



# Welfare Watch



## Welcome back to our newsletter!

### Welcome to the latest edition of Welfare Watch!

As we approach the festive season, I want to take a moment to reflect on what has been an extraordinary year of collaboration, innovation, and unwavering commitment to seafarers' welfare.

This autumn has been especially busy. We were delighted to welcome 70 guests — including members, port officials, government bodies, and unions — to our Seafarers' Welfare Conference at the Utilita Bowl, where important issues and ideas on welfare standards were discussed.

Other highlights include the Westminster Hall debate, the renewal of our Memorandum of Understanding with the MCA, the launch of a new Merchant Navy training video, and the recognition of our Deputy CEO with the Merchant Navy Medal.

We also celebrated the arrival of a new member to our Board, which strengthens our collective voice.

In this edition, we shine a spotlight on Care Ashore, who have unveiled their newly refurbished flats, and we invite you to share your views on future training courses to help shape the next chapter of welfare provision.

Our mission remains as vital as ever. While the MNWB provides the framework, it is our 48 member charities who deliver real impact to seafarers and their families.

As Christmas approaches, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to our members, trustees, Port Welfare Committees, staff, and all those who work tirelessly to improve the lives of seafarers.

Looking ahead to 2026, we remain focused on driving welfare standards, fostering collaboration, and embracing innovation.

On behalf of everyone at the Merchant Navy Welfare Board, I wish you and your loved ones a joyful Christmas and a prosperous New Year. Thank you for standing with us in our mission to care for those who keep global trade moving.

Enjoy the read!

**Stuart Rivers**  
**MNWB Chief Executive**

# MNWB's work on seafarers' welfare highlighted in Westminster Hall debate



**The importance of seafarers' welfare was the focus of a Westminster Hall debate, where MPs gathered to discuss the vital role of those working at sea.**

The debate led by Jen Craft, Labour MP for Thurrock, emphasised the contribution of seafarers who transport 95% of the world's goods.

She also acknowledged the work of MNWB, the UK's umbrella charity representing 48 maritime welfare organisations, including QVSR.

**Stuart Rivers, MNWB CEO who attended the debate, said:**

"We're delighted to see seafarers' welfare recognised in Westminster Hall. Together, with our member charities, we work tirelessly to support those at sea, and this debate reinforces the importance of collaboration between government and welfare organisations to ensure seafarers receive the care and services they deserve."

[Read the story](#)

# Conference addresses sector challenges



**Members, government officials, port representatives, trustees and ambassadors came together for our Seafarers' Welfare Conference at the Utilita Bowl in Southampton.**

Over two days, attendees heard from MNWB leaders, engaged in a funding panel featuring key maritime charities, and explored themes of sustainability and the growing role of AI in the charity sector.

The second day featured an address from Maritime Minister Keir Mather MP, discussions on accommodation services, and interactive sessions where attendees had their say on MNWB's future strategy.

The conference gave a platform for collaboration, innovation and shared purpose.

[View the photo gallery](#)



## Commitment to seafarers reaffirmed



**The welfare of seafarers and fishers across the UK has been strengthened with the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and the Merchant Navy Welfare Board (MNWB).**

The updated agreement reaffirms the MNWB's formal role as the UK's National Seafarers' Welfare Board and deepens collaboration on welfare services and facilities. It sets out clear responsibilities for both organisations while enhancing coordination, consultation and information sharing on issues affecting those working at sea.

**Maritime Minister Keir Mather said:**

"We're working with the sector to raise the bar for seafarers' working conditions and welfare and it's fantastic to see the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and the Merchant Navy Welfare Board coming together to deliver change."

**MNWB CEO Stuart Rivers said:**

"This MoU not only acknowledges our longstanding relationship but also highlights the vital role played by our member organisations and our Port Welfare Committees."

[Find out more](#)

# Merchant Navy awareness video launches



**We have released a training video to raise awareness of the Merchant Navy.**

This 20-minute video aims to provide charity staff and volunteers with an understanding of the Merchant Navy and the vital role of seafarers.

The video covers an array of subjects including the history of the Merchant Navy, shipboard environment, working conditions and the roles and responsibilities of seafarers.

We have also released a two-minute condensed version of this video on our social media platforms.

We hope that we have provided you with a greater understanding of the vital role seafarers play in maintaining our way of life.

# Deputy CEO receives prestigious medal



**Sharon Coveney, our Deputy CEO, received the Merchant Navy Medal for Meritorious Service - the highest medal of honour within the maritime sector - for services to safety and welfare at the official Trinity House ceremony.**

The event was attended by distinguished guests and industry leaders, with HRH Princess Anne, our Patron, presenting the medals to this year's recipients.

Some 12 exceptional British seafarers who have demonstrated outstanding dedication to the UK's maritime sector were honoured.

The event also featured addresses by Department for Transport's Lola Fadina and Maritime Minister Keir Mather, recognising the vital role of the Merchant Navy in global trade and national security.

# Veterans Outreach Support joins MNWB



**A charity that supports veterans from the UK Armed Forces and Merchant Navy along with their spouses, partners and carers across the South has joined MNWB as a member.**

Veterans Outreach Support (VOS) has become the 48th member charity of MNWB, increasing its advocacy to improve the lives of Merchant Navy Veterans and their families.

VOS now has access to a plethora of services that MNWB provide to its membership.

“We are delighted to welcome Veterans Outreach Support as a member of the Board. Their dedication to supporting Merchant Navy veterans and their families reflects the very values we uphold—collaboration, care, and commitment to those who have served at sea,” **said MNWB CEO Stuart Rivers.**

[Find out more](#)

## Seafarer Support is here to help

Seafarer Support is a free confidential telephone and online referral service helping to support serving and former UK seafarers and their families.



**Are you a serving or  
retired UK Seafarer?**



**0800 121 4765**

If you need advice or help with:

- ➡ Accommodation
- ➡ Training
- ➡ Support
- ➡ Health & Finance

[Find out more](#)



## Member Feature: Care Ashore

In each newsletter, we will be promoting our members in this section. If you want to share anything you have been up to, please don't hesitate to reach out and we can feature you.



Accommodation provider Care Ashore unveiled their newly-refurbished flats on its 260-acre estate in rural Surrey this month.

The opening began late morning, with a short ceremony where MNWB CEO Stuart Rivers formally opened the new flats and presented keys to the new resident.

After the official proceedings, there was an opportunity to speak to residents at Care Ashore and have a tour of the estate to see the ongoing improvements and gain a better understanding of the redevelopment work.

The charity has gone through a period of significant strategic and operational transformation, doing vital work to provide support to former seafarers.

## Staff Spotlight



On 10th November, we were joined by George Knight, of Directory of Social Change, who delivered an insightful training session on the evolving world of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

We are now looking forward to seeing how AI can help support our members in the new year.

## We want to hear your suggestions



Do you have any suggestions for training courses which you would like to see us run in 2026?

We are looking to expand our training course portfolio for the next calendar year to provide our members and associates with the right knowledge and facilities to tackle the ever-changing world of seafarers' welfare.

[Make your training course suggestions](#)

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