

**UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce (UKSST)**

*Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2023*

*Microsoft Teams*

**Item 1: Welcome and Chair's Business**

- Chair welcomed the Taskforce to its 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, noting that this was only the 3<sup>rd</sup> occasion that the Taskforce had met online, such had been the excellent commitment shown by busy Taskforce members. He also welcomed back to Rod Paterson (National Shipbuilding Office) and Tessa Griffiths (Department for Education).
- Chair reminded members that there were four meetings remaining until the end of the Taskforce, and that the report launch was only a mere month away.
- Chair acknowledged a request from Bob King to amend the July meeting minutes. Bob King stated that he wanted the minutes to recognise his personal concern about the venue chosen for the report launch event. The minutes of the last meeting were subsequently approved.
- Chair asked members to review the designed copy of the report previously circulated with the meeting papers, and asked for final feedback on the design to be shared with the Secretariat as soon as possible.
- Sarah Dhanda asked if the report's subtitle could be reconsidered. Other members agreed that it should be reviewed. Chair asked members to share alternatives with the group. After the meeting ended, members agreed to the Chair's suggestion to delete the subtitle altogether.
- At their request, members had received a core brief within the meeting papers, containing suggested lines to take on Taskforce work. Members asked if the secretariat could revise a few of the questions, particularly one about the scope and focus of the Taskforce's recommendations. The secretariat agreed to revise the core brief to capture their feedback.
- The Chair reminded members that they had remained true to their original Terms of Reference.
- Chair reminded the Taskforce about the strands of activity that would be required in this Engagement Phase, which were: establishing a 'new narrative' for the sector, participating in a 'Skills Foresighting' exercise, and engaging with stakeholders in key regions across the UK. Hannah Patterson (Department for Education) shared which activity Taskforce members had been allocated to. Keith Longman asked to be placed in the 'new narrative' group, which was agreed.
- Hannah Patterson shared a proposed agenda for the report launch event and asked members to support communications around the launch.
- Hannah Patterson updated members on outline plans for the proposed Shipbuilding Skills Delivery group. She explained that the Taskforce would have the opportunity to draft a letter to the Shipbuilding Enterprise for Growth (SEG) setting out recommendations for a delivery group's priorities.

## **Item 2: Reflections on Solent stakeholder engagement**

- Chair invited members to discuss the stakeholder engagement activity held at the last Taskforce meeting in Southampton.
- Sarah Dhanda said that she liked the approach, but wondered if more needed to be done to understand the impact that the Taskforce should seek from engagement, and what attendees would be taking away from the meetings.
- In the Teams chat, Hannah Patterson stated that there were actions that industry and stakeholders could take immediately, and that the engagement slides shared with members highlight what these actions could be.
- Bob King reminded members of the importance of inviting members of the workforce to engagement events and said that this could be achieved by inviting trade union representatives.
- Andy Cree stated that it would be important to get the guest list right for future events, and stated the importance of representing the broader industry so that all sectors could engage with the final report and recommendations.
- Members discussed the importance of engagement activity, stating that including a diverse range of stakeholders would be key to making an impact. Members stated that there should be a mechanism to feed back questions and points raised by stakeholders. Hannah Patterson stated that members would be able to update the Taskforce on stakeholder views in future Taskforce meetings.
- Kerrie Forster asked for an industry-led communication strategy to be developed to ensure that industry and individuals who did not read the report could still engage with the recommendations. Hannah Patterson informed the Taskforce that there will be defined communications plan for the report launch event. She stated that additional communications strategies for engagement beyond the report would be welcome.

## **Item 3: Proposed Shipbuilding Skills Charter**

- Chair introduced the draft charter, which was circulated with the meeting papers, and reminded members that the role of this charter would be to facilitate long-term industry commitment to the Taskforce's recommendations. Chair invited member feedback.
- Andy Cree asked whether government would be a signatory, arguing that it would make the charter more impactful.
- Kerrie Forster argued that a charter would need to be flexible to accommodate both large companies and SMEs. Kerrie said he was not opposed to the idea of a charter but said a commitment to a delivery group should be priority.
- Matthew Guy raised concern that companies with multiple interests may not want to sign up to a charter. He said it would need to have a clear purpose, which could be getting corporate commitment to develop the skills and capabilities needed to deliver the 30-year shipbuilding pipeline.

- Paul Feely said he liked the idea of a charter as a mechanism to ensure corporate commitment to skills, but the charter must be linked to delivery. Paul noted that most businesses are driven by customer requirements, noting that for the primes, the main customer is government.
- Sarah Dhanda stated it would be difficult to ensure a charter was impactful, as many businesses would be reluctant to sign unless the commitments are minimal.
- Richard Westgarth clarified that his original intention in proposing this charter was to achieve a cultural change across industry. Several members agreed that a charter would be a good way to encourage cultural change.
- Keith Longman said there could be confusion between the proposed outline charter and the set of pledges listed in the Taskforce's toolkit. He said it would be challenging for a charter to appeal to smaller businesses, and queried whether it would pre-empt the work of a delivery group.
- Chair thanked members for their feedback and agreed to discuss the idea of a charter further at the next Taskforce meeting.

#### **Item 4: Next Steps and AONB**

- Chair asked members to confirm whether they were attending the report launch, stating the importance of the event as a collegiate celebration of the expert work they have completed together. Chair asked the Taskforce to consult their respective communications teams to inform them about plans for the report launch, and seek supportive quotes.
- Chair also asked members to inform the secretariat of guests that are yet to be invited to the launch.
- Hannah Patterson informed the group that there was a strict capacity of 120 people at the venue, and that a guestlist was therefore required.
- Hannah Patterson encouraged members to plan to bring along apprentices and trainees to attend the launch event and Maritime UK's careers fair.
- Bryony Danks (Department for Education) raised awareness of the opportunity to get involved with the Department for Education's Skills for Life campaign, encouraging members to apply to be involved.
- Hannah Patterson informed members about an opportunity with the Gatsby Foundation who are looking for a range of case studies to feature on their technicians website.
- Chair reminded the Taskforce of the next meeting on Thursday 14 September at Thales in Crawley.
- The Chair was fulsome in his praise and gratitude on behalf of the Taskforce to Bryony Danks and Helen Barker, since this was their last Taskforce meeting. He wished them every success in their new roles ahead.

## **Regional Engagement Activity: National Stakeholders**

After a break, the Taskforce hosted national stakeholders to brief them on the recommendations ahead of the report launch. Those in attendance were:

- George Brash, Unite
- Jonathan Green, GMB
- Laurence Turner, GMB
- Lesley Robinson, British Marine
- Paul Sheerin, Scottish Engineering
- Rick Graham, Unite
- Tom Chant, Society of Maritime Industries

Chair welcomed the guests to the event and gave an overview of the work of the UKSST. UKSST members took the guests through the Taskforce's four priorities and the recommendations within the report and invited feedback and questions.

### **Leveraging and enhancing existing system**

Keith Longman and Richard Westgarth covered this priority. They outlined the toolkit for employers that the Taskforce has created, and recommendations for a 'network of excellence', a 'bootcamp-style investment' and the idea of a 'shipbuilding charter'.

- Lesley Robinson said that the toolkit would be useful in the medium term, but argued there is a need for immediate help. She suggested that the bootcamp-style investment would be helpful for boatbuilders on the south coast of England. Keith Longman acknowledged Lesley's concerns, stating that making the industry more attractive is another Taskforce priority, which will also help alleviate skills challenges in the short-term.
- Johnathan Green asked what role industry and unions would play in the proposed 'network of excellence'. Richard Westgarth stated that skills work will cover all aspects of the sector and that it should also consider regional differences.
- Tom Chant said it was important that language in the toolkit was accessible for SMEs, and asked whether the toolkit would be available at the launch, and how its use would be monitored. Keith Longman confirmed that it would be available at the launch and accessible online too.

### **Promoting shipbuilding as a vibrant and inclusive sector**

Sarah Dhanda and Tahsin Tezdogan outlined the recommendations under this priority, which included the creation of a 'new narrative for shipbuilding', as well as a communications campaign to be coordinated by the National Shipbuilding Office, and the creation of a 'career pathways framework'. Sarah highlighted the importance of focusing on all people and not just young people in this work.

- Rick Graham said a clearing house, like UCAS, should be set up for entry level opportunities and apprenticeships. He also said that if the academic bar is set too

high, there is a risk that the skills gap will not be overcome. Sarah Dhanda highlighted that UCAS is doing work on apprenticeships but said she would like this to be brought forward.

- Laurence Turner noted that many skilled workers are approaching retirement and stressed the importance of considering neurodiversity in training.

### **Ensuring shipbuilding skills are fit for the future**

Matthew Guy and Nick Mansell outlined the Taskforce's recommendations for 'Skills Foresighting' and 'Microcredentials'.

- Johnathan Green asked whether the Taskforce had considered how lifelong learning could be supported and encouraged within the sector. Nick Mansell said this culture of embedded learning is already in place in some companies, and the Taskforce wants to build structures so this can be adopted across the whole workforce as the pace of technological change will only increase.

### **Collaborating on shipbuilding skills**

Andy Cree and Kerrie Forster explained that the Taskforce recommends a 'Shipbuilding Skills Delivery Group' is established, to foster continued collaboration within the sector.

- Johnathan Green and Rick Graham said unions and the workforce should play a key role in this group.

Chair thanked the stakeholders for their constructive contributions and insight. He recommended they join the Taskforce mailing list to receive regular newsletters and be invited to attend the report launch.