



# A NEW DEAL FOR MARITIME PROFESSIONALS

KEY REFORMS FOR A LABOUR GOVERNMENT

# A NEW DEAL FOR MARITIME PROFESSIONALS

1. Commit to increase Support for Maritime Training (SMarT) funding to 100% of the cost of training a cadet and guarantee a minimum training allowance for cadets to meet their material needs.
2. Reform tonnage tax to its original purpose of supporting employment opportunities for cadets once they qualify.
3. Deliver a national training provider proposed by the maritime skills commission (MSC) that is accountable to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and the Department for Transport (DfT).
4. Grow the number of UK flagged vessels working in the offshore energy sector through favourable procurement procedures for companies that use vessels on the UK Ship Register (UKSR).
5. Ensure the procurement of contracts to install and maintain UK offshore renewable energy installations require collective bargaining agreements with UK based trade unions.
6. Support the introduction of fair pay agreements for the sector.
7. Instigate a global review of ship registration practices with a view to enforcing Article 91 of the UN Convention on the Laws of the Seas (UNCLOS) that requires a genuine link between shipowner and state of registration.
8. Develop and implement a plan of action to grow the UK ship register incentivising vessels working primarily within the domestic maritime industry to register their vessels to the UK register.



# A WORD FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY



In 2000 the Labour government delivered one of the most significant interventions to seafarer training by any British government through the introduction of tonnage tax. We are calling on an incoming Labour government to continue the legacy of supporting the UK shipping industry and our maritime professionals by committing to key reforms.

The unlawful sacking of 786 maritime professionals by P&O Ferries in March 2022 received widespread public condemnation and forced the government to commit to enhancing protections for seafarers. Labour also committed to go further through the introduction of a mandatory seafarers' charter and Sir Keir Starmer MP vowed to close the legal loopholes exploited by P&O Ferries.

Although P&O Ferries' actions were particularly brutal, the loss of British seafaring jobs to be replaced with agency crew from abroad on weaker terms and conditions is not a new phenomenon.

Despite the UK having one of the world's most robust and well-respected training regimes, our maritime professionals have struggled to remain competitive for employment in a globalised market.

This challenge is not unique to the UK, but it is compounded by the continuing decline of the UK ship register and lack of quality permanent employment opportunities within the domestic maritime space.

That's why there must be key reforms to maritime training, support for seafaring jobs in strategically important sectors like ferries and offshore renewable energy.

Britain is a maritime nation and whilst technology and innovation within Britain's maritime space is world leading, our seafarers are in danger of being left behind. To an island nation where over 90% of goods enter by sea, it is critical that Labour ends the decline in our maritime skills.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Mark Dickinson'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

**MARK DICKINSON**  
GENERAL SECRETARY



John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister in 1999 re-flags P&O container ship 'Peninsular Bay'.

# REFORM MARITIME TRAINING

The UK's seafarer training system needs desperate reform to remain one of the best in the world.

The Maritime Skills Commission (MSC) was established in January 2019 by the Department for Transport (DfT) as part of its commitments under the Maritime 2050 strategy developed and supported by both government and industry. It's first report, published in September 2019, gave a series of recommendations with many yet to be implemented.

In 2022, the UK government committed to increase government funding of the Support for Maritime Training (SMarT) scheme from 30% to 50%, however this still falls short of the 100% recommended by the MSC. If implemented, this would put the UK's training in line with other comparable European states, re-incentivising shipowners and ship operators to help train UK cadets.

An Oxford economics study from 2016 found that for every £1 spent on maritime training, £4.80 is returned in GDP, with those who complete maritime training typically generating £1.1 million more in lifetime productivity. Investment in maritime training has a clear long term economic benefit.

Shipowners and ship operators benefit from tax incentives for training cadets under the tonnage tax system. Some companies also cadets as a form cheaper labour, whilst also not guaranteeing a job at the end of training.

There are several maritime training providers in the UK, including 3rd party training management companies, none of whom are accountable for the quality of provision they provide to cadets. This has effectively created a two-tier system with cadets receiving varying quality of training depending on the company they are placed with. Nautilus is aware of serious cases where training providers have failed in their duty of care to cadets but no mechanism exists within the current regime to hold these companies to account.

There is a need, recognised in Maritime 2050, to increase the number of young people undertaking careers in maritime. While increasing visibility of maritime careers is vital to do this, we must also tackle the barriers to accessing a maritime career and ensure good, quality, well-paid jobs are available once qualified.

A particularly concerning issue is the level of attrition amongst cadets. In the year 2022/2023 there was a 16% attrition rate for cadets, with nearly a third of cadets surveyed by Nautilus considering discontinuing their training owing to their experiences in industry. Many highlighted financial struggles as a main driver for leaving or considering leaving training, some cadets telling us that they couldn't afford to visit their friends and family when ashore and others being forced to cut back on food and other basic essentials.

# REFORM MARITIME TRAINING

## A NEW DEAL



Commit to increase SMarT funding to 100% of the cost of training a cadet and guarantee a minimum training allowance for cadets to meet their material needs.



Reform tonnage tax to its original purpose of supporting employment opportunities for cadets once they qualify.



Deliver a national training provider proposed by MSC that is accountable to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and the Department for Transport (DfT).

**FOR EVERY £1  
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TRAINING £4.80  
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# GREEN JOBS AND A JUST TRANSITION

Currently, the UK's offshore renewable sector is largely operated by companies, who are fully or partly owned by other European states.

The installation and maintenance of UK wind farms is likewise being undertaken by companies using non-UK flagged vessels employing officers and crew from outside the UK. Much of the UK government investment in offshore renewable energy is not supporting jobs for UK workers. This situation cannot be allowed to continue.

The employment of non-resident seafarers, often from developing countries, on lesser pay and conditions disincentivises companies from supporting the training and employment for resident seafarers in what should be a growth sector.

Labour have also committed to no new oil and gas contracts and it is likely the number of jobs in this sector will continue to decline, the Labour Leader Sir Keir Starmer has said the transition to green energy cannot be a re-run of the 1980s.

Supporting good quality employment in the offshore renewable sector is vital to ensure a just transition for seafarers currently employed in the oil and gas industry, so they can secure employment in the offshore renewable sector.





# GREEN JOBS AND A JUST TRANSITION

## A NEW DEAL



Grow the number of UK flagged vessels working in the offshore energy sector through favourable procurement procedures for companies using vessels on the UK Ship Register (UKSR).



Ensure the procurement of contracts to install and maintain UK offshore renewable energy installations require collective bargaining agreements with UK based trade unions.



Support the introduction of fair pay agreements for the sector.

# GROW UK FLAG AND TACKLE FLAGS OF CONVENIENCE

P&O Ferries' actions in March 2022 typified the corrosive impact of flags of convenience (FOC); the process of shipowners registering their vessels in third party countries for regulatory and tax purposes. P&O Ferries' vessels were registered to Bermuda, Bahamas and Cyprus, three flags of convenience as defined by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) fair practices committee.

The FOC system is directly linked to the increase in 'social dumping' in UK waters, with shipowners employing seafarers from across the world on weaker pay and conditions than UK professionals.

The COVID-19 pandemic also highlighted the vulnerabilities of the FOC regime where flag states simply abdicated responsibility for those working onboard their vessels leading to seafarers being trapped onboard, forbidden to be repatriated, even denied shoreside medical support. There were even cases of deceased seafarers' bodies being denied repatriation for burial and being stored in ship's cold storage.

International conventions such as the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) were simply ignored by FOCs, the rights and dignity of seafarers who were critical to securing global supply chains, were collateral damage in the fight against a global pandemic.

The UK Ship Register has been in a state of decline as shipowners have increasingly opted to flag vessels to FOC countries such as Panama and Liberia. We need an action plan to encourage more ships to operate under the UK Flag.



# GROW UK FLAG AND TACKLE FLAGS OF CONVENIENCE

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Instigate a global review of ship registration practices with a view to enforcing Article 91 of the UN Convention on the Laws of the Seas (UNCLOS) that requires a genuine link between shipowner and state of registration and review supportive strategy to Red Ensign Group.



Develop and implement a plan of action to grow the UK ship register (UKSR) incentivising vessels working primarily within the domestic maritime industry to register their vessels to the UKSR.

## About Nautilus International

Nautilus International is an independent, influential, global trade union and professional organisation, committed to organising and campaigning for a future for maritime professionals, delivering high quality services to members, and maritime welfare support.

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