



MERCHANT NAVY WELFARE BOARD

NOTES OF THE SEAFARERS' WELFARE – CRISIS WORKING GROUP VIDEOCONFERENCE MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 6TH JULY 2022

PRESENT: Ms Sharon Coveney (Chair)	MNWB
Ms Jo Doheny (JD)	The Seafarers' Charity (TSC)
Mr Martin Foley (MF)	Stella Maris (SM)
Mr Simon Grainge (SG)	ISWAN
Mr Andrew Jones (AJ)	Nautilus Welfare Fund (NWF)
Ms Gwen Lancaster (GL)	Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)
Miss Victoria Muir (VM)	Trinity House (TH)
Ms Carla Rockson (CR)	Marine Society (MS)
Mrs Sandra Welch (SW)	Seafarers Hospital Society (SHS)

The meeting opened at 11.00am. The Chair reported that MNWB and The Fishermen's Mission (TFM) have produced a C188 Guide in consultation with TFM, MCA, NI and the Fishing Industry Safety Group (FISG). The guide provides a summary of key elements of the UK legislation on the International Convention on Work in Fishing. A pdf version of the guide is available on the MNWB website: [Working-in-Fishing-Convention.pdf \(toolkitfiles.co.uk\)](http://Working-in-Fishing-Convention.pdf_(toolkitfiles.co.uk)) and members were encouraged to contact celia@mnwb.org if they needed hard copies. The Chair was also pleased to report on the £2 million grant fund launched by the Board to support front-line welfare providers and to invest in skills and diversity in the maritime sector. The grants platform was now live: [Grants to Organisations : Merchant Navy Welfare Board \(mnwb.org\)](http://Grants to Organisations : Merchant Navy Welfare Board (mnwb.org)) To date, the Board has issued 6,400 SIM cards to be distributed to Ukrainian seafarers, with around 1,500 remaining. If more are needed, the Board will negotiate with Vodafone who are keen to support Ukrainian seafarers with this project. As the SIM cards have a six month validity, an initial surge in demand was expected which would then drop off. Front-line service providers are encouraged to contact Aiden Harvey, MNWB Projects & Welfare Co-ordinator aiden@mnwb.org.uk if they require additional SIMs.

SG, ISWAN – From ISWAN's perspective, things have settled down in terms of the Ukraine crisis. There has been an increase in the number of calls to the helpline, with people seeking financial support. The Ukraine Crisis Support Fund has received a lot of applications although the fund has been paused as there is no money left. This won't reopen unless significant sums of money come into SIRF which is where the funding has come from. The SIRF stakeholders have met to discuss the next steps. A decision was made that a plateau has been reached in terms of the amount of money coming into SIRF. It was decided that it was time to review the support offered and to understand what people thought should happen next. SG emphasised the important work of Chaplains around the world and other welfare organisations who have supported seafarers affected by the Ukraine crisis; as well as shipowners and managers who have worked alongside unions to get people out of the country. Jason Zuidema, ICMA, is putting together a survey to be sent out to industry, unions and welfare organisations, to build a picture of what kind of support has been available, how effective it has been and what support is needed going forward. This review is expected to be circulated on Monday 11th July and will be live for two weeks. Jason will report on the results in a month's time. The findings could result in immediate activities requiring funding or further work could be needed to assess the results. The Chair reported that the Board would be keen to support the review as needed and would be able to assist with promoting the survey to its Constituents and PWCs.

SW, SHS – There has been a decline in the number of people requesting grants from SHS; down 9% on Q1. 75 grants have been awarded this quarter to the value of £46K. Grants have been awarded for help with mobility aids and to those requesting help with arrears relating to Council tax and rent arrears; particularly those in the fishing industry. One grant has been awarded from the Anchor Fund. With permission from TSC, this has been extended to people affected by the

P&O redundancies although there has been a very small uptake. Members were encouraged to promote the fund to those in need. There has been a huge increase in those approaching SHS for free fast-track physiotherapy, likely due to current NHS waiting lists. This quarter, SHS has provided 284 treatment sessions; almost 100 more than during the last quarter. This enables people to stay fit in order to continue working at sea. The monthly Seafarer Health webinars have been successful; details for the autumn webinars will be circulated in due course. The webinars aim to help keep seafarers and fishers healthy at sea. MNWB has helped SHS to circulate a survey to ascertain the number of AEDs and the need for these in seafarers' centres and ports around the country. 19 responses have been collected so far and the survey will be promoted further so that more data can be collected. Members were encouraged to ask their Port Chaplains to complete the survey: https://qfreeaccountssjc1.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bPhlh1iCh4rnMMe

JD, TSC – JD was delighted to report that Deborah Layde (DL) had taken on the role of CEO at TSC. Members joined the Chair in congratulating DL and looked forward to continuing to work with her. JD reported that the SIRF stakeholder group had paused the Ukraine Crisis Support Fund and that a survey would be launched on Monday (as reported on by SG). TSC has signed an MoU with the IAPH (International Association of Ports and Harbours). Funds raised will be distributed through Mortrans to their port workers. £8,300 has been paid out to date and £7,200 is expected to be transferred to Mortrans in the next couple of weeks, subject to approval at tomorrow's Impact meeting. ISWAN had requested a grant for £136K which was approved. As there were not enough funds in the SIRF, the trustees had agreed to pay for this from TSC's main grant. \$50K had been received from TK Foundation and would be transferred to ISWAN. TSC took part in the Pride parade on Saturday along with Maritime UK, Stena, RYA and other maritime groups. TSC hopes to continue to support this as part of its ED&I programme.

Post-meeting note: JD has confirmed that this year's ANSS (Annual National Service for Seafarers) will take place on Wednesday 12 October 2022 at St Paul's Cathedral. For further information please email ANSS@theseafarerscharity.org

MF, SM – SM is preparing for this week's Sea Sunday. The Vatican has put out a Sea Sunday message, available on SM's website: [Sea Sunday 2022: Grant seafarers shore leave, urges Vatican - Stella Maris](#) MF has held discussions with TSC regarding work arising from the recent research project undertaken by Nottingham University into the treatment of migrant fishers and separate research into the subject undertaken by the ITF. SM is supporting a number of foreign fishers who are in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). These fishers came to the UK on transit visas, but once they go into the NRM, they have no right to work in the UK because of the transit visa. Whilst awaiting a decision on whether they will be granted leave to remain, they cannot work. The average length of time that victims of modern slavery are waiting in the NRM is two years. MF emphasised that those affected were desperate to work. SM is trying to raise this issue with the Home Office, MF encouraged members to contact their MP on the subject and asked the Chair if he could continue the conversation with MNWB. The Chair reported that she had discussed the issues relating to the transit visa with John Cousley at their recent meeting. JD reported that the CRCC was in touch with people who were in this same situation in Cornwall. SW reported that SHS were ready to help with welfare grants and support through Togetherall as needed.

AJ, NWF – The Chair welcomed AJ who had recently taken over from Mick Howarth as Director of Welfare & Care at NWF. AJ reported that the workload was increasing in all areas of caseworking. NWF was in the process of appointing a new post in Aberdeen which would be a joint role between welfare and the union. AJ offered to hold a separate conversation with MF to discuss assistance that NWF caseworkers could offer. The tender and planning application had been put out for the new build development. Tender interviews would be held on 21st July. A lot of ex-seafarers were looking for access to basic financial funds and access to food banks. This was to be looked at further as the financial crisis was affecting residents at Mariners' Park. AJ thanked MNWB and TH for the Certificate of Appreciation and vouchers received today in recognition of staff for their work during the pandemic. The Chair added that the Board was delighted that TH had agreed to jointly fund the initiative and congratulated those working for

accommodation-based services for their hard work supporting MN seafarers during this challenging time. AJ reported that an open day was planned at the Park on 15th July; this would consist of a celebratory event for residents and staff and would also be used as an opportunity for recruitment. The Chair reported that MNWB would be able to assist with promoting the event via social media.

GL, MCA – Surveys and inspections are continuing. Covid - There have been discussions as to whether MIN 632, guidance for the extension of seafarer employment agreements, should be removed. Crew changes should be able to happen currently but the guidance has not yet been withdrawn. MGN 477 does cover circumstances when extensions can be given for extraordinary circumstances. There is now reportedly a much lower number of seafarers staying on beyond their SEA time. P&O – MCA is fully aware of the ongoing disputes between individual seafarers and P&O, regarding seafarers' belongings. The unions are also involved in this. Shore leave - Where there is a particular geographical area where shore leave isn't granted, MCA headquarters will look into this with the Marine Office on a case by case basis to establish what the grounds are for not permitting shore leave. Members were encouraged to report any known cases to the MCA.

VM, TH – TH was delighted to partner with MNWB on the initiative to recognise the exceptional support provided to MN seafarers by staff and volunteers of accommodation-based services during Covid. Business as usual. TH has just held their Board meeting and awarded their annual grants.

CR, MS – The Covid-19 Redundancy & Retraining Fund has been kept open during June although only one application has been received. The fund had been kept open to provide support for P&O crew who had been made redundant and remained open to support those in need. MS was inundated with applications for the Green Skills Bursary which had to be closed temporarily. This will reopen imminently for applications for those needing training in order to find work in the offshore & renewables sector. MS recently attended an apprenticeship festival at the Oval cricket ground attended by over 1,000 potential apprentices, 16-24 year olds from London and the local counties. MS and the RN were the only two organisations in attendance representing the maritime sector. A similar event was also scheduled to take place in Manchester. MS will be promoting the Coming Ashore programme to employers at an event to be held on 21st July at MS London offices.

Closing Remark – Members to forward any links, extra information and note amendments to Celia celia@mnwb.org.uk Notes from the meetings to be posted on the MNWB website [Ukraine and P&O Ferries : Merchant Navy Welfare Board \(mnwb.org\)](#) Meeting format to remain flexible.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 3rd August at 11:00.