



**MERCHANT NAVY WELFARE BOARD**

**SERVING SEAFARERS**

**WORKING GROUP REPORT**

**MAY 2017**

## Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION .....	2
2.	MEMBERSHIP .....	2
3.	RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SUPPORTING SEAFARERS & THEIR FAMILIES REPORT – 2007 - UPDATE.....	3
4.	UK SEAFARERS .....	6
4.1	MCG Demographic Report January 2015.....	6
4.2	Numbers of Seafarers .....	6
4.3	Average Length of MN Service & Future Trends.....	8
4.4	Fishermen .....	8
4.5	Professional Yacht Sector .....	11
5.	PORT BASED WELFARE – MERCHANT SEAFARERS .....	12
5.1	Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC 2006) Regulation 4.4 (Appendix III) ...	12
5.2	Marine Guidance Notice (MGN 486) (Appendix IV).....	12
5.3	Chaplaincy.....	13
5.4	Communications.....	14
5.5	Other Services .....	15
5.6	Funding.....	18
5.7	Access to shore leave.....	20
6.	PORT BASED WELFARE – FISHERMEN .....	20
6.1	ILO C188 - Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188) .....	21
7.	VOLUNTEERS .....	22
8.	CONCLUSION .....	22

## APPENDICES

- I. Merchant Navy Statistics 2016
- II. Results of MNWB Survey of Seafarers’ Needs & Aspirations when in Port
- III. MLC, 2006 Regulation 4.4 - Access to shore-based welfare facilities
- IV. MCA Marine Guidance Notice, MGN 486 - Access to shore-based welfare facilities

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Merchant Navy Welfare Board introduced working groups in 1994. They had considerable input into the Maritime Charities Funding Group's Supporting Seafarers & their Families report of 2007 (SS07) and for a time met under that umbrella alongside colleagues from the Royal Naval (RN) charities. The report and subsequent reviews highlighted some very real differences in the approaches to welfare. The RN sector quite understandably sees both their serving and retired personnel as having more in common with those from the other two armed services. By mutual agreement the working groups reverted back to MNWB, but all sectors remain in close contact through the Maritime Charities Group (MCG).

This working group was established to look at both port based welfare provision and supporting the needs of UK based serving seafarers. It will continue to meet, normally twice yearly, to review issues of common interest and publish biennial reports. These will be shared with the appropriate maritime funding charities where it is intended that they can be used to assist in prioritising their strategy.

### David Parsons, Chairman

**N.B.** In a number of conventions and publications, the term *fishers* has been used to describe those seafarers working in the fishing industry. Within the UK these are still defined as *fishermen* and this definition has therefore been used in this report.

## 2. MEMBERSHIP

The members of the Working Group at the time of this report are:

Merchant Navy Welfare Board	<i>Capt David Parsons (Chairman)</i>
Apostleship of the Sea (AoS)	<i>Mr Martin Foley</i>
Centres for Seafarers (CfS)	<i>Mr Alexander Campbell (until 2016)</i>
Fishermen's Mission (FM)	<i>Cdre David Dickens</i>
Humber Seafarers Service (HSS)	<i>Mr Andrew Dalrymple</i>
ISWAN	<i>Mr Roger Harris</i>
Liverpool Seafarers Centre	<i>Mr John Wilson</i>
Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA)	<i>Mr Neil Atkinson</i>
Merchant Navy Welfare Board (MNWB)	<i>Mr Peter Tomlin</i>
Mission to Seafarers (MtS)	<i>Revd Canon Ken Peters (until Feb 2017)</i> <i>Revd. Ijeoma Ajibade (from Feb 2017)</i>
Queen Victoria's Seamen's Rest (QVSR)	<i>Mr Alexander Campbell (from 2016)</i>
Sailors' Society (S Socy)	<i>Mrs Sandra Welch</i>
Seafarers UK	<i>Mrs Deborah Layde</i>

MNWB would like to record its thanks to all the members, past and present, who have contributed to this report and the Working Group in general.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SUPPORTING SEAFARERS & THEIR FAMILIES REPORT – 2007 - UPDATE

#### Supporting Seafarers Report 2007 Recommendations – progress report

The Report identified the following priorities for further work (*an update is included*):

Note *NA* = Not applicable to this Working Group.

1) Publicity about charities for seafarers: support to improve the information about charities that reaches seafarers and their families.

*Improved and ongoing – considerable efforts have been made by the establishment of “Seafarer Support”. This programme, which is managed by MNWB and funded by MCG members, has an interactive website, is widely advertised in the maritime press and staff attend a number of relevant exhibitions.*

2) A directory of maritime charities: development and support for a comprehensive directory that is accessible on line as well as on paper.

*Completed and updated. The Seafarer Support website, maintained by MNWB, contains an online guide to the maritime charities which is regularly updated and can be downloaded as a printed version. In addition the guide has been published in a directory format in early 2016 and distributed to all maritime charities. Updates will be forwarded on a 6 monthly basis.*

3) Updates and alerts for staff, trustees and volunteers, about national policies that impact on the lives of the seafaring community.

*Many charities receive information from umbrella organisations such as the Charity Commission, NCVO, ACO etc. MNWB endeavours to forward ACO circulars. The Board is willing to look at circulating more information if requested by members.*

4) Information about seafaring: collecting information that continues to present a UK picture of numbers, needs and service gaps. This area of further work would include targeted research.

*MCFG (now MCG) commissioned a demographic review which was published in early 2015. Projections extended to 2050 on the basis that there are no major changes in expected employment patterns within any of the maritime sectors. The Working Groups will monitor future needs and gaps in provision and make recommendations.*

*At the time of this report MCG has also commissioned lifestyle surveys of Families & Dependants and Older Seafarers to better understand their needs and aspirations.*

5) Information about the health of seafarers (and former seafarers).

*Improved and regularly reviewed by Seafarers Hospital Society. Considerable research is taking place to better understand industry related health issues. Additionally the Sailors’ Society has introduced a welcome global holistic wellness programme delivered to seafarers to improve their on-board wellbeing. This focusses on social, emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual well-being.*

6) Information about the needs of minority ethnic seafarers (and former seafarers) living in the UK.

*NA*

7) Improved information to non-maritime (mainstream) organisations: about seafaring and its impact on people’s lives.

*Since it was established Seafarer Support has been widely publicised. More recently MNWB staff involved with the service have begun to attend non-maritime events to promote the service and improve awareness of the seafaring charities.*

8) Casework: support to develop effective caseworking systems and share expertise across charities.

*NA*

9) Assessment systems: shared development of appropriate systems to undertake and record assessments of applicants’ needs.

*NA*

10) Grant making and decisions: shared systems, information and decisions across the sector.

*NA.*

11) Support groups: practical help to set up systems that offer seafarers and their families opportunities to support each other.

*NA*

12) Eligibility criteria: review and refinement in the light of this and further research that defines length of careers at sea and evidence of hierarchies of need. *The MCG demographic research has provided some good signposting for future numbers. Unfortunately, there are very few reliable statistics that give much of an insight into the amount of time those in the MN or fishing industry spend at sea. There is, however, a useful report from the **European Union** covering time spent at sea and it is probable that this reflects the UK. The bar chart is included in this report.*

*Unfortunately, little consideration has been given to addressing personnel who have left the sea but work in the associated industries ashore. This report recommends that, at least in most cases, this time ashore should be part of the accumulative time.*

13) Accreditation for charities: shared standards for various services and systems for review.

*Some charities need to be properly accredited such as those providing accommodation. For others this is a voluntary issue. The general charity standard is PQASSO but only Seafarers UK are known to have obtained accreditation. For some, such as SfUK, it is valuable within the maritime sector by demonstrating to corporate and statutory funders that the charity meets a required standard. For others, whilst it is desirable, it is also extremely time consuming, consequently costly and probably therefore difficult to justify (MNWB has placed this on hold for this reason).*

14) For charities working with young people in maritime youth groups: targeted information resources to support training, ship visits and career development.

*Improved and ongoing via Sea Vision etc.*

15) Ask referring agencies to provide information in a consistent way about the issues facing potential beneficiaries.

*NA*

16) Information sharing among maritime charities about what each does and what other, general, charities do.

*Improved and ongoing. Seafarer Support's online guide to the maritime charities. There is almost certainly much better understanding among the maritime charities of one another's roles. This enables closer collaboration.*

17) Volunteer training to common standards.

*MNWB has agreed to review, via its Working Groups, opportunities to support its members to establish better, hopefully common, standards of volunteer recruitment, training and support.*

18) Support for improved volunteer and trustee recruitment.

*As above.*

19) Help for charities to access sources of public funding (EU, government). *This is an area that still needs to be considered for development. MNWB will review this again with its members. The Board is considering taking on this latter piece of work as a long-term project.*

20) Disseminate the report to relevant government departments.

*Completed.*

21) Share the research findings about, and support action to address, the needs of non UK seafarers visiting UK ports and the international context of seafaring.

*Completed.*

22) Seminars to monitor progress against the research findings and recommendations.

*Ongoing.*

23) Guidelines for shared standards in similar services.

*Ongoing.*

24) Develop links between caseworkers and SAIL.

*NA*

25) Action to reduce the regulatory bureaucracy for charities, especially for those working in more than one nation of the UK.

*This is for umbrella organisations such as NCVO.*

26) Support for mutual recognition of seafaring qualifications and training across the different industry sectors.

*This is the remit of industry representative organisations and trade unions.*

27) Publicity about charities should be clear and targeted to media used by seafarers and their families. ISAN (now ISWAN) and SAIL should be extended to reach more people. Information should also be accessible from websites, general and maritime organisations. Coordination and collaboration to produce good publicity will be important and the value of sector specific leads or umbrella organisations should be considered as one way of achieving this. Care should be taken in using the term 'charity' in order to make clear the 'support' available to seafarers and their families.

*Ongoing. Much has been done.*

*ISAN merged with ICSW to become ISWAN and the referral line is becoming increasingly well used. There is potential for promoting this service more widely in the UK, especially through centres.*

28) A coordinated directory of all maritime charities is an important resource for maritime and other organisations. This will be of most value if available in paper and electronic formats, with interactive search facilities that support search by name, need and geographical area, and linked to individual charity websites. The responsibility for updating should be shared with charities listed. *Seafarer Support, through MNWB, publishes an online guide to maritime charities. Following a number of requests it has circulated printed editions in early 2016 which will be updated twice per year.*

29) Information updates and alerts for trustees and staff are needed. They should be carefully targeted and balance selection and 'a need to know'. Electronic formats are increasingly valued. A system should be flexible and respond to charities' needs and interests.

*The other Working Group charities took the view that they received enough information. The views of this Working Group are also sought.*

30) Improved information is needed to increase awareness of needs in the seafaring community among non-maritime organisations. This requires coordination and carefully targeted work that can reach leaders and advocates for seafarers. Electronic formats are increasingly needed.

*NA*

31) Support to develop effective caseworking requires collaboration to create a flexible system that can respond to particular charity interests, while supporting confidentiality and shared action in response to applicants' needs. Caseworkers will need to be better trained, and have specialised skills relevant to work with children, older people or vulnerable adults. If possible their skills should be accredited. *See 8 NA.*

32) Information that can build on research and regularly update demographic profiles and understanding of needs in the community is important. Opportunities to use existing research and data collection (in public and voluntary services, maritime and other charities) should be maximised and information collected made accessible on a website.

*See 4 above.*

## CONCLUSION

The responses to these recommendations are by no means definitive and where members feel that more can be done, the Board is very open to suggestions.

## **4. UK SEAFARERS**

### **4.1 MCG Demographic Report January 2015**

In February 2015 the Maritime Charities Funding Group (MCFG) – now the Maritime Charities Group (MCG) commissioned the Institute of Public Care (IPC) at Oxford Brookes University to undertake a review of UK demographic profiles of Royal Navy, Merchant Navy and fishing fleet personnel and their dependants from 1945 to 2015 and provide projections to around 2050. The start date was chosen to cover the huge decline in naval personnel following the end of World War II and the anticipated decline in the number of veterans from that era in the coming years. This report, however, covers the Merchant Navy (MN) and Fishing Fleets (FF) where the declines started in the 1960s and accelerated through to the 80's.

Where possible, information on age, gender, ethnicity, disability and health was included. The aim was to obtain a clear picture of how the demographic profile is changing; and to use the available data to develop a credible and accessible dataset, which can be used to inform service planning, decisions about the use of resources, and other activities by a wide range of stakeholders, including grant makers and service providers. It is however important to emphasise that the projections are dependent on the assumptions used in the model. The further into the future they go, the more speculative they become.

The project follows and builds on a previous study by the University of Hertfordshire in 2007 commissioned by the MCFG, which provided projections up to 2020.

The report has been widely studied and welcomed as the most definitive demographic study of seafarers to date. Importantly for the Merchant Navy and fishermen it has, to a large extent, overturned the previously held belief that there would be a large fall in eligible numbers of retired seafarers around this time. Whereas this is true for the fishing industry, the Merchant Navy decline is expected to begin around 2023 when numbers will begin to fall quite sharply. In fact the report is wider than just statistics and projections as it usefully contains information on those with long term illness, dementia and alcohol problems.

The majority of recipients of charitable grants both in the past and at present are either MN ratings or deep-sea fishermen and/or the dependants of both. One reason for this is almost certainly due to many having no occupational pension provision. Notwithstanding, applications come from across a range of all ranks and ratings.

This report has been widely distributed and can be downloaded from the MNWB website; <http://www.mnwb.org/Publications>.

### **4.2 Numbers of Seafarers**

The statistics and projections are well covered in the above demographic report which should be used in conjunction with this report.

#### **a) MN Seafarer Statistics – Department for Transport (DfT) 2014 – See Appendix I**

**More information can be found on:**

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/408026/seafarer-statistics-2014.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/408026/seafarer-statistics-2014.pdf)

**b) Merchant Navy Officers**

The numbers of serving officers' currently receiving, or requesting, assistance from the grant making charities continues to be comparatively small. The Working Group recognises that a large percentage of officers are now employed on foreign-flag vessels (often through manning agencies.)

*Support for training costs and certificate revalidation* Seafarer Support is receiving requests, from serving officers, for financial support towards furthering their qualifications and revalidating their certificates.

Some more enlightened employers do provide both study leave and also cover the costs of revalidation. In one example, however, an officer looking to take his Class 2 Certificate estimates the costs, including tuition fees and accommodation to be over £10,000. This is a married man with family commitments, in full time employment, but whose company will not assist in any way. Revalidation of certificates is around £800. Traditionally the Marine Society will provide interest free loans, but these are limited to £3,000 and of course need repayment. The dilemma is that if charitable support became available shipowners may see this as an opportunity. Nonetheless this is an important issue as there is considerable support for new entrants, or potential new entrants but, it seems, rather too little for those who have already committed to a career and are seeking to build their future, which ultimately is an investment in the future of maritime UK.

This was raised at a meeting of the MNWB Council in March who felt that this was an issue for Nautilus International to raise, as the officer's trade union. Notwithstanding the Maritime Education Foundation (MEF) can assist with funding for statutory certificates for any officer who is unemployed, although they cannot assist those in employment. Nautilus International is currently in the process of setting up a credit union, where applicants will have access to interest free loans similar to those available from the Marine Society, but without a capped limit.

*Recommendation 1: That Nautilus International and possibly the Marine Society, be asked to review this situation.*

**c) Merchant Navy Ratings**

The number of ratings within the British merchant shipping industry currently is now approximately 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the number of officers. Among the more experienced and skilled 'professional' ratings, many now have company service contracts, which include pension provisions etc. These are found on RFA's, specialist vessels and some ferries. The number employed on foreign flagged vessels (non-UK owned) in traditional departments is very small

**d) Definition of Seafarers**

Under the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, all those employed in any capacity on a merchant vessel are now defined as seafarers and this includes a considerable, but unknown, number of UK nationals, such as entertainers, shop staff, hairdressers etc. Almost all are on short term contracts with little security. It also includes all workers including, for example, maintenance staff on offshore wind farm support vessels and all workers e.g. tool pushers, roustabouts, drillers aboard mobile drilling ships.

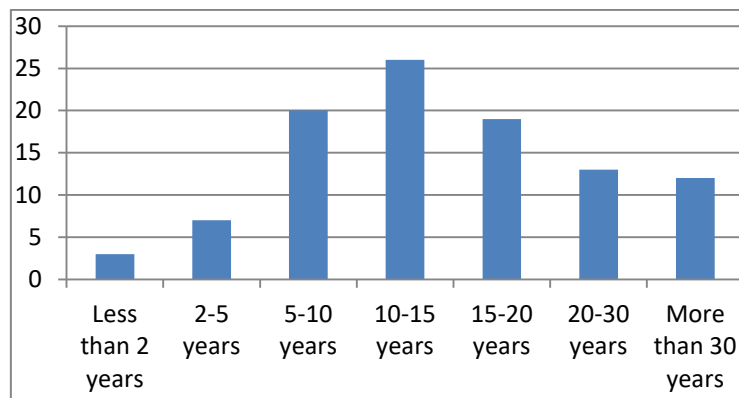


**Recommendation 2:** Maritime charities take into consideration that non-traditional seafaring roles may now be eligible for assistance, depending on the charities own criteria.

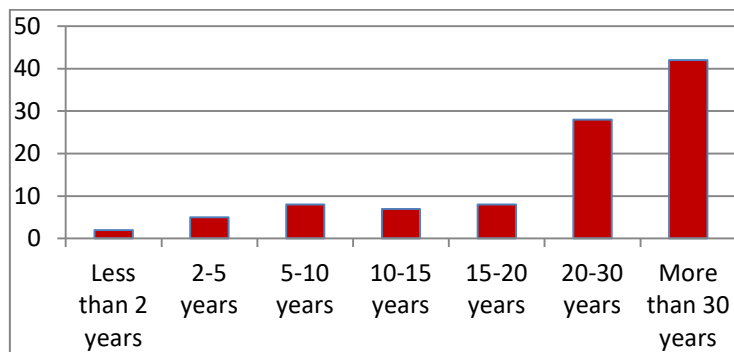
### 4.3 Average Length of MN Service & Future Trends

There are no official statistics covering length of service in the Merchant Navy. The Board has, however, obtained two sets of statistics published in, or around 2004 for merchant seafarers. The first was published by the EU, but the UK is probably a microcosm of this, whilst the second was published by NUMAST (now Nautilus International) covering their members (officers). The large difference can probably be explained as many officers tend to make the sea a career.

European Union Report c. 2004 – Mercantile Officer & Rating by percentage



NUMAST Members Report c. 2004 – MN Officers by percentage



### 4.4 Fishermen

The fishing industry has seen a huge decline in employment due to foreign competition, fishing quotas and improved technology over the years. Between 2012 and 2014 numbers continued to decline as below:

### Fishing Statistics 1995 -2014 (UK fishermen)

	Nos. F'men	Fishing v/ls		Nos. F'men	Fishing v/ls
1995	20,000		2005	16,000	
1996	19,810		2006	15,619	
1997	19,429		2007	15,238	
1998	19,048		2008	14,857	6,850
1999	18,667		2009	14,476	6,801
2000	18,268		2010	14,095	6,758
2001	17,905		2011	13,714	6,702
2002	17,524		2012	13,333	6,653
2003	17,143		2013	12,952	6,457
2004	16,762	7,002	2014	12,571	6,380

Source BBC News

	Full-time	Part-time	Total
2012	10,280	2,160	12,450*
2014	9,772	2,073	11,845*

Source UK Sea Fisheries

**\*Note:** These statistics are believed to include overseas nationals. The industry is increasingly supplementing its traditional work force with foreign seafarers from Eastern Europe, the Far East and West Africa, with some boats having only a UK skipper and perhaps mate. As can be seen there is a small discrepancy between the statistics. There are also understood to be a number of experienced British skippers taking up work in overseas fishing vessels although numbers are unknown and this might be an explanation.

### The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) annual UK Sea Fisheries Statistics 2015 include:

- Around 12,100 fishermen were active in the UK of which over 1,900 were part-time.
- Scottish vessels accounted for 62% of the quantity of landings by the UK fleet while English vessels accounted for 29%.
- Peterhead remained the port with the highest landings – 127,000 tonnes with a value of £111m.
- Plymouth had the highest quantity of landings in England – 13,400 tonnes with a value of £15m, closely followed by Brixham with 12,400 tonnes but with the higher value of £23m.

### Fleet size and employment

In 2015, the UK fishing industry had 6,187 fishing vessels compared with 6,716 in 2005, a reduction of 8 per cent. The fleet in 2015 comprised 4,863 vessels under 10m and 1,324 over 10m.

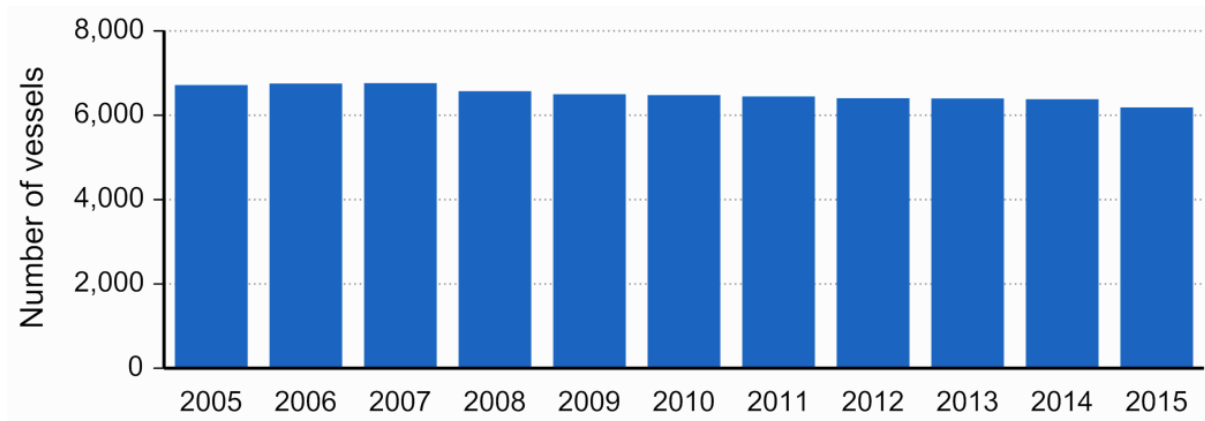
### Overseas Fishermen

Over recent years, there have been increasing number of fishermen from overseas employed aboard UK registered fishing vessels. Whilst the numbers are unknown, predominant sources are Eastern Europe, Ghana and the Philippines.

### Fish Farm Workers

Whilst it is a matter for each charity to decide who they can help, the Serving Seafarers' Working Group, felt that those people employed specifically as "farmers" in inshore fish farms should not be included. Exceptions were the crew members of any associated workboats or, of course, those who have previously been employed as fishermen.

**Chart 1.1: UK fleet size: 2005 to 2015**

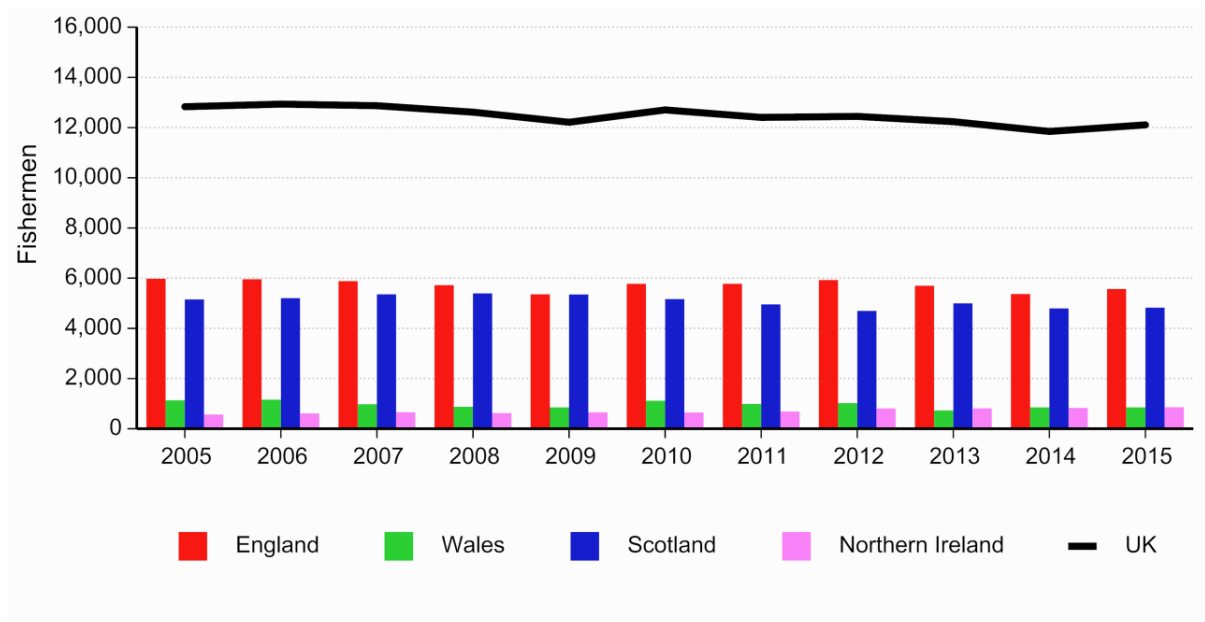


There were an estimated 12,107 fishermen in 2015, > 6% since 2005 but an increase of 262 on the previous year. Of these:

- 5,569 - England
- 851 - Wales
- 4,828 - Scotland
- 859 - Northern Ireland.

Part-time fishermen accounted for 16% of the total compared with 18% a decade ago.

**Chart 1.2: Number of fishermen in the UK: 2005 to 2015**



## 4.5 Professional Yacht Sector

This is a relatively new but increasingly significant sector within the Maritime industry. There are ever more increasing large, or luxury, yachts which are operated either on behalf of their owner and/or for charter purposes. In addition are the “lead” crews of flotilla yachts and yacht deliveries, all of whom are paid. In most cases, particularly among junior ranks, crews are itinerant and on very loose contracts with little job security, but many are UK and Commonwealth nationals. Among the more senior officers and Masters many will come from a Royal or Merchant Navy background. All should be regarded as professionally employed seafarers and therefore recognised as such by the maritime charity sector.

Much of this industry is unregulated and no formal statistics covering the numbers employed in this industry, or their nationalities, are available. It is, however, understood that there are at least 50,000 people employed in this sector (but very possibly many more) of which 10,000, possibly up to 13,000 are UK nationals. A large number of personnel from Commonwealth countries will be included in the overall total. Both MNWB and Seafarers UK have made contact with the industry associations. Additionally Nautilus International has begun to recruit new members from the sector.

As with other seafarers, some will be looking for help from the maritime charities although it is impossible to predict the likely level of demand.

***Recommendation 3:*** *Several maritime charities recognise all professional yacht crew members as bona fide seafarers eligible for assistance. Those that do not are encouraged to do so.*

## 5. PORT BASED WELFARE – MERCHANT SEAFARERS

### Introduction

The United Kingdom is one of the world's foremost providers of port based welfare via Chaplains, volunteers and seafarers centres. Within the last two decades (and indeed beyond that) there have been numerous factors that have impacted on these services and the charities have adapted to these. Ships spend very little time alongside unless they are in lay up or refit when manning is reduced. Otherwise it is normally the few bulk, or break bulk, vessels that might be in port for up to three days. Many seafarers are restricted in their opportunities, even for a few hours ashore, by duties and much needed rest periods. Furthermore terminals and berths are often in isolated locations.

**Appendix II** covers the MNWB 2015 survey of seafarers' needs and aspirations when in port. This is a summary of over 800 responses which is a good return and thus the findings carry weight. It is evident from this that seafarers value both chaplaincy services and access to centres.

### 5.1 Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC 2006) Regulation 4.4 (Appendix III)

and

### 5.2 Marine Guidance Notice (MGN 486) (Appendix IV)

**MLC 2006** In August 2013 the UK and Gibraltar ratified MLC 2006, which was enforceable on the first anniversary. To date it has been ratified by at least 80 states representing 87% of world shipping. In UK and Gibraltar it is strictly adhered to by both Flag and Port State controls (MCA in UK and Gibraltar Maritime Administration) and is beginning to have a significant positive impact on seafarers' rights and conditions.

Regulation 4.4 covers *Access to shore-based welfare facilities*. As such it is apparently compelling but in reality it has a number of clauses which allow very considerable flexibility. For example it states that *Each Member shall ensure that shore-based welfare facilities, where they exist, are easily accessible*.

Notwithstanding, in both the UK and Gibraltar, the provision of port based welfare is of the highest possible standard and, it is understood, this part of MLC 2006 was based on the UK model. Importantly, at least in theory, every ratifying state will, at some point, be asked to confirm that they are in compliance with 4.4 (and other regulations). This should mean that they will need to have set up a national seafarers' welfare board and port welfare committees, or given reasons for not doing so.

Unfortunately **Guideline B4.4.4 – Financing of welfare facilities** is, again, not enforceable meaning that there is no obligation, on behalf of government, to ensure that adequate funding is in place to meet the needs.

1. *In accordance with national conditions and practice, financial support for port welfare facilities should be made available through one or more of the following:*

- (a) grants from public funds;*
- (b) levies or other special dues from shipping sources;*
- (c) voluntary contributions from shipowners, seafarers, or their organizations; and*
- (d) voluntary contributions from other sources.*

In early 2017 an amendment came in to force which, significantly, covered abandoned seafarers.

### **Amendments to the Code implementing Regulation 2.5 – Repatriation of the MLC, 2006**

*(a) outstanding wages and other entitlements due from the shipowner to the seafarer under their employment agreement, the relevant collective bargaining agreement or the national law of the flag State, limited to four months of any such outstanding wages and four months of any such outstanding entitlements;*

*(b) all expenses reasonably incurred by the seafarer, including the cost of repatriation referred to in the paragraph (below)*

*(c) the essential needs of the seafarer including such items as: adequate food, clothing where necessary, accommodation, drinking water supplies, essential fuel for survival on board the ship, necessary medical care and any other reasonable costs or charges from the act or omission constituting the abandonment until the seafarer’s arrival at home.*

*The cost of repatriation shall cover travel by appropriate and expeditious means, normally by air, and include provision for food and accommodation of the seafarer from the time of leaving the ship until arrival at the seafarer’s home, necessary medical care, passage and transport of personal effects and any other reasonable costs or charges arising from the abandonment.*

This particular amendment is greatly welcomed as, at least in theory, abandoned seafarers will receive up to four months’ pay, with their ship provisioned, and emergency medical treatment and repatriation costs covered. This will, hopefully, lift an enormous burden from the voluntary societies and the ITF. MNWB has recently opened a “recreation fund” to cover the costs of excursions or equipment such as DVD players to help alleviate boredom.

**MGN 486** was published in September 2013 and does much to reinforce Regulation 4.4 from the UK’s perspective. In particular it is very welcome as it gives formal government recognition to and empowers the work and important role of the MNWB and its PWCs and in consequence its constituent voluntary societies.

**Recommendation 4:** *Ensure that the Merchant Navy Welfare Board retains its identity as the UK national seafarers welfare board in accordance with MLC, 2006 and MGN 486.*

### **5.3 Chaplaincy**

A key component to port based welfare is port chaplaincy and included in this are the teams of volunteers. All too often these will be the only people that the seafarers see that are not connected with the business of the ship. They provide an opportunity for seafarers to discuss

their problems, some of which may be very personal, whilst others might be connected to conditions on board. Many seafarers are often isolated without any real companionship and this can include anyone from the master downward.

It is often suggested that the real problems encountered are among seafarers in overseas ports. This report would argue that most of these problems can be found aboard vessels in any part of the world and chaplains and volunteers are every bit as important in the UK and Gibraltar (the current remit of MNWB) as elsewhere. Proactive chaplains can often identify a problem and help to diffuse it before it escalates. This is clearly a huge benefit to the safe and efficient operation of a vessel which also has a positive impact on the port. Too often, sadly, port agents and port authorities (usually with the exception of harbour masters who have seagoing experience) take port chaplains for granted, not realising just how important they are within a port structure. There is, frankly, no one else in a port community that can provide pastoral care and, in fact, other than at senior officer level, there is normally virtually no other contact with shore personnel. It is too easy to ignore the fact that a seafarer, a long way from home, has no friends or family to call on and does not even have access to an HR manager.

A recent significant development is the introduction of an online Ship Welfare Visitor training course. This is administered by and copyrighted to MNWB. It is based on the content of the original face to face training, and was transferred to the new format by NAMMA, which MNWB gratefully acknowledges. This allows a new chaplain, or volunteer, to begin training immediately, whilst also being mentored locally. MNWB has agreed that this course can be used by bona-fide seafarer welfare organisations (ICMA or ISWAN members) around the world.

#### **5.4 Communications**

The first priority for many seafarers is contact with their friends and families. In fact probably the two greatest factors that impact on their wellbeing are their conditions on board ship and the reassurance that all is well with their families and loved ones. In days gone by, short of prohibitively expensive overseas phone calls, letters that often took several weeks were the only form of contact. When the monopolies of national phone companies ceased, access to other providers lowered the costs of calls dramatically. Chaplains and centres could sell phonecards to seafarers at a small profit for use in public telephones. A short while later the internet rapidly became popular with public access initially to emails and simple websites, via internet cafes. At that time seafarers did not have their own IT equipment and centres installed computers where time could be rented. Again within a few years seafarers began to have their own laptops and then tablets or smart phones, which could be used with wireless internet in centres. All these factors were a big draw for seafarers to use centres.

Mi-Fi or Dongles provided by chaplains when visiting ships provide an alternative, especially for those who are unable to go ashore. The next development was SIM cards that can be used in unlocked cell phones anywhere within range of telecom mast.

Another factor is that, for commercial reasons, ports will need to improve access to the internet for their shipboard customer – masters and senior offices. This should open up better access for all crew when alongside.

These days there is still a very small demand for phonecards, virtually none for internet cafes, but still a reasonable need for the other sources of communications. Increasingly, however, internet is available on board ships via Sat-Coms (when at sea) albeit with limitations due to low bandwidth (restricting usage primarily to emails) and the cost factor, where the owner restricts time allowed.

When ashore in every city and town centre, seafarers can always have free, high quality internet access in cafes, bars and even some shops, at least during normal opening hours. All these factors have begun to impact on one of the primary needs to visit a centre. Furthermore access to free Wi-Fi has become an expectation and this has had an impact on income, without any obvious substitute.

***Recommendation 5: Continuously monitor the development and impact of both shipboard and port wide communications.***

## **5.5 Other Services**

### **5.5.1 Manned centres**

In addition to easy access to communications, manned centres provide various amenities. These normally include:

- A lounge area, usually with a TV
- Chapel/quiet room
- Indoor games e.g. pool, table tennis, darts
- Video and books library
- Warm clothes
- Light refreshments inc beverages, soft drinks and confectionary.
- Basic toiletries
- Money exchange
- Money transfer
- Depending on the port, a bar area.

All have different opening times but are invariably open in the evenings.

Seafarer footfall in centres is, in a commercial sense, very small – a maximum recorded average of around 20 per day, but often as little as 7. Whilst centres are open to the port communities the only one that, for various reasons, is able to use this commercially is Immingham.

### **5.5.2 Unmanned centres and annexes of manned centres**

In many ports there is an increasing awareness of the need to make communications facilities available to seafarers 24/7. This enables them to access the internet at a time convenient to the work routines and their families in various parts of the world, often after midnight. In Hull and Tilbury manned centres have been adapted to provide areas for this purpose, whilst in other places they are permanently unmanned.



Ideally such centres should be monitored by CCTV linked to port security. Access is often restricted by a coded keypad. These are often very basic but adequate. Some have vending machines. Heating can be a challenge, but this could be overcome by motion sensors. Regular maintenance arrangement, including cleaning, is essential. This report would encourage societies to adapt manned centres to provide an area with 24/7 access.

**Recommendation 6:** *Manned centres should consider setting aside unmanned “annexes” for internet access 24/7*

### 5.5.3 What is the future for centres?

Every port is different and for those remote from local amenities they remain the only place that seafarers can have a break from life aboard ship. The challenge is increasingly how to sustain manned centres, particularly those with paid staff, as the income from seafarer usage will no longer cover the costs. Opening them up to the port community is an ideal way of increasing revenue, such as in Immingham, but in Felixstowe this is actively discouraged, by the port authority, as it would compete with the port canteen and a commercial garage/shop plus concerns about dock workers and transport drivers using the bar.

Almost certainly, the greatest challenge faced by centres is the impact of the communications revolution. As mentioned elsewhere, increasingly seafarers have access to the internet on board ship, even at sea, albeit rather poor quality and usually time constrained. The quality is likely to improve (though probably never meet that ashore), but also ports increasingly make Wi-Fi available to vessels alongside. Given the opportunity of good communications in the privacy of his or her cabin, seafarers will opt for this rather than come ashore for connectivity. At the time of this report it would require a “crystal ball” to estimate the impact of this on centres, but it will need careful monitoring.

Clearly, retention of centres can only be justified if there is a critical number of seafarers using them. Each centre needs to be reviewed on merit. In some cases, centres can only be sustainable if they are supported by head office subsidies, revenue grants and/or port levies. Those subsidies will be difficult to justify if usage by serving seafarers declines.

**Recommendation 7:** *Regularly review centre usage.*

### 5.5.4 MNWB Report of Joint Centres

In 2016/17 MNWB, at the request of the societies involved, undertook a review of the jointly owned centres. Each centre received a report with recommendations and, in early 2017, an “overall” report was circulated with a number of recommendations. Most importantly, this suggested opportunities for rationalisation. In particular, it was felt that by establishing one centralised administration for those and, possibly, other centres this would simplify governance, centralise some of the back office services, provide purchasing opportunities and provide common standards of best practice. This should lead to potential savings and economies of scale. The report recognised that there was no “one size fits all” and that local input including a management committee remained an essential factor.

**Recommendation 8:** Consider establishing a centralised management structure with rationalisation of governance, management structures and back office services.

### 5.5.5 Transport

Key to port based welfare is a need for transport, whether it is for the chaplain to visit ships, often over a wide geographical area, or to take seafarers to centres or elsewhere.

Since 2009 MNWB has managed a vehicle replacement programme in which it, along with ITF Seafarers Trust, Seafarers UK and Trinity House contribute to a fund that provides most of the costs of replacing port based vehicles every 5 years. This has been extremely successful and is highly valued. Three types of vehicle are covered – minibuses, MPVs and cars. In each case a maximum subsidy is agreed and the part exchange value of the old vehicle taken into account, with any cost difference being made up by the parent society. At the time of this report there are a number of challenging issues, most especially with regards to minibuses. Whilst, occasionally, a 12 or 15 seat minibus is useful, these are rare and on most occasions an MPV is perfectly adequate for the small numbers of seafarers needing transport.

#### *Minibuses v. MPVs*

Most centres place great emphasis on using minibuses to transport seafarers to and from their ship. The question posed, in this report, is whether, at least in some centres, minibuses could be replaced by MPVs? There are several reasons behind this question:

- The numbers of seafarers transported are often small and a large MPV can have up to 7 seats (6 passengers). It may only be an occasional late evening trip when the seating capacity of a minibus, over an MPV, can be justified.
- MPVs are more economical to run.
- Electric powered MPVs are not much more costly than conventional vehicles, after government subsidies. They are very economical to run and, unlike modern diesel engines, are not mechanically compromised where there are strict speed restrictions in many port areas.
- MPVs are not subjected the same onerous restrictions on drivers.\*

\*An increasing challenge is, in any case, to find drivers, usually volunteers, who are willing to cover the necessary hours. Many volunteers are retired and, with extended working lives, most tend to be in their late 60's or early 70's. The regulations for minibuses have become extremely onerous depending upon the licence restrictions of a driver, his or her age, seating capacity and tonnage of vehicle. In at least two centres minibuses are lying idle as there are no volunteers able to drive them.

#### *Taxis*

Another problem identified in the reviews is that, all too often, drivers are unavailable at times when the centres are open. Notwithstanding, with the exception of Grangemouth, there was little evidence that centres had endeavoured to negotiate fixed fares with local taxi companies. Grangemouth had an arrangement whereby they pay the cab firm for one trip and the seafarer/s pay/s the other. The scheme has not been in place long but, ultimately, a cost comparison should be undertaken to look at this compared to those of purchasing and running a minibus.

**Recommendation 9:** *Review the appropriateness of existing vehicles and services.*

### 5.5.6 Seeking donations

It is understood that, in many North American ports, a collection box is placed in the vehicles for seafarers to donate their small change. If they are leaving the UK, spare currency will be of little use. It seems to be a widely held belief however that merely placing a collection box in a vehicle in UK would classify it as a taxi. The Board went to some effort to check this. With regard to the voluntary collection of small change from departing Seafarers, it contacted the Community Transport Association UK's Help-Line. They, having listened carefully to the circumstances, stated quite categorically that there was nothing to stop an organisation accepting donations from people being transported in vehicles as long as the monies collected were used for fuel and maintenance only. This would seem easy to justify.

(The Community Transport Association is a national membership association which leads and supports community transport to be successful and sustainable in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. They are funded by the Department for Transport's community Minibus Fund. They can be contacted on 0845 130 6195. Their website can be found at <http://www.ctauk.org/>)

**Recommendation 10:** *Place boxes in vehicle to collect donations and surplus currency.*

## 5.6 Funding

MLC, 2006 Regulation 4.4 outlines four possible sources of funding.

- (a) grants from public funds;
- (b) levies or other special dues from shipping sources;
- (c) voluntary contributions from shipowners, seafarers, or their organizations; and
- (d) voluntary contributions from other sources.

In the case of centres there is one other source of funding which is surplus income from sales but, as referred to earlier, in reality these are often inadequate. Chaplains also can raise a small amount of income from the sale of phone and SIM cards.

Realistically "grants from public funds" will not be forthcoming in UK. The other three sources, to a greater, or lesser extent, do however provide support. These include the funding of chaplains and subsidising centres from head offices, local fundraising (often among church communities) and grants from other maritime charities (Seafarers UK for revenue and ITFST, MNWB and Trinity House for capital purposes). At the time of this report the most significant opportunity to improve local income, but also the greatest challenge is to try and secure more support via levies.

In at least one centre, an additional major source of income because it is allowed to be open to the port community, including dock workers and lorry drivers. Whilst this is not practical everywhere, or in at least one port, not permitted, opportunities to increase income in this way should be considered.

*Recommendation 11: Centres should try and maximise income, wherever possible by opening up to the port community*

### 5.6.1 Port Levies

There are four ways in which ports can provide support:

- Lump sum contributions.
- Opt in levies – wherein the shipowner has to proactively agree to make a contribution.
- Opt out levies – where the shipowner has to actively refuse to contribute (this is the usual medium.)
- Compulsory levies – added to port conservancy charges.

Levies can only really be justified in places where there is active welfare support for seafarers, but this is all large and most medium size ports. There are different formulas in almost every port, some just applied per ship and some based on tonnage and at varying prices. The maximum is around £50 per visit and all are capped at a maximum number of calls (usually 10 or 12 per annum). To put matters in perspective the cost of bringing a large ship into port can often exceed £100k and even a skip for the garbage will be around £100. This means that a levy is very modest, insignificant to the overall costs and great value for money.

A new scheme was established in a UK port in January 2016 and the first pay-out is expected in mid-2017. The formula within the MoU is set as follows:

First, the Port Welfare Committee will set aside a small emergency fund, which all welfare organisations will be able to access at short notice. Thereafter the total sum that has accrued will be split 20% for capital projects, aimed at improving existing seafarers' welfare services, and 80% service delivery support costs. Requests for capital grants will be submitted on the Port Levy Scheme Grant Application Form to the Port Welfare Manager in readiness for discussion at the first available meeting. The remaining 80%, or 100% if there are no requests for capital grants, will be allocated via a formula detailed below, which rewards organisations that have delivered port welfare services in between PWC meetings.

Port welfare services are provided for people by people, therefore, it is people not facilities at the heart of the distribution formula. Although all welfare workers have an important contribution to make to seafarers' welfare, financially, full time (paid) employees such as Port Chaplains and Centre Managers are the most costly, followed by part time (paid) workers and then, last but not least, (non-paid) volunteers. To that end, the formula will allocate points on a 'per person per organisation' basis as follows:

Full Time (Paid) Employees	- 20 points
Part Time (Paid) Employees	- 4 points per day per week (max 16 points)
Volunteers (Unpaid)*	- 1 point

\*In exceptional circumstances, where the contribution of an individual unpaid volunteer is exceeding normal expectations over a prolonged period, the Port Welfare Committee can allocate up to a maximum of 12 points.

To arrive at the amount each organisation is due to receive, the total sum of money to be distributed shall be divided by the overall total number of points. This will identify the amount of money available for distribution per point, which can then be multiplied by the number of

points accumulated by each welfare organisation. The formula will be calculated by MNWB for confirmation and approval at the appropriate PWC meeting.

This Port Levy Scheme is seen as a possible template for other ports.

The greatest challenge is to “sell” the concept of a levy to port authorities and port user associations. All too often, within the senior management of a port, only the harbour master and his or her assistant will have seagoing experience and not all are from an MN background. The port user associations – the ships’ agents are almost entirely people from a shore based commercial background. Both are very happy to call on port based practitioners when there is an emergency, or even a seafarer landed for any reason. Unfortunately, in some ports, they tend to take for granted that the societies are there and never question how they are funded. They also are unaware of the number of issues that are quietly resolved by the chaplains and volunteers as part of their pastoral care. These are sometimes issues which, if they are allowed to escalate, might delay a vessel or even have an impact on safety.

The MNWB, as part of its strategy, recognises the increasing importance of finding support from port communities and has agreed to include this in its strategy. It argues that the port is a host to visiting seafarers and that the provision of levies should be part of a corporate responsibility. Importantly it cannot do this without the active support of the societies who have first-hand experience and can demonstrate their financial shortfalls. This must be very much a collaborative effort undertaken in partnership. In the first instance an opportunity should be found to explain to authorities and agents just what is done, question how it would affect their work if the societies were not present (MNWB would argue a significant impact in trying to deal with situations where they do not have the experience or time) and justify what is needed financially.

**Recommendation 12** : *MNWB to work in close partnership with appropriate Constituents to enhance and increase levy scheme.*

## 5.7 Access to Shore Leave

At the time of this report there are a number of reports where access to shore leave has effectively been denied to seafarers. This is normally because a terminal does not allow vehicles into the facility, or pedestrian access is either not permitted or impractical due to distances, and the operator does not provide any regular transport. Furthermore the ISPS Code cannot be used as a reason to restrict shore leave other than times when there is very high security threat. Such restrictions are in contradiction of the seafarers’ rights under MLC, 2006 and should be raised, firstly with the terminal operator, but if this is unsuccessful, reported to the MCA.

**Recommendation 13:** *Ensure that seafarers are not unreasonably denied access to shore leave.*

## 6. PORT BASED WELFARE – FISHERMEN

The fishing industry over the last few decades has also undergone some significant changes, which have had an enormous impact on the welfare needs. Fishing is a precarious industry with restrictive licences, many owner-operated vessels and normally self-employed crew whose income is based on a share of the catch. Significantly it is widely known to be the most hazardous industry in UK (and in places elsewhere), with all too numerous lives lost or serious injuries.

Fishermen in the UK are largely supported by just one charity, the Fishermen's Mission (FM), who have full and part-time superintendents in all the larger ports (and communities where fishing has declined). It is these men and women who provide support when there are casualties or incidents of poverty (all too common), as well as pastoral care.

Over recent years the FM has adapted well to change, disposing of their larger centres which were underused and moving into smaller purpose built premises. Another significant change that they have adapted to is the employment of foreign seafarers from places such as Eastern Europe, Philippines and West Africa. The rationale behind their employment is that, apparently, it is increasingly difficult to recruit UK crews. Youngsters no longer wish to pursue a career in fishing and the older men have retired or, in some cases, found jobs in the North Sea oil industry (with the recession in oil some are apparently returning to fishing.)

The FM has also adapted well in providing care for foreign fishermen and has begun to provide the kind of support previously available to visiting merchant seafarers. Unfortunately the employment of men from overseas has highlighted a number of shortcomings. Many of the boats were never designed to live on for long periods as the crews went home. The smaller ones sometimes have no proper cabins, nor even washrooms and yet the crew are expected to live on board whilst they are alongside, which might be for long periods. The other big problem is that some arrive expecting a reasonable contract, which is then changed by the owner which is entirely unacceptable. Some of these men have no fishing experience and have been led to believe that they will join a merchant ship – this is highly dangerous for untrained personnel. Although not commonplace, there are well documented incidents human trafficking and modern slavery among overseas fishermen aboard some vessels. Fortunately the FM has been able to work with the MCA, Immigration Department, constabularies and ITF to begin eradicating these highly illegal practices.

Another serious concern, especially among some younger crew members is substance abuse, particularly drug usage. This has serious implications, not only for their own safety, but also that of their shipmates and even their vessel. The FM and other organisations involved with the industry are endeavouring to raise awareness of this problem among the fishing communities.

## **6.1 ILO C188 - Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188)**

The *Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188)* has recently been ratified by the tenth country which is the trigger point for UK ratification and this is likely to occur before the end of 2017. Presumably, it will then take twelve months before it is enforceable. The contents can be found on the ILO's website and well worth viewing. This Convention should do much to improve regulatory conditions for fishermen.

***Recommendation 14:*** Encourage UK government to ratify Convention 188 at the earliest opportunity and closely monitor its implementation.

## **7. VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers are hugely welcome, because they can increase the welfare provision and also because they have a commitment to caring for seafarers. There are increasing numbers of volunteer ship visitors and some very successful centres are exclusively manned by volunteers. Importantly, volunteers need to be motivated and feel appreciated for what they do. Whoever is recruiting volunteers needs to play to individual strengths – some may make excellent committee members, others ship visitors, drivers or working in centres. It has been argued that, because they are volunteers, people can opt out of a “duty” without recourse but, for motivated personnel, this is no more likely than staff throwing a “sickie!” In some centres, using volunteers to handle payments has been discouraged. This report would argue that people who give their time and are treated properly will be properly committed and scrupulously honest. Furthermore in the two centres reviewed by MNWB where there had been misappropriation of funds this was by managers, whereas there has been no evidence of this happening among volunteers! Another anecdotal concern is that people who have volunteered to man centres and/or visit ships have also been expected to fundraise. This report would argue that, whilst some people would be pleased to volunteer as fundraisers, others would not wish to be involved in this aspect. There seems a need to properly define what is expected of volunteers in a role description.

The MNWB, given the support of its Constituent charities, has agreed a project to assist in the recruitment, best management practice and retention of volunteers.

***Recommendation 14:*** Review volunteer policies, probably in collaboration with MNWB, to establish best working practices, recruitment and retention.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

This report demonstrates some of the enormous changes that have taken place over recent years and also, hopefully, highlights a number of the anticipated challenges for the future. It will be reviewed and updated in two years’ time, during early 2019.

The Merchant Navy Welfare Board gratefully acknowledges the advice and support of all the members of this important Working Group.

**Captain David A Parsons MNM MNI**  
**Chief Executive**

**24<sup>th</sup> May 2017.**