

UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce (UKSST)

Friday 14 July 2023

University of Southampton

Item 1: Welcome and Chair's Business

- Chair welcomed the Taskforce to its 13th meeting and thanked Tahsin Tezdogan for hosting at the University of Southampton's Boldrewood Innovation Campus. He noted that this was the first meeting of the Taskforce's third and final phase, Engagement.
- Chair set out the meeting objectives, which were to:
 - Agree the text in the Taskforce's report, so that it could be designed and printed.
 - Take stock against the Terms of Reference (ToR) ahead of the final phase of work.
 - Discuss feedback on the Taskforce's report and plans for future collaboration with the Senior Responsible Officers (SROs) from the National Shipbuilding Office (NSO) and the Department for Education (DfE).
 - Receive an update on the toolkit for employers that Taskforce members were working on.
 - Agree objectives and milestones for the final phase of work.
 - Conduct the first of several engagement exercises for this phase, this time with local stakeholders from the Solent.
- Chair asked the group to approve the minutes from the Taskforce's June meeting and updated minutes from May's meeting. The group confirmed that they were content with both. These will be published on gov.uk.
- Chair thanked the SROs from NSO and DfE, Rex Cox and Tessa Griffiths (respectively), for coming to the meeting in person. Chair also thanked Taskforce members, particularly those who had led Solution Groups in the previous phase, for their hard work.
- Chair showed Taskforce members a draft designed version of their report. Feedback was as follows:
 - Photos should demonstrate diversity of people and products in the industry.
 - Photos need to be high resolution, so members who had shared lower resolution photos would need to resend these.
 - The front cover should include a photo of people.

Item 2: Terms of Reference Review

- Chair talked through a set of slides that identified what, against its ToR, the Taskforce had achieved, what it was on track to achieve by the end of December 2023 (when its work finishes), and what it had only been able to partially achieve.
- Chair explained that just two things would only be partially achieved:
 - *“establish a baseline understanding of the upskilling, reskilling and future skilling needs to support shipbuilding across the UK”*

- Chair explained that this work had been superseded by the NSO Capacity & Capability survey, but the Taskforce drew on the research it had already conducted in the Discovery Phase and work shared by organisations such as British Marine to develop a working understanding of the sector's skills needs.
- *“review detailed analyses of all relevant skills training and their uptake”*
 - Chair noted that the Secretariat worked with officials from Devolved Governments to analyse apprenticeship and degree pathways into the sector on behalf of the Taskforce. Other priorities, such as the image of the sector, and the impact of technological change, have subsequently been the Taskforce's main focus.
- Chair asked if Taskforce members were content with the extent to which the Taskforce had fulfilled its objectives in the ToR. Comments included:
 - Andy Cree suggested that the Taskforce map its recommendations against the ToR. This was agreed to. Andy Cree also noted a need to link the recommendations back to the National Shipbuilding Strategy Refresh (NSbS) objectives in the report. It was agreed that designers would work on an existing report diagram that demonstrates this, to make it stand out more.
 - Matt Bolton suggested adding the ToR to the report as an annex. This was agreed to.

Item 3: NSO and DfE feedback on progress

- Chair explained that at its last meeting, the Taskforce agreed to recommend that government establishes a delivery group to act as an overarching industry body for shipbuilding skills. There were questions about what this would look like in practice, so SROs Rex Cox and Tessa Griffiths were present to discuss this further, as well as share broader feedback on the Taskforce's report.
- Rex thanked Taskforce members for their work, and for giving up time and money to attend monthly meetings. Rex shared feedback on the Taskforce's report. He suggested editing part of a chapter that referred to procurement policy, to give it a clearer link to skills.
 - Taskforce members explained that they feel current procurement policy has a significant impact on skills. They explained that a stable order book helps employers to feel confident of future work and therefore able to increase investment in their workforce. They also asserted that it helps attract people to the sector in a competitive environment, as it demonstrates job security. Members argued that there needs to be more certainty and a fairer chance of UK shipbuilders winning contracts than there is currently, to make increased investment in training feel worthwhile. Taskforce members agreed to articulate this link more clearly in the relevant report section.
- Tessa commended the Taskforce on its report. She noted that there would be a gear shift once the Taskforce concludes, as the work required would no longer be setting out a vision for the sector; it would be delivering the Taskforce's vision. That would require a different kind of group. Industry would have a critical role to

play in delivery, so that group must be led by industry, and be empowered to get things done.

- Rex explained that the Shipbuilding Enterprise for Growth (SEG), an industry/government forum convened by the NSO, would provide an effective delivery and governance mechanism for a new group dedicated to delivering the Taskforce's recommendations. He suggested that a new sub-group of the SEG could be created, with a Chair who would fill the skills post on the SEG.
 - Matt Bolton agreed that industry would play an integral role in delivery. He said there would need to be leadership and investment from industry in carrying forward the Taskforce's recommendations. He said he supported the plan to use the SEG as a home for the delivery group initially, but expressed an ambition that a new, solely industry-led organisation would eventually be formed.
 - Eddie Corbett asked if the SEG was comprised of 'talkers' or 'doers'. Rex said it was a bit of both, but membership is refreshed every two years, which provides an opportunity to recruit more 'doers' if needed.
 - Matthew Guy suggested that the SEG Shadow Board could complement the work of a new delivery group. Rex agreed.
 - Andy Cree and Nick Mansell asserted that the SEG would need to adapt to take on this work and recognise a changed purpose. Rex explained that the SEG already had a standing agenda item on skills, which was dedicated to receiving updates on the Taskforce but would change to fit the next phase of work.
 - Tessa reflected that a lot of the Taskforce's feedback was about the process of setting up the new group, but it sounded as though members were content with the objective, and the right process just needed to be identified.
 - Kerrie Forster said the SEG would need to communicate about itself better so that industry understands its role and function. Rex reflected that part of SEG members' role is to feed back to the part of industry they represent, and some have been more effective at this than others.
 - Hannah Prowse argued that shipbuilding is a small sector and would have more power if it works with other sectors that have common challenges. She said the SEG must relate effectively to other sectors. Tessa agreed that this is vital, and government can play a key role in supporting join-up. Rex explained that the SEG is new and still developing but has links to adjacent sectors and works collaboratively.
- Chair thanked members for their reflections and explained that as a next step, he would take a proposal to the SEG when it next meets in September.

Item 4: Toolkit

- Chair handed over to Rachel Kitley, to update the Taskforce on progress to create a toolkit for employers to help them navigate the skills systems across the UK.
- Rachel shared a draft toolkit with Taskforce members. She explained that this would be designed to match the Taskforce's report and published alongside it.

She stated that the toolkit would be a practical, digital booklet with lots of links, bringing together skills products across the four nations. It would particularly be aimed at small and medium sized employers, who the Taskforce found struggle to understand what is on offer. It would help the sector to increase its utilisation of existing skills programmes and provide a tangible link between the report and actions that its readers can immediately take.

- Feedback from Taskforce members was positive. They agreed that this would be an impactful resource that would be useful to other sectors too. Members suggested:
 - Adding a link to the STEM learning website, which has an employers section.
 - Increasing the emphasis on higher education, to show which universities provide naval architecture degrees and have advisory boards that shipyards can sit on to shape delivery.
 - Adding acknowledgement that skills can provide a way to deliver contractual social value obligations. Matthew Guy agreed to share draft wording for inclusion on this.
 - Eddie Corbett said he had shared the toolkit with Harland & Wolff's Human Resources department, who found it useful.

Item 5: Commencing Phase 3: Engagement

- Chair introduced Hannah Patterson from the DfE Secretariat team, to present a proposed structure for the Taskforce's final phase of work, Engagement.
- Hannah set out the objectives for this phase, as described in the ToR, and proposed a set of Taskforce-led activities to take place within and outside remaining monthly meetings.
- Proposed activity outside meetings comprised of:
 - A working group to create a new narrative for shipbuilding;
 - Skills Foresighting workshops; and
 - Member-led engagement with industry and education stakeholders in key shipbuilding areas, to encourage take-up of the Taskforce's recommendations.
- Hannah suggested that the Taskforce used its remaining monthly meetings to:
 - Create a shipbuilding skills charter that could underpin its recommendations for industry;
 - Engage stakeholders in each meeting's geographic region; and
 - Receive progress updates on activity outside meetings.
- Hannah also presented a timeline showing the milestones that would be achieved each month until December 2023, when the Taskforce's work would conclude.
- Questions and comments from Taskforce members were as follows:
 - Sarah Dhanda said marketing and communications experts would be needed to develop a new narrative for the sector. Hannah reassured her that the NSO communications team had offered to facilitate this working group.
 - Sarah Dhanda asked if the Taskforce would create a delivery action plan, to hand over to the delivery group. Hannah explained that as the

Taskforce had decided to recommend that government establish the delivery group, full details of that group would be set out as part of the government response to the Taskforce's report. That new group would need to be given space to consider how best to deliver the Taskforce's recommendations. Government intended to work closely with the Taskforce to develop plans for the delivery group but would need to leave room for the individuals appointed to the group to interpret their task as they see fit.

Item 6: London International Shipping Week and report launch (update)

- Hannah Patterson reminded the Taskforce of plans to launch its report at London International Shipping Week, aboard Trinity House Vessel (THV) Galatea in partnership with Maritime UK.
- Hannah explained that there was a link where people could register interest in attending the event, and asked Taskforce members to circulate this link with their networks.
- Bob King stated that he did not support use of this venue as the vessel was built overseas. Rex Cox acknowledged that THV Galatea was not built in the UK but argued that hosting the report launch on this ship would signal the potential for UK shipbuilding if the skills pipeline was nurtured effectively.

Item 7: Next Steps and AONB

- The Chair confirmed that the Taskforce was content to approve the report for publication, subject to final tweaks to photographs and the section on procurement policy.
- Chair thanked Tahsin Tezdogan again for hosting the meeting. He informed members that the next meeting would take place online on Thursday 10 August.

Item 8: Tour & regional engagement

- Taskforce members received a tour of some research facilities at University of Southampton's Boldrewood Innovation Campus.
- Taskforce members then hosted education and shipbuilding industry stakeholders from the Solent region for a networking event. Taskforce members outlined their recommendations and encouraged stakeholders to take forward actions for education and industry.