



# Welfare Watch



## Welcome back to our newsletter!

This edition marks a full year since we launched *Welfare Watch* – a proud milestone for the Board.

Over the past 12 months, this newsletter has become a space to share progress, strengthen collaboration and celebrate the ongoing work of our maritime welfare community.

As we enter Spring and look ahead to the Easter bank holiday, it feels like the perfect moment to pause, take stock and recognise the collective effort driving our mission forward. As many of us take time to rest this weekend, we also acknowledge the seafarers who will not stop — those working tirelessly across the globe throughout the Easter period — and we hold in our thoughts and prayers all seafarers currently stranded and facing uncertainty in the Strait of Hormuz.

In this issue, we bring you a wide range of updates that showcase the energy and commitment across our sector.

We share details of Southampton's service marking the Titanic anniversary, highlight the momentum behind our pioneering Merchant Navy Pledge, and reflect on the inaugural European National Seafarers' Welfare Board forum.

We also feature the opportunities we are exploring to bolster seafarers' welfare, the two-month countdown to Merchant Navy Medal nominations, and our refreshed grants page designed to make applications simpler and more accessible.

Our Member Feature shines a light on Marine Society's Digital Library project, which we will be supporting for another year as it provides seafarers with free access to thousands of books, magazines and audiobooks wherever they are in the world.

As always, we are grateful for your continued dedication to supporting seafarers, fishers and their families.

With Easter upon us and brighter days ahead, we hope you enjoy this edition — and we wish you all a wonderful Easter break.

Thank you for your continued support.

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

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# Service to mark Titanic tragedy



**Southampton will commemorate the anniversary of the RMS Titanic tragedy with a service honouring more than 540 local residents who died in 1912.**

Organised by the MNWB's Southern Port Welfare Committee with IMarEST's Guild of Benevolence, the event will take place at the Titanic Engineers Memorial on Wednesday, April 15th at 11am.

The service will pay tribute to the engineering and electrical officers who remained at their posts as the ship sank.

**Sharon Coveney, Deputy Chief Executive of the MNWB, said:**

“Commemorating the anniversary of Titanic allows Southampton’s maritime community to reflect and honour the crew whose bravery remains part of the city’s shared heritage.”

Members of the public are welcome to attend.

[Read more](#)

# Shape our pioneering pledge



**The MNWB is continuing to develop its landmark Merchant Navy Pledge initiative and is calling on maritime organisations, industry leaders and seafarer advocates to help shape it.**

As momentum builds, the MNWB will host a roundtable with industry leaders in May, followed by a sector-wide webinar, as it gathers support ahead of the initiative's official launch in July.

Designed as a new national, voluntary framework inspired by the Armed Forces Covenant, the Merchant Navy Pledge aims to recognise the vital contribution of Merchant Navy seafarers, support their transition into shore-based roles, and ensure retired seafarers receive the respect and access to support they deserve.

The project is jointly funded by MNWB, Trinity House and the Merchant Navy Association. Created from an idea by Steven Jones, it is already generating valuable insights through its pilot phase, with organisations and seafarers helping shape how the pledge can best strengthen seafarer welfare.

Organisations wishing to support the initiative are encouraged to get in touch.

[Support the pledge](#)

# Maiden European National Seafarers' Welfare Board forum



**The first European National Seafarers' Welfare Board (ENSWB) forum took place last month, bringing together countries from across the region to share progress on seafarers' welfare.**

The forum focused on the role of national seafarers' welfare boards and how coordinated structures supported stronger MLC implementation. Participants, who are keen to meet regularly to share new ideas, were shown the new ENSWB resource portal, which provided guidance for national boards alongside a range of best-practice materials.

The event concluded with updates from member countries outlining recent achievements, ongoing challenges and opportunities for continued regional collaboration.

As the UK's National Seafarers' Welfare Board, the MNWB contributed its experience and insight to support this important regional effort.

[Learn more](#)

# Bolstering support for seafarers



**MNWB is developing a range of new opportunities designed to help strengthen the support available to seafarers and fishers across the UK.**

By sponsoring key initiatives, such as our growing portfolio of training packages, sponsors can directly enhance the skills and capacity of those on the frontline of welfare services.

Sponsorship not only sustains this work but also enables members and partners to play an active role in shaping a stronger, more resilient welfare network for the maritime community. As the umbrella charity for the UK Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets, we work with various organisations to sponsor projects.

If you would like to discuss potential sponsorship or have an idea for a new opportunity you believe would benefit seafarers, then please get in contact with our Business Sustainability Lead, Johnny Dowling.

[Contact Johnny](#)

# Honour a maritime hero



**The nomination period for the Merchant Navy Medal for Meritorious Service 2026 is underway, and there are only two months left to put forward those who deserve national recognition.**

This prestigious honour celebrates individuals who have made an exceptional contribution to the Merchant Navy and the wider maritime community.

If you know someone who has consistently gone above and beyond in their service, don't leave it too late.

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Past recipients include our Deputy CEO Sharon Coveney, Chair Capt. Andrew Cassels, maritime consultant Steven Jones, trustee Louise Sara and many more you can visit [HERE](#)

The deadline is fast approaching – applications close on **31st May**.

[Submit your nomination](#)

# Staff Spotlight: New-look grants page



**The MNWB has recently refreshed its grants page to make it easier for members to complete application forms and access information about previous grants.**

The updated page also highlights how MNWB funding supported seafarers and member organisations throughout 2025. We remain committed to helping our members in a variety of ways, including through continued access to grants.

MNWB member organisations applying for a grant can get in touch with MNWB Executive Assistant Hollie Harbinson, who has been leading our grants work for the past year.

To learn more about how our grants have supported both members and seafarers, click “Find out more” below or contact Hollie for any grants’ queries.

[Contact Hollie](#)

[Find out more](#)

# Member Feature: MNWB renews support to Digital Library

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.



MNWB has renewed its support for Marine Society's Digital Library for seafarers, giving crew another year of free worldwide access to thousands of e-books, magazines and audiobooks.

Carla Rockson, Head of Seafarer Learning and Welfare at Marine Society, said the service "transforms how seafarers access reading at sea, boosting wellbeing and continuous learning."

Marine Society is working closely with maritime welfare charities to ensure crew arriving in UK ports can easily sign up.

With more than 3,700 e-books, 6,500 magazines and 780 audiobooks available offline in multiple languages, the app offers a vital boost to connection, wellbeing and professional development.

[Find out more](#)

# Seafarer Support is here to help



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

  
**0800 121 4765**

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

If you need advice or help with:

- ➔ Accommodation
- ➔ Training
- ➔ Support
- ➔ Health & Finance

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