitors the Convoy and represents the interests of the Merchant Navy if required.

Finally, the Board recognises that it is good practice for any organisation to review its strategy at regular intervals. To that end, the Board conducted a comprehensive survey of its Constituent Organisations and PWC members in 2019, the results of which were made available on the Board's website, [www.mnwb.org](http://www.mnwb.org).