

**ANNUAL
REVIEW**
2024/25

WELCOME FROM HRH THE PRINCESS ROYAL



As Patron of the Marine Society & Sea Cadets, I am pleased to reflect on another year of the organisation’s ongoing commitment to those who serve and have served at sea. From young seafarers embarking on their first voyages, to experienced mariners seeking new qualifications and opportunities ashore, the Society’s work delivers learning, guidance and encouragement.

In an era when maritime skills and expertise are still essential to our national life, Marine Society’s role has never been more important. This review highlights a year of progress and renewed impact, reflecting the commitment of employees, trustees, partners and supporters who, together, uphold the proud tradition of Marine Society as the world’s oldest seafarers’ charity. Their efforts ensure that men and women at sea, and those preparing for maritime careers, continue to receive the encouragement and resources they need.

I am pleased to see Marine Society’s commitment to lifelong learning continues, enabling seafarers to gain new qualifications, improve literacy and numeracy, and pursue higher education. Such opportunities transform lives, strengthen the confidence of individuals and enhance the resilience of the maritime sector as a whole. By offering access to study programmes, specialist advice, and a library service reaching ships across the globe, Marine Society helps sustain the professional standards and intellectual curiosity that defines Britain’s maritime community.

I commend Marine Society for its enduring service to the maritime community, and I am honoured to support its mission as Patron.

HRH The Princess Royal
Patron, Marine Society & Sea Cadets (MSSC)

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR



I was delighted to see Marine Society achieve so much success in expanding and enhancing its offering in 2024/25. The marketing of our apprenticeships to employers and young people certainly paid off, with a three-fold growth in the number of apprentices we support. This was a major breakthrough for our programme, which has come so far in just five years and received a glowing endorsement with March 2024’s ‘Good’ Ofsted assessment. With several award nominations for our apprentices during the year, the positive word-of-mouth we are generating is helping to establish Marine Society as one of the UK’s leading maritime apprenticeship providers.

The growing demand for our apprenticeships has also been supported by efforts to promote Marine Society’s offering on the Sea Cadets Portal website. 585 cadets and volunteers took part in maritime careers awareness webinars and hundreds more enjoyed hands-on visits to maritime employers. We hope this will encourage more of them to bring their nautical skillset and aptitude to

the sector, by making the natural step from Sea Cadets to Marine Society – hopefully inspired by the success of the cadet and volunteer who joined our apprenticeship programme this year. It was also great to see apprentices benefit from another training voyage on Sea Cadets’ powerboat TS John Jerwood, and there are exciting plans in place to expand this partnership by developing an RYA Yachtmaster course with the Sea Cadets Offshore Team.

With much hard work promoting Marine Society’s other services across the sector, we also increased our provision of scholarships and bursaries; saw another rise in income from libraries and learning apps; and provided more hours of mentoring to seafarers seeking shoreside roles. Meanwhile, our digital library app allowed us to supply 73% more books than last year, with a record 85 countries benefitting from our bookshop services – demonstrating the impact of our global presence. Our online reach was further enhanced by the launch of our well-received email newsletter, The Seafarer, which is showcasing our services to a growing subscriber base.

Because so much of what we do is driven by the needs of our beneficiaries, we were honoured to receive a ringing endorsement of our work in our three-yearly reaccreditation assessment for the Matrix Standard – the quality mark for organisations delivering information, advice and guidance. While the final assessment praised our “remarkable services” and “commendable impact”, the most pleasing feedback was that “all partners interviewed seemed genuinely pleased to be associated with Marine Society and said they would recommend them without hesitation.”

With a clean bill of health from our ESFA funding audit, and our continued success in securing major funding during the year – including the £5.1m Nautilus Slater Fund – we are well positioned to make further progress in 2025/26 and beyond. Guided by our Future Ready Strategy, we look forward to delivering even more positive impact for the maritime workers and employers we are so proud to serve.

Jeremy Penn
Chair, MSSC

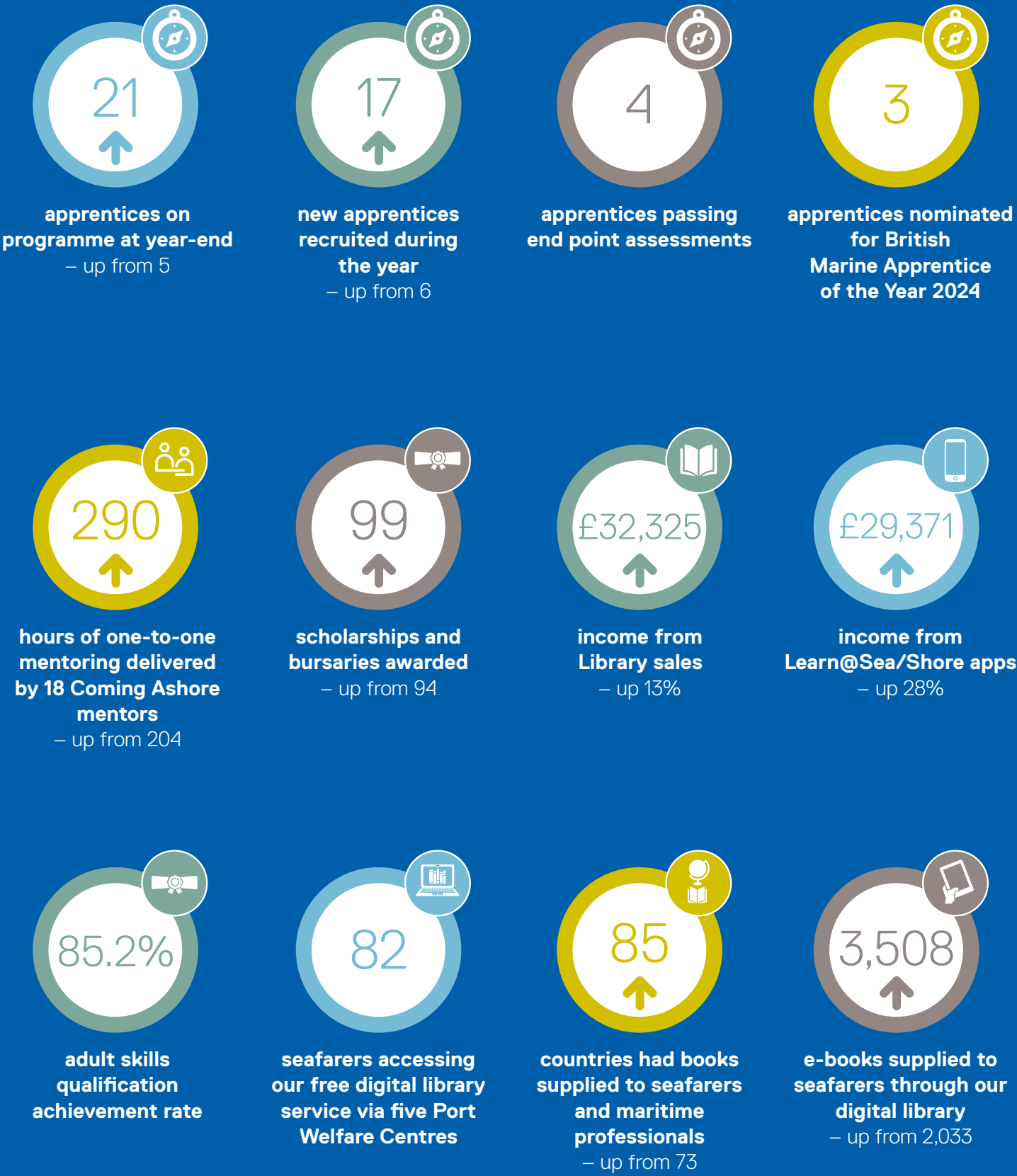


WHAT WE DO

Marine Society works to ensure that every current and future seafarer and maritime professional is skilled for life. We achieve this by offering a range of apprenticeships and courses that build vital experience and deliver a range of practical and transferrable skills – all backed by our bursaries, mentoring schemes and library services.

Thanks to the learning opportunities we facilitate, the seafarers we work with are able to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world – whether they chose to progress at sea or return to shore. And in promoting maritime careers and providing training packages for employers, we’re also developing the flexibility and expertise needed to grow the maritime sector – which will help to create even more career options for aspiring seafarers.

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR



EXPANDING APPRENTICESHIPS

Marine Society’s apprenticeships are a great way for aspiring seafarers to gain skills and knowledge while earning a wage. Best of all, they come at no cost to the apprentice, thanks to the funding contributions we secure from employers and the government – including our successful tender for a £45k grant from the level 3 ‘Free Courses for Jobs’ fund in 2024/25.

Our apprentice numbers surged from five to 21, with 17 new apprentices recruited during the year, compared to six in 2023/24. Both measures were well ahead of our targets, with new apprentices being taken on by a range of employers across the UK. By year-end we had a healthy pipeline of around 13 apprentices due to start, signalling excellent progress towards our goal of recruiting 20 new starters in 2025/26.

INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE

Our promotion and partnership-building helped to create a spike in demand across our range of seven apprenticeship standards, led by interest in the Level 3 Small Commercial Vessel Crewmember apprenticeship – a versatile course providing pathways to support industries from offshore windfarm construction to port services.



We were delighted that one of the enthusiastic new entrants taking up this course was a beneficiary of our sister organisation Sea Cadets, attracted by our efforts to promote apprenticeships to its cadets and volunteers. 16-year-old Royal Marines Cadet Daniel is learning to be a deckhand and assist on pilot boats alongside experienced seafarers at the Port of Tyne. He also had the chance to test his new skills on one of our apprentice training voyages onboard Sea Cadets’ 24-metre powerboat, TS John Jerwood (above), gaining invaluable experience in navigation, helming and engineering at sea.

WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS IN THE SOLENT

Our sustained growth in apprentice numbers was supported by the partnerships we’ve cultivated at a variety of networking events. This productive engagement with employers is exemplified by our growing influence in the Solent region. We welcomed aboard Commercial Vessel Crewmember apprentices with Chichester Harbour, Solent Cruises and Williams Shipping, along with a Marina & Boatyard apprentice at Emsworth Yacht Harbour. A number of these apprentices are benefitting from our training partnership with UK Sailing Academy (UKSA) on the Isle of Wight – such as our Level 2 Seafarer (Deck) apprentice, Abbi, 24, who was driving passenger ferries within three months of her time with Red Funnel Ferries (right). Having helped her switch career paths from a vehicle loader role, our 16-month apprenticeship will support Abbi’s ultimate ambition to become a Master seafarer.

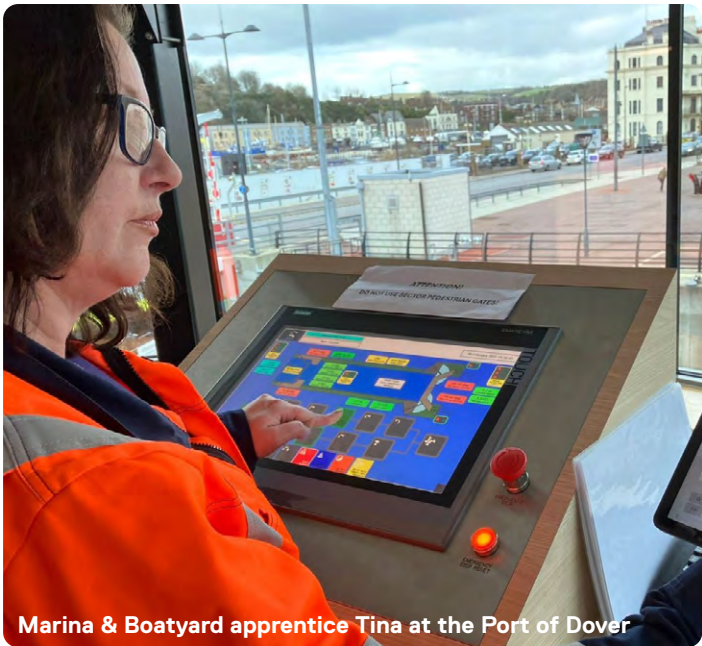


SET UP TO SUCCEED

Our first Marina & Boatyard Operative apprentices neared the end of their training programmes, with four passing their end point assessments during the year. Three were even nominated for the British Marine Apprentice of the Year Award, with the awards ceremony taking place at the Southampton International Boat Show. This was a remarkable achievement in their first year, and the event was a unique opportunity for the Marine Society team to introduce them to influential employers from every area of the marine leisure sector.



Two of our nominees subsequently claimed other prizes. George Jenkins won our Outstanding Achievement Award having thrived during his apprenticeship at ABP Ports and achieved a merit in his end point assessment – which helped him gain employment with Svitzer. Meanwhile, Oli Rickard (left) won the ViewHR Apprentice of the Year for the New Forest area, with his assessor praising the “deep knowledge” he gained during his time at Buckler’s Hard Yacht Harbour.



Marina & Boatyard apprentice Tina at the Port of Dover

FEEDBACK ON MARINE SOCIETY’S APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME

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Marine Society has established a formal 12-week review process which engages the apprentices’ line managers [who] refreshingly saw the apprentices as an investment. Apprentices mentioned how well they had been supported, encouraged and prepared through their assessment. All partners interviewed were very clear how valuable the relationship with Marine Society is, because of excellent communications and the expertise of the staff and their ethos – which in turn leads to better support and outcomes for learners.”

Matrix assessment report

“

Support is good, and our trainer is very clear – giving in-depth information but always taking his time to explain it properly. He is always an email away if you need something, and when he visits the boatyard he is very interested in what I am doing. He is definitely passionate about what he does and what he teaches us.”

Henry McNeil, L2 Marina & Boatyard Operative Apprentice



Henry and his Marine Society trainer

COMING ASHORE

MAINTAINING A STEADY COURSE

We're proud to offer a unique service to help seafarers looking to make the difficult transition to a shore-side career. So, we were delighted to secure the long-term future of our free Coming Ashore programme, thanks to £50k in repeat funding generously provided by ITF Seafarers Trust. Remaining a sought-after offering in 2024/25, Coming Ashore continued to deliver the highest quality of mentoring and bespoke support – from CV reviews and personality profiling to learning resources and job alerts.

The programme gives experienced professionals the confidence to make a successful pivot in their maritime career, ensuring their skills can continue to benefit the industry. With difficult conditions persisting as a result of global conflicts and sustained inflation, the number of new registrations during the year was down slightly (8%) at 77. However, this exceeded our target of 72, and we helped seven of our seafarers secure jobs onshore – including our first overseas role, in Mumbai. We also maintained an enviable roster of 18 experienced mentors, who delivered a combined 290 hours of one-to-one guidance – a 42% increase on 2023/24.

The wealth of experience contained in our mentoring team is typified by John Nicholson, a technical leader at marine surveyors Idwal who is helping our seafarers secure shore-based roles. Having spent 11 years at



sea with Maersk, John's own experience of this major transition helps him to give others the confidence to do the same. "A lot of seafarers undervalue themselves and their knowledge," he explains. "But experience of shipboard procedures and the issues that vessels face is invaluable to many companies."

FEEDBACK ON THE COMING ASHORE EXPERIENCE

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I joined the Coming Ashore programme simply because I didn't really know my options or the best approach. It's just not something seafarers are guided on as the pathway is set up to be at sea for your whole career. My mentor, Georgi, was proactive, approachable, and very well connected. He arranged work experience at "K" Line after our first meeting and made considerable efforts to ensure I made the most of my time there. The experience confirmed I am making the correct decision to come ashore and has shown me the potential career development pathways I can take."

John Whetton, Coming Ashore mentee



SCHOLARSHIPS AND BURSARIES

The reliable source of financial support that Marine Society can provide became increasingly crucial during the year, as seafarers looked to improve their career prospects while coping with the soaring cost of living.

Funding essential practical courses and academic studies, we increased the total number of scholarships and bursaries we awarded to 99 (up from 94). These grants were tailored to a range of specific requirements, whether helping students to gain the qualifications needed for a first job at sea; allowing those with more experience to upskill; or retraining seafarers to work in the offshore and renewable energy sector.



A HISTORIC YEAR FOR THE NAUTILUS SLATER SCHOLARSHIP

Our flagship Nautilus Slater Scholarship funded 79 seafarers (up from 63), with 46 certificates of competency achieved. The sustainability of the scholarship was also confirmed with the historic transfer of the entire £5.1m JW Slater Memorial Fund to MSSC in October 2024. Administered by Marine Society for over 40 years, the fund has provided scholarships for more than 1,000 Merchant Navy ratings in that period. Currently worth up to £18,500 each, these scholarships are supporting life-changing opportunities for seafarers to become officers or gain other Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) certificates of competency.

The fund transfer will reduce administration and costs, allowing the Nautilus Slater Fund to provide direct support to even more seafarers – who can now access its support throughout the year, following the change from bi-annual application assessments. We are hugely grateful to Nautilus International and the Slater Trustees for entrusting us with the fund which will continue to transform the futures of hundreds of seafarers. Our determination to maximise its resources for beneficiaries was demonstrated in 2024/25 by the £28k in savings we made through course discounts for Slater scholars – thanks to our new approved provider recognition scheme.

FEEDBACK ON OUR NAUTILUS SLATER SCHOLARSHIP

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I've had a very positive experience so far; application steps were easy to follow, and it is easy to use the Google Classroom once set-up. Bindu Sharma has been very helpful with information and steps to follow, and I feel as though I have a great support network available should I need it."

Slater Scholar (March 2025)

We were also delighted to see a former Slater scholar, Paul Buckley, become the inaugural Tug Trainee of the Year – a new award proudly administered by Marine Society on behalf of the British Tugowners Association (BTA). Paul's scholarship had enabled him to become a qualified Officer of the Watch Tugs <500gt, opening up a host of opportunities in a specialism that is so vital to the UK's ports and harbours.

SEAFARER WELLBEING AND DISTANCE LEARNING

Our efforts to provide accessible learning resources were again vital to our beneficiaries' career development and personal growth. This included our delivery of the level 3 Certificate in Maritime Studies, a distance-learning course aimed at school leavers and adults looking to retrain. Following significant promotion and the development of new materials, we were proud to welcome students in locations as far-flung as St Helena and Australia (see page 12 for one personal account of the impact of our online tutoring and expert-led webinars).



INCREASING SEAFARER WELFARE THROUGH DIGITAL ACCESS TO READING

Our digital library app, Libby, has transformed our ability to make educational and recreational reading material more accessible at sea – with thousands of engaging titles available to read without Wi-Fi. By delivering these resources online, we are rising to the digital transformation and seafarer wellbeing challenges presented by long periods spent at sea. And many more readers made use of our service, with the number of e-books we supplied through Libby increasing by 73%, to 3,508. We also provided 5,994 magazines in 25 languages, and 477 audiobooks in seven languages – highlighting our global reach.

Thanks to the generous support of the Merchant Navy Welfare Board, we were also able to provide free access to our digital library app to five Port Welfare Centres across the UK. A total of 82 seafarers passing through Tilbury, Grangemouth, Southampton, Humber and Belfast ports chose to access a year's free subscription, encouraged by our promotional visits to Tilbury and Southampton. As well as demonstrating our digital library to seafarers, port officials, and shipping company representatives, the visits also allowed for some wider outreach with the port communities, with Marine Society team members working alongside local Women's Institute volunteers to wrap Christmas gifts for seafarers at the Queen Victoria Seafarers Rest Centre in the Port of Tilbury.



DELIVERING BOOKSHOP AND LIBRARY SERVICES

Despite a challenging market, our annual book sales remained steady at £165k, thanks to the efforts of our Books & Libraries Team to reach the widest possible range of buyers. This year we returned with an eye-catching book stand at a number of International Maritime Organisation Committee events – securing several orders worth between £3k to £7k from countries including the UK, Tanzania, Liberia, Qatar, Hungary and Canada. In total, we supplied books to 85 countries (up from 73), including 2,292 books and e-books sold through our online store.

Complementing our digital library offer, traditional crew libraries remain an historic and valued part of our services. In 2024/25 we achieved a 13% increase in sales to £32,325, as we continued to fulfil contracts to supply hardback research libraries to the prestigious ships of the National Oceanographic Centre and British Antarctic Survey, helping to support the work of some of the UK's leading scientists.

COMBATTING ISOLATION

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The welfare element of Marine Society is essential in helping seafarers to combat isolation and any mental health issues they are encountering. It is important to note the role of Books & Libraries Service in this welfare role too. Books remain important whether digital or physical and for some seafarers they represent a luxury. Accessing the Books & Libraries Service can develop into important social contact, something more than just a transactional event, as evidenced by interviews and comments from questionnaires.”

Matrix assessment report

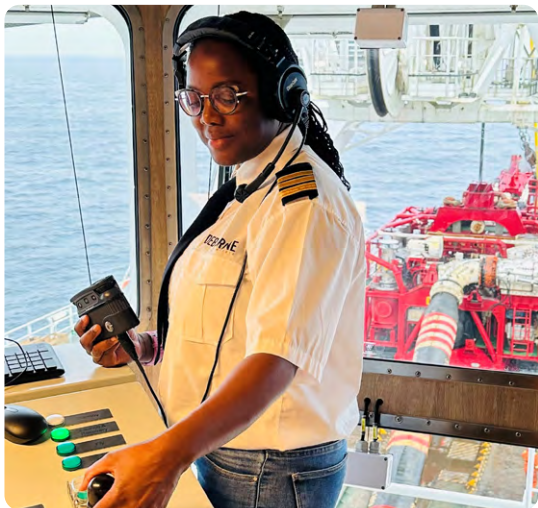
SUPPORTING REMOTE LEARNING

The growing popularity of the 30 courses available through our Learn@Sea and Learn@Shore apps delivered a 28% increase in revenue, to £29,371. Sales were boosted by purchases of our corporate bundles – including from new clients such as Falmouth Marine School – and a two-fold growth in royalties from our existing partnership with Whitehorse Maritime Academy.

The quality of courses was recognised by the decision of the Thames Skills Academy to add two of them to their accredited continuing professional development listings. A further endorsement came in our Matrix assessment, in which a major maritime organisation commented: “Learn@Sea is a product that deserves greater success – vital in helping seafarers combat isolation”



HOW MARINE SOCIETY CHANGED MY LIFE



“

I was born and raised in Namibia and began my seagoing career as a deck cadet onboard a Norwegian research vessel. After I obtained my Master CoC, I felt the need for career growth, however the choices available were very limited, especially living in the southern African continent where the maritime industry is still in its infancy.

I joined Coming Ashore when I received a call from a friend telling me about an exciting career path available for mariners looking to transition ashore. I meet my experienced mentor once a month for an hour and I am

free to dial in at any moment; he is very open, knowledgeable, and patient, and knows how to keep me motivated to focus. The programme has taught me a sense of accountability and time management, as I learn to prioritise my goals and make time to achieve my objectives.

The programme also eliminated the fear of facing the job market, as I gained interpersonal skills and knowledge on how to understand job descriptions and assignments. Because of this mentorship journey, I am proud to share that I obtained a postgraduate Diploma in Ship Superintendency from Lloyd’s Maritime Academy and have grown to become a confident Superintendent in the making.”

Joanna Kafe, Coming Ashore mentee



“

I was an Able Seaman for almost 17 years and decided it was time to become an Officer of the Watch. Marine Society helped me a lot by offering me a Slater scholarship. I would never have been able to gain my Officer of the Watch qualification and achieve the career prospects that I have now if it wasn’t for the funding.

The blended learning approach means that instead of going to college full time, you can carry on going to sea, doing your normal job, and then you study in your spare time. The Marine Society and Fleetwood College teams were excellent

and helped me a lot; they took the pressure off while I studied, working hard behind the scenes booking courses and organising exams for me in line with my shore leave.

If anyone is unsure whether to apply for the Slater Fund, I would say definitely give it a go. I was never really good in school, and I thought I might struggle; but I was given an opportunity I didn’t want to waste, and I proved that with hard work you will reap the rewards in the end. It’s changed my career for the better and my aim is to become a Dynamic Positioning Operator on offshore wind farm vessels. Marine Society made it possible to get past obstacles and achieve my dream.”

Dean Hodgson, winner of the 2024 Slater Award for Outstanding Achievement



“

When I finished sixth form, I felt dissatisfied with my A-level choices as the options they led to didn’t suit me. After searching online, I found the Marine Society’s qualification in Maritime Studies, which felt perfect for someone with my interest in shipping (which stemmed from the Titanic) as it offered the opportunity to pursue a subject which couldn’t be chosen in school.

Learning objectives were met through a mix of structured worksheets and Learn@Sea digital courses to build understanding, as well as essays which required my own research and tested my ability to accurately explain what I’d learned. Along with the wide range of topics, this made the course dynamic, interesting and motivating. The ability to work on assignments from home made it adaptable to my unpredictable work schedule, while my tutor was able to fix dates which suited me. He also provided valuable explanations and sources of information during our sessions.

Through completing this course, I became confident in my decision to pursue a career in maritime. I’ve secured a position as a trainee Third Officer in a sponsored cadetship with AW Crewing, and I believe the knowledge I’ve obtained from this qualification helped me in my interview and demonstrated my commitment to becoming a seafarer. I would certainly recommend this course to anyone in a similar position of uncertainty to mine.”

Christopher J. Wardle, Level 3 Certificate in Maritime Studies achiever

LOOKING FORWARD: PRIORITIES FOR 2025/26

As we enter the third year of our Future Ready Strategy, we are maintaining a tight focus on its four central themes in order to improve our offer for seafarers and maritime professionals.

Expanding and diversifying apprenticeship recruitment is an ambitious goal that will help bring skilled new talent into the sector. We believe it can be achieved by extending our promotional activities, building new partnerships with employers and training providers, and attracting more entrants from Sea Cadets – with whom we are developing a new course to give apprentices affordable access to the RYA Yachtmaster qualification.

We also aim to **grow and broaden our maritime curriculum** by developing new courses such as our Skills Bootcamp. Designed to tackle long-term unemployment and skills shortages, our Bootcamp will provide intensive training in the basic competencies needed for essential ratings jobs in the workboat sector. And having proudly signed up to the Maritime UK Diversity in Maritime pledge this year, we’re prioritising an EDI course to help ensure every seafarer understands and promotes the benefits of equity, diversity and inclusion.

Under the theme of **promoting maritime careers**, our key goal is to reach even more sea cadets, with engaging material on roles and sectors added to their



core learning modules. We want to help these young people understand the huge range of opportunities open to them, thanks to the skills and nautical grounding provided by Sea Cadets. At the same time, cadets will learn more about what Marine Society does and be able to explore our current offering – as well as a new opportunity being developed, whereby Marine Society would sponsor sea cadets through a Merchant Navy cadetship.

With good initial progress on our fourth aim, to **develop financial support** for our activities, Marine Society can look forward to another exciting year helping even more beneficiaries achieve their full potential.

10 KEY OUTCOMES FOR 2025/26:

1

20 additional apprentices enrolled

2

At least 75% of apprenticeships (by funding value) delivered directly

3

RYA Yachtmaster course developed (ideally in collaboration with the Sea Cadets Offshore Team)

4

Maritime Skills Bootcamp designed, tendered and delivered

5

12 Level 3 Certificate in Maritime Studies enrolments

6

Commercial EDI micro learning courses established within our Learn@Sea package

7

Marine Society and maritime career opportunities embedded in Sea Cadets training modules

8

Funding secured to sponsor sea cadets for Merchant Navy cadetships

9

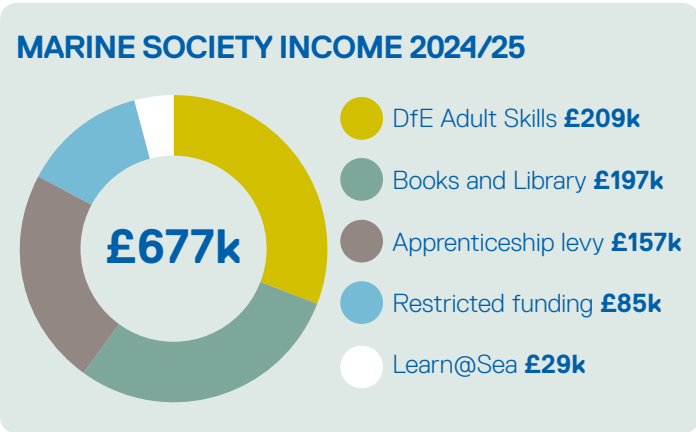
A minimum of 10 Coming Ashore mentees recruited per month

10

10 maritime employment job outcomes achieved for Coming Ashore mentees

THANK YOU

A huge thank you to the Marine Society donors and supporters who helped us to work towards our vision for every current and future seafarer and maritime professional to be skilled for life.



OUR FUNDERS

We thank the generosity of those who made so much of our vital work possible in 2024/25.

Attollo Foundation

Education & Skills Funding Agency

ITF Seafarer’s Trust

Merchant Navy Welfare Board

CHARTING THE COURSE



I was proud to become CEO of Marine Society & Sea Cadets in May 2025 – an organisation with a pedigree in nautical training dating back to 1756. Thanks to the 15-year tenure of my predecessor Martin Coles CBE, Marine Society has seen a period of constant improvement since 2010: achieving ‘Good’ Ofsted assessments in 2017 and 2024; transforming their services to capitalise on the power of online communications; and creating an apprenticeship programme which has become a beacon of opportunity in the maritime sector within just five years.

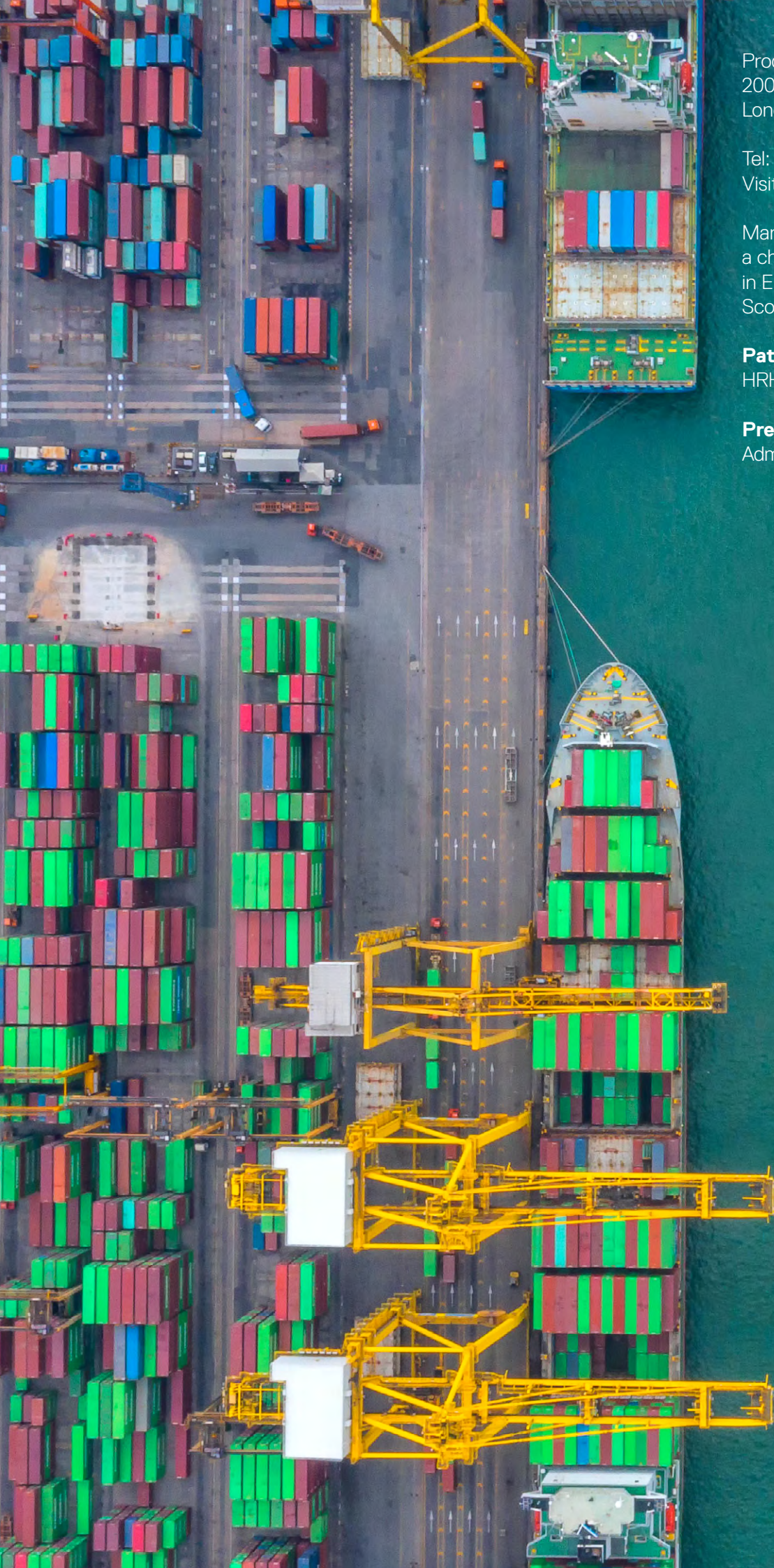
Marine Society’s burgeoning reputation as one of the UK’s most influential and effective maritime educators also owes much to our Director of Maritime Training & Development, Darrell Bate, and his small but incredibly hard-working team. The growing recognition for our services is a result of their excellent partnership building within the industry – highlighted by Marine Society being

chosen as the charity beneficiary of the UK Chamber of Shipping’s prestigious Summer Lunch 2025 event in Edinburgh.

In the context of shifting trade and defence priorities, we also stand to benefit from the government’s realisation that shipping, offshore energy and undersea infrastructure are “critical for sustaining daily national life”; as well as their recognition that apprenticeships, ports and maritime regions are crucial for the economy and communities.

We’re ready to seize every opportunity to support the UK’s amazing maritime industries. And with increasing numbers of marine employers, nautical professionals and aspiring entrants discovering our incredible offering, we look forward to helping many more seafarers to flourish in 2025/26 and beyond.

Guy Holloway
CEO, MSSC



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