

Welfare Watch



Welcome back to our newsletter!

Welcome to the ninth edition of Welfare Watch!

As 2025 has now come to a close, lets look back at what both MNWB and our members have done throughout the previous year.

January: New MNWB President and MLC 10 years on



January 2025 marked the start of Captain Sir Ian McNaught's MNWB presidency. He was announced as new president of MNWB at the end of 2024 marking a new era for our organisation.

Seafarers, maritime charities and shipping companies attended the '*Maritime Labour Convention 10 Years on – Is it working for the seafarer*' event where discussions were held on the the successes and challenges of the Convention and its ongoing role in supporting seafarers' rights and welfare.

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February: Bristol seafarer centre refurbished



This month saw our member Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest launch their refurbished 24/7 Seafarers' Centre in Bristol with the support of a grant provided by us. We provide support to our member organisations including grant funding helping to make a positive impact on the lives of serving and retired seafarers and fishers.

March: Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal appointed as our new Patron



In March, we were thrilled to announce that Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal had agreed to become our new Patron.

HRH The Princess Royal kindly agreed to accept this role and in doing so will help champion the work we do to improve the lives of seafarers and fishers. This is the first time in MNWB's 77-year history it has had a royal patronage.

Stuart Rivers, CEO of MNWB welcomed this news as a “proud moment”.

He said, “we are honoured and privileged to welcome The Princess Royal as our new Patron,”

“I’ve been fortunate enough to meet The Princess Royal at maritime functions. Her unwavering passion for the maritime sector is so evident, making her a leading expert on maritime subjects.”

“With her wealth of experience in maritime and the charitable sector, we look forward to welcoming her to our upcoming flagship events.”

In addition to this, CEO Stuart Rivers responded to reports of a major collision in the North Sea between a US oil tanker and Portuguese cargo ship 13 miles off of the East Yorkshire Coast, with MNWB members offering pastoral, spiritual and welfare support to those who were affected.

March, also saw the launch of Welfare Watch, our monthly email newsletter bringing updates about MNWB and the work of its members to improve the lives of seafarers across the UK.

April: Welcome to our new Vice Chair and the first National Port Welfare Forum



After 24 years of dedicated service, long-serving trustee Mark Dickinson retired from his role as Vice Chair at MNWB. Mr Dickinson, who is the General Secretary of Nautilus International, joined the MNWB in 2000 and has over 30 years' experience within the shipping industry. David Appleton, who has been a trustee since 2017, has succeeded Mark as Vice Chair.

The first official National Port Welfare Forum was held in April. This important initiative brings Port Welfare Committee chairs together from across the UK to share insights and discuss common concerns.

May: Women in Maritime and VE Day 80th anniversary celebrations



Three members of the MNWB team paid a visit to Carnival HQ in Southampton to celebrate the IMO International Day for Women in Maritime where conversations were held around careers in maritime, mentorship and the need for supportive allies in traditionally male-dominated environments.

The 8th May, marked the 80th anniversary of VE Day where members, supporters and ambassadors organised and participated in multiple events.

June: Day of the Seafarer and response to cargo ship fire



Every year on 24th June, we celebrate the Day of the Seafarer. This day is especially important for MNWB and its members as it raises awareness of seafarers and the critical role they perform.

MNWB also issued a statement after an incident in Hull dock where a cargo ship caught fire on the morning of 27th June.

Stuart Rivers, CEO of the MNWB commented:

“While it’s a sobering reminder that seafarers face serious risks, even when moored in port, we commend Humberside Fire and Rescue, the port’s Control Room team and the crew of the Altay.”

July: Staff Ship Visit



Two members of the MNWB team met with a number of international seafarers during a day of ship visiting in the port of Southampton with Frans Sahetapy, Port Chaplain, Sailors' Society.

During the visits, they met with Ukrainian, Russian and Filipino seafarers, and were able to engage with them about life at sea, what their role entails and what it's like to be a seafarer.

August: Kuba Szymanski announced as headline speaker for LISW25 event



In August, huge announcements were made for London International Shipping Week (LISW25). Captain Kuba Szymanski was unveiled as the headline speaker for a highly-anticipated charity event at LISW25. MNWB were also revealed to be one of the official charities of LISW25 joined by the International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF), Project Connect, and the Sir Thomas Lipton Foundation.

September: LISW25 charity event and Merchant Navy Day



The 12th LISW was held and was the most significant for MNWB as an official charity partner joined by the International Maritime Rescue Foundation, Project Connect, and the Sir Thomas Lipton Foundation.

A panel discussion entitled *Serving a Purpose – the vital role of maritime charities for the shipping industry* brought together over 70 guests at Norton Rose Fulbright to explore challenges and solutions in the sector.

Headline speaker of this event Captain Kuba Szymanski, posed the question:
“Why can’t we lookafter ourselves? We need shipowners to recognise what we are trying to do – we need to be listening to seafarers and asking them direct: what is it you need? What can we be doing for you?”

All four organisations and Captain Kuba were supported by the Department for Transport’s Director for Maritime, Lola Fadina, and MNWB President Captain Sir Ian McNaught.

MNWB also attended more than 30 events throughout the week, including the golf day, headline conference and gala dinner, engaging with stakeholders committed to seafarer welfare. Over £6,000 was raised during the week, shared between all four charities evenly.

The 3rd September marked Merchant Navy Day - a day to remember and honour those who lost their lives at sea, and those who continue to keep major supply lines open. Across the week, services were held nationwide for Merchant Navy Day to honour past and present seafarers.

October: MNWB Training Video

Understanding The Merchant Navy

MNWB launched a training video to raise awareness of the Merchant Navy. The video covers an array of subjects including the history of the Merchant Navy, shipboard environment, working conditions and what seafarers do.

WATCH HERE

November: 2025 Seafarers' Welfare Conference



Over two days, 25-26 November, we hosted our Seafarers' Welfare Conference at the Utilita Bowl in Southampton.

This saw many of our members, government officials, port representatives, trustees and ambassadors come together to discuss seafarers welfare today and what the future should look like.

On the first day, attendees heard from the MNWB team, we saw key maritime funding charities engaged in a panel discussion, 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.

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 also featured addresses from 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.

December: Seafarers' Welfare highlighted in Westminster Hall debate



MNWB's work on seafarers' welfare was highlighted in a Westminster Hall debate on 4th December. The debate, led by Labour MP for Thurrock, Jen Craft, emphasised the contribution of seafarers who transport 95% of the world's goods. We intend to work closely with MPs and others in government going into 2026.

MNWB CEO, Stuart Rivers delivered a Christmas message, focusing on the important role seafarers have in delivering Christmas for all of us and the experiences of seafarers at Christmas time.

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