



## MERCHANT NAVY WELFARE BOARD

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### PORT WELFARE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### 1. BACKGROUND

Port Welfare Committees provide a forum where all those involved in seafarers' welfare can meet regularly, share information, provide mutual support and generally network. They also provide an opportunity to brief members on wider issues that may affect seafarers and their families visiting or resident around their ports. The Merchant Navy Welfare Board (MNWB), as the independent co-ordinator for the maritime charities in the United Kingdom and Gibraltar, is responsible for all administrative aspects

Under the International Labour Organisation's Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (MLC 2006) there are clear guidelines for the establishment and maintenance of Welfare Board's and Port Welfare Committees. This Convention (expected to be ratified by the UK Government during the latter part of 2010) 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 sixty years the MNWB has administered Port Welfare Committees (PWCs) and thus, in reality, both the United Kingdom and Gibraltar are already complying with these 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 at 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 encourage and co-ordinate the efforts of its members to provide welfare support and facilities for active, or retired, seafarers and their dependants within its area.

## **3. MEMBERSHIP**

Membership is drawn from organisations that contribute to the welfare of merchant seafarers, deep-sea fishermen and their dependants within the area covered by the local Committee. Members must be nominated by their parent organisation and approved by the Board'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, 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 be at least three times per annum. In addition there will be an Annual General Meeting which will be held to coincide with the date of an ordinary meeting. The AGM will be used to confirm changes in the membership and elect, or re-elect, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

### **4.2 Location**

Members are encouraged to hold meetings at venues connected with the welfare of seafarers within their area. This enables them to familiarise themselves with the work of colleagues. The MNWB is happy to 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 Board via the post at least two weeks prior to a meeting. These will include any reports received from members, an MNWB 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 asked to notify the Port Welfare Administrator, giving as much notice as possible, if they are unable to attend. This will enable the MNWB to consider an alternative date if there are only small numbers of members available.

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**

The meeting secretary will seek declarations of interest at the beginning of each meeting. Those with an interest that is seeking support of fellow members may be asked to leave the meeting during discussions and/or a vote.

#### **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.

#### **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 Port Welfare Administrator whose duties include the 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 Committee annually nominates and elects, or re-elects, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman from among the members. Those elected must be under 70 years of age at the time of election.

### **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/or their dependants) are receiving the highest levels of welfare within the resources available. In undertaking this objective the committee should examine the needs of seafarers taking into account any relevant issues both nationally and within the locality of their area, keeping in mind that 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 verbally report matters of interest.

#### **6.2 MNWB Reports to Committees**

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

#### **6.3 Capital Grant Applications (see appendix attached)**

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 capital project. This might include proposals for the opening, closing or major refurbishment of any seafarers' facility within the area and for the provision of additional or replacement 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, making grants to organisations, set 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' will be raised on the agenda of each PWC meeting. Member organisations are encouraged to raise any proposal for seeking a capital grant, with the MNWB at an early stage in writing. In any event organisations seeking the support of a PWC must submit details, in writing, to the Port Welfare Administrator at

least 14 days before the next meeting. 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.

The PWC members are asked to consider:

- Whether the proposal will benefit visiting seafarers 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.
- If an application is unsuccessful whether local seafarers' welfare provision will be adversely affected.
- Whether there are any alternative suggestions or recommendations.
- Whether the members can make any suggestions to improve the project outlined within the application.
- If a grant application is for funding towards an additional or replacement vehicle details of the usage including average numbers of seafarers transported (if applicable), age and mileage of any current vehicle along with any outstanding major repairs must be included. Consideration should also be given as to whether the new, or existing transport, within that area can be shared with other seafarers' charities.

The PWCs are not empowered either to approve or veto any capital grant application. The ultimate decision will always lie with the charity, or charities, to which an application has been made. Nevertheless those 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 Board places great emphasis the importance of its Port Welfare Committees, which are one of its primary objectives. The ongoing hard work, support of the many members and the time they give in support of seafarers' welfare and the Board is greatly appreciated. Any comments to improve and enhance the role of the Board or a particular committee are always welcome.

**21<sup>st</sup> April 2010**