

UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce (UKSST)

Monday 9 October 2023, 10:30-16:30

Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff

Item 1: Welcome and Chair's Business

- The Chair welcomed the group to the 16th UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce (UKSST) meeting and said that he was delighted to be in Cardiff, as the Taskforce had now visited all four UK nations. He thanked Chris Hare for hosting the meeting and reiterated his intention to meet with Devolved Government officials in the coming weeks to ensure a smooth transition to the Skills Delivery Group (SDG).
- The Chair welcomed Gladys Mugugu who introduced herself as the new Grade 6 for shipbuilding at the Department for Education (DfE), replacing Charlotte Govan.
- The Chair introduced Tony Williams to the group, Deputy Head of Delivery and Naval Officer Seconded to the National Shipbuilding Office (NSO).
- The Chair outlined the meeting agenda and confirmed that the previous meeting minutes were cleared.

Item 2: Shipbuilding Skills Delivery Group

- The Chair handed over to Rue McIlmoyle, who presented the Taskforce with a working draft of a proposal for a Skills Delivery Group (SDG), to sit under the Shipbuilding Enterprise for Growth (SEG). The proposal stated that the SDG would oversee the delivery of the UKSST recommendations and be a voice for skills in the sector going forward. The delivery function of the SDG will require specific skills, like gathering and analysing information, communication, and project design and delivery. For this reason, the proposal was that recruitment of members would be driven by the collective skills required to deliver the group's objectives, but representation of the sector would also be important. Policy leads from NSO and DfE will also be members. Rue explained that the NSO would provide basic secretariat for the SDG, as well as some project management support. Like other SEG members, the SDG would need to provide any further administration or project support that they require themselves.
- Rue asked Taskforce members for their feedback and explained that this would inform the draft Terms of Reference for the SDG, which in turn would go to the Shipbuilding Enterprise for Growth (SEG) for comment and ultimately be cleared by the SDG, once constituted.
- Feedback from Taskforce members included:
 - Taskforce members expressed concern that the proposal paper came from NSO and not the Taskforce. Hannah Patterson (DfE) explained this was because the Taskforce had recommended that government convenes the SDG, so government was now taking the idea forward, but close consultation with the Taskforce was important. Hannah reassured the Taskforce that this meant government would be accountable if something went wrong with the SDG, and not the Taskforce. Taskforce members noted that it would have been ideal for industry to convene this group independently but acknowledged that establishing it under the SEG was a good workaround given there was no delivery route from industry.
 - Bob King said that he did not think the SDG draft proposal should be an NSO paper and that he believed SDG would be too far removed from the SEG. He expressed concern about how the membership of the SDG would be selected and criticised the absence of trade unions on the list of sectors the SDG would

- aim to represent. He said he was concerned the SDG would become a group of well-meaning individuals with no authority or power to deliver.
- Agreement about the importance of communication to be included in the skills portfolio for SDG members, as the SDG should become responsible for changing the narrative around the shipbuilding sector.
 - Recognition from Taskforce members that the proposal paper closely incorporated the thinking about this recommendation undertaken by Solution Group 2 in the Prioritisation Phase of the Taskforce project.
 - The importance of clarifying accountability arrangements for the SDG and how it will interact with the SEG, which Taskforce members felt was unclear so far.
 - The importance of regionality to shipbuilding skills, which Taskforce members felt needed more recognition in the proposal. Members felt sustained input from Devolved Government officials would be important, as well as representatives from each nation among SDG membership.
 - SMEs will struggle to bring their own resources to the SDG, but this should not diminish their input or representation.
- Rue acknowledged feedback on the importance of regionality and accountability in particular and agreed to take these views into consideration when developing draft Terms of Reference for the SDG.
 - Summing up, the Chair then invited feedback from Taskforce members on the outline letter from the Taskforce to the SDG, which had been circulated as a meeting paper. Feedback included:
 - The letter should be accompanied by the offer of a joint a meeting or workshop between the Taskforce and SDG, once constituted.
 - The letter should remind the SDG to be demanding of industry and government in calling for investment in shipbuilding skills in particular and the UK skills infrastructure in general.
 - The letter should strongly emphasise that the SDG's role is to implement the recommendations in the UKSST report, and that a comprehensive SMART project plan, including milestones, would be required.
 - The letter should define what success would look like.
 - The Taskforce's recommendation for a 'new narrative' for shipbuilding is urgent and should be prioritised.
 - Similar to the proposal paper, the letter should be clear about the accountability framework between the SDG and the SEG.
 - The collaborative culture of the Taskforce has been key to its success. The letter should encourage the SDG to follow this lead and put aside competitive interests to work ever closely together.
 - Bob King said he was worried the Taskforce's report was being handed to government and that nothing would be delivered. He said he did not agree with the NSO convening the SDG. The Chair reassured Bob that he was confident in government's commitment to recruit and convene the SDG and that he hoped there would be an annual review of progress.

Item 3: Taskforce member updates

- Chair asked Taskforce members to share progress on their work outside meetings on Skills Foresighting, engaging regional stakeholders, and developing a 'new narrative' for shipbuilding.
- The Taskforce heard updates from Adrian Bevin, Eddie Corbett, Linton Roberts, Paul Feely and Rachel Kitley about their work to promote the UKSST report and

recommendations to stakeholders in south west England, Northern Ireland, north west England, Scotland, and amongst educators.

- Paul Feely asked the Taskforce whether the first Skills Foresighting cycle should focus on robotics and automation or data and AI. The Taskforce agreed that robotics and automation would have more of an impact in the short term, and therefore should come before data and AI.
- Chair noted that the NSO had recently held a workshop to develop the 'new narrative' for shipbuilding and invited reflections on it from Taskforce members. They agreed that a clear message about the sector must be identified. Gladys said that DfE is launching a new communications campaign in January to promote skills and technical education. Gladys said there is a natural synergy between this campaign and the Taskforce's recommendation for a 'new narrative' for shipbuilding and campaign to promote it. The Taskforce agreed to include an agenda item on the 'new narrative' at the next meeting.

Item 4: Next steps and AONB

- Hannah Patterson said there would be a demonstration of Enginuity's digital career tools at the next meeting, to enable work to begin on the Taskforce's recommendation for a career pathways framework for shipbuilding.
- The Chair thanked Chris Hare for hosting the meeting.
- Chair noted that the next Taskforce meeting would be Monday 13 November, Cowes Enterprise College, Isle of Wight.

Item 5: Regional engagement session

- Individuals from organisations including Careers Wales, Industry Wales, Mainstay Marine, Unite the Union, UK Dredging, Purus Wind and Maritime Enterprise joined the meeting.
- The Chair welcomed visitors and thanked them for their time. He gave an introduction to the Taskforce, its aims, the UKSST report, and the toolkit.
- Taskforce members outlined the recommendations under the four priorities in the report: collaboration, awareness, opportunity, and fit for the future.
- Reflections from the stakeholders in attendance included:
 - Sector Skills Agreement programmes in Wales and Regional Skills Partnerships can help ensure collaboration – an important cross-cutting theme.
 - Welsh shipbuilding businesses can struggle to attract talent to remote areas. Stakeholders felt the Taskforce's ideas about growing awareness reflected their experience. They also highlighted the importance of raising awareness at primary education level.
 - Many sectors have shortages of similar skills and should collaborate to grow a sustainable pipeline.