

UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce (UKSST)

Tuesday 12 December 2023, 10:00-13:00

Ministry of Defence, Whitehall, London

Item 1: Welcome and Chair's Business

- The Chair welcomed attendees to the 18th and final UKSST meeting. He thanked all members for contributing their time, wisdom, and passion for shipbuilding skills, and paid tribute to the support of the secretariat and Devolved Government officials involved in the project.
- The Chair noted he had met with Devolved Government officials recently, to thank them for their work and ask them to support the Shipbuilding Skills Delivery Group (SDG), Skills Foresighting, and work to develop a 'new narrative' for shipbuilding. He said Devolved Governments would be instrumental to keeping members abreast of skills priorities in all four nations in the next phase of work.
- Chair asked Taskforce members to confirm they were content with the minutes from the previous meeting. There were no objections, so the minutes were agreed. These will be published on gov.uk.

Item 2: Shipbuilding Skills Delivery Group

- Chair turned to Aimee Spriggs (National Shipbuilding Office (NSO)) to give an update on establishment of the SDG. Aimee explained NSO was still working towards the first SDG meeting taking place in the spring and holding a handover meeting between the Taskforce and the SDG once recruited.
- Aimee answered questions from Taskforce members on issues including the application process, pace, and government response to the Taskforce's report.
 - Aimee explained that the recruitment for the SDG would be a competitive process, similar to that of the Taskforce.
 - Rex Cox (NSO) acknowledged that it was taking time to establish the SDG, but said it was important to get the process right.
 - Charlotte Govan (Department for Education (DfE)) stated that the plan was still to publish the government response in the first quarter of 2024.
- Some taskforce members felt that the SDG should be able to work outside the parameters of the existing skills system. Taskforce members also noted that the SDG would be crucial to establishing a coherent voice for shipbuilding skills and working with other sectors and contribute to a broader conversation on the skills system, including identifying what 'good' would look like.
- Taskforce members reiterated the importance of hearing small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) perspectives, arguing they can often be overlooked. It was acknowledged that the Shipbuilding Enterprise for Growth (SEG), is exploring how better to represent SME needs.
- Charlotte Govan noted the importance of consistent skills policy and said substantial reform was not currently being explored by DfE. She acknowledged that the Taskforce could use its priorities letter to the SDG to land the messages members felt were important.
- Taskforce members discussed the letter, debating whether significant amendments were needed. Members agreed to add one additional paragraph, acknowledging that they felt more fundamental reform to the skills system was required, but shipbuilding would need to work collaboratively with other sectors to push for change, while working within the parameters of the current system in the meantime. After this addition, Taskforce members agreed to the text of the letter, and provided their signatures for it.

Item 3: Engagement updates

- Taskforce members provided updates on how they had been engaging their networks on the report and wider work of the Taskforce over the last month. Key groups including domestic and international trade unions, the academic community, political parties, heritage organisations, local organisations in key shipbuilding regions, and other parts of the wider manufacturing sector, had all been engaged.
- Kerrie Forster provided a final update on the Taskforce communications strategy he had developed. He thanked Taskforce members who had shared key contacts, and noted there was still time for others to share if they had not already. He suggested doing an end of project press release, which the Secretariat agreed to explore. **ACTION: Secretariat.**
- Paul Feely provided a final update on Skills Foresighting. He said an initial planning workshop was scheduled for 20th December, after which Taskforce members who had volunteered to be involved in the first Foresighting cycle would begin to be involved in subsequent workshops. He also explained that NMIS was holding an event on 30th January that the same Taskforce members would be invited to.
- Taskforce members asked what would happen to the UKSST gov.uk page after the group concluded, and what would happen to online content like the report. The secretariat agreed to look into both issues. **ACTION: Secretariat.**

Item 4: Taskforce reflections

- Chair invited reflections from the two Senior Responsible Owners for the UKSST, Rex Cox (NSO) and Sarah Maclean (DfE).
 - Sarah acknowledged how impressed the Skills Minister had been with the Taskforce's work. Sarah said the Taskforce's report launch in September, and meeting at the University of Southampton in July, had been highlights for her and Tessa Griffiths, her jobshare partner, in their time working with the Taskforce. She thanked the Chair for his work too, saying he had operated with grace, style and efficiency.
 - Rex acknowledged the Taskforce's commitment to persist through challenging moments and reach consensus. He said the transition to the SDG marked a key moment in a longer journey to improve shipbuilding skills, and said skills remained a vital part of the National Shipbuilding Strategy Refresh.
- Chair invited reflections from Taskforce members and officials involved in the project. Many expressed gratitude and pride in the way everyone had worked together, produced tangible outcomes, and worked at a rapid pace.

Item 9: Next steps and AONB

- Hannah Patterson (DfE) noted that the final Taskforce newsletter would be sent to subscribers shortly. She also noted that the final set of meeting minutes would be circulated with a deadline for feedback, as there would not be another meeting to clear them in.
- Chair thanked all attendees again, saying it was an honour and a privilege to chair the Taskforce and that he had been thrilled by the collaboration, trust and game-changing recommendations members had collectively achieved. He thanked the secretariat team for their commendable work and wished the forthcoming SDG every success.