

## **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL COURT OF THE MEMBERS OF MSSC HELD AT 11.30 AM ON WEDNESDAY 9 OCTOBER 2024 HELD AT TRINITY HOUSE & VIRTUALLY ON YOUTUBE.**

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### **Present**

Admiral Sir Philip Jones GCB DL  
(President, MSSC and Chair of the Court)  
Mr Jeremy Penn (MSSC Chair)

### **In Attendance**

Mr M J Coles CBE (CEO)  
MSSC Senior Management Team

31 MSSC members in person – 14 votes received at the ballot box.

39 MSSC members online - 15 proxy votes received by members attending online.

Cadet Corporal Madison Grace, cadet speaker was present.

Rear Admiral Iain Lower CB MA AFNI, special guest and speaker was present.

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### **01/24 Welcome**

Admiral Sir Philip Jones GCB DL, MSSC President and Chair of the Court, welcomed the audience to this year's Annual Court. He introduced Mr Jeremy Penn, MSSC Chair. The Chair introduced Mr Martin Coles CBE, MSSC Chief Executive Officer, Captain Neil Downing RN, Captain Sea Cadets, Cadet Corporal Madison Grace and welcomed the guest speaker, Rear Admiral Iain Lower CB MA AFNI.

The Chair expressed his thanks to Rear Admiral Iain Lower CB MA AFNI and Trinity House for the use of its venue for the Annual Court.

The Chair expressed his congratulations to Cadet Corporal Madison Grace who has recently completed her Sergeant exam and been duly promoted.

The Chair expressed his congratulations to Brigadier Ged Salzano who has taken up the post as the Commander of the Cadet Forces for the Royal Navy.

Apologies were received from many Members and these had been recorded, 36 were present meaning the Annual Court was quorate.

The Chair asked Members to note with sadness the passing of former Marine Society Director Jeremy Howard, former MSSC Trustee/Vice President Sir Christopher Benson and former volunteer PO Reece Walding of Nuneaton & Bedworth Sea Cadets, who died of a medical condition during the south-west area summer cadet camp. The Chair led the Annual Court in a moment of silence to reflect on their passing.

### **02/24 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The item is deferred to the 7 November 2024 Annual Court online meeting. The Chair said due to a governance irregularity, the formal business of the court, including the tabling of the minutes from the last meeting, has been deferred to November 7, 2024, at 9 am, which will be held online. The Chair said the formal business of the Annual Court, including confirming and signing the minutes, retirements, elections of new trustees and vice presidents, and appointing auditors, will be deferred to the online meeting. Members will be notified, and a recording of today's Presentations Meeting will be made available. Proxy votes from today will be used at the online Annual Court. The Chair said attendees at today's Presentations Meeting can submit proxy forms and ask questions about the formal matters. The Chair ended by saying that despite this change, the meeting will proceed with a format similar to a normal Annual Court.

## **03/24      Report and Accounts**

MSSC Chair, Mr Jeremy Penn, presented the Report and Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2024.

Members were invited to receive the Report and Accounts, which had been approved by MSSC Council on 9 July 2024. The Accounts had been audited by MacIntyre Hudson LLP.

The MSSC Chair expressed his thanks to:

- The Board of Trustees, the Senior Management Team and MSSC employees.
- Miss Liz Cassidy and Mr Simon Figgis who had both completed their extended terms as Trustees. The MSSC Chair expressed his thanks to them for their enormous efforts.
- Mr David Derbyshire, Mr Alan Marsh MBE FICS, Mr John May OBE DL and Mrs Miranda Nagalingam who are standing down as retiring Trustees. The MSSC Chair expressed his gratitude to Mr David Derbyshire and Mr John May OBE DL for their expertise and focus on safety and safeguarding. The MSSC Chair acknowledge the immense contribution to fundraising by Mr Alan Marsh MBE FICS.
- Mr Stuart Curl and Mr Stephen Peck who are standing for election as MSSC Council members.
- Mr Andy Helliwell, Ms Honor Wilson-Fletcher and Ms Deana Rouse who are standing for election as Trustee Committee members.
- AC Dianne Gomes-Oldridge and LC Sharlize Munro-Labuda are standing for election as Cadet Trustee Committee members.

The MSSC Chair announced a newly co-opted safeguarding trustee, Dr Kate Richardson OBE.

The MSSC Chair said he was delighted to announce that HRH, the Princess Royal, has kindly agreed become the new royal patron of the Marine Society and Sea Cadets, succeeding Queen Elizabeth. Despite financial challenges due to grant-in-aid reductions and inflation, the charity managed to break even with revenues of £18.8 million and a balance sheet increase to £37.3 million. The MSSC Chair said MSSC continued to deliver excellent Sea Cadet experiences, focusing on diversity, inclusion, safety, and safeguarding. The MSSC Chair said the Marine Society OFSTED inspection of their activities resulted in a positive outcome and he expressed his congratulations to Darrell Bate (Director of Maritime Training & Development) and his team.

No questions were raised at this point

## **04/24      Retirements and election of MSSC Council members**

The Chair thanked the retiring MSSC Council members for their exemplary service and noted that Mr Jeremy Penn and Mr Mike Schofield would be continuing their roles. The Chair said the retirements and election of MSSC Council members would be voted on at the revised Formal Annual Court on 7 November 2024.

## **Retirement and Elections of MSSC Trustee Committee Members**

**05/24**

The Chair said at the revised Formal Annual Court meeting on 7 November 2024, there will be no committee retirements, but Mr Andy Helliwell, Ms Honor Wilson-Fletcher and Ms Deana Rouse will be standing for election as trustee committee members. Cadet trustee members AC Dianne Gomes-Oldridge and LC Sharlize Munro-Labuda will also stand for election.

## **Retirement and Elections of Vice Presidents**

**06/24**

The Chair said at the 7 November 2024 Formal Annual Court meeting the resignations of Vice Presidents Commodore Ian Gibb and Mr Mike Cornish will be acknowledged, and Mr David Derbyshire, Mr Alan Marsh MBE FICS, and Mr John May OBE DL will be proposed as new Vice Presidents.

## **Appointment of Auditors**

**07/24**

The Chair said at the 7 November 2024 Formal Annual Court meeting McIntyre Hudson LLP will be proposed for reappointment as the charity's auditors.

## **Chief Executive Officer's report**

**08/24**

Martin Coles CBE, MSSC CEO, began by saying how the year to April 2024 had been one of considerable optimism.

The CEO said The Sea Cadets participated in the Coronation of King Charles III celebrations in May 2023, culminating in their first Guinness World Record for the largest number of people piping as part of the national initiative, "The Big Help Out," promoting volunteerism across the UK.

The CEO said in May 2023, the Sea Cadets launched their Future Ready Strategy at the House of Lords. This five-year plan was developed in collaboration with cadets, volunteers, and employees to prepare the organisation for future challenges through 2028. The strategy focuses on inclusivity, flexible volunteering, and increasing cadet engagement while ensuring readiness for the evolving world.

The CEO said The Marine Society expanded its apprenticeship programs, setting a strong foundation for its college's delivery of post-16 apprenticeships. The Marine Society College received positive recognition, achieving a "Good" rating and praise for its contributions to the maritime sector. The CEO commended the work of Darrell Bate (Director of Maritime Training & Development) and the Marine Society team for their transformation efforts.

The CEO acknowledged financial difficulties faced in 2023-24 due to unexpected funding reductions. While temporary cuts were made, such as limiting new uniforms and reducing the offshore fleet, the organisation still delivered an impressive year of progress in the first year of the Future Ready Strategy.

The CEO said The Sea Cadets opened 24 new senior sections and 14 new junior sections under a grant program with the Department for Communities, Media, and Sport (DCMS).

The CEO said the Future Ready strategy made progress in aligning the cadet experience with the modern Royal Navy. The CEO highlighted 14 Naval Experience Weeks, 15 amphibious experiences, 873 cadets participating in career fairs and that there was around 35% of cadets engaged directly with the Royal Navy during the year.

The CEO said The Cadet Voice initiative expanded, enabling greater engagement of young people in the organisation's decision-making processes. A record-breaking Cadet

Conference in February 2024 was held with 300 cadets in attendance, and cadets were involved in the interview process for senior leadership positions.

A Barnardo's independent review of the MSSC safeguarding highlighted strong procedures and areas for improvement, which the organisation is actively addressing. The CEO also discussed safety initiatives following learnings from the February 2024 Coroner's Inquest into tragic 2018 Great Orme incident that impacted The Scout Association, involving an Explorer Scout, implementing new training and risk management protocols.

The CEO said cadets presented at both Conservative and Labour Party Conferences to MPs and stakeholders, raising the profile of the organisation and showcasing its impact on young people. The CEO shared a moving story about a 12-year-old boy who found a sense of belonging and achievement through Sea Cadets. The CEO said, "We all know that believing in oneself for the first time in circumstances just like this young boy was going through, is a light bulb moment." The CEO added "Our charity delivers light bulb moments, light bulb moments that inspire young people to achieve their potential through challenge and nautical adventure guided by the customs and traditions of today's Royal Navy, light bulb moments that enable seafarers to realize their potential through learning and career development. That is what our charity is about."

The CEO acknowledged ongoing financial challenges but expressed optimism for the future. Key developments include the sale of the old HQ and the move to the NSC at no cost to the charity and the upcoming opening of the Midlands Residential Boat Station, part of a £19 million decade of investment in boating for cadets.

The CEO highlighted a new fundraising strategy, including the launch of a Friends of Sea Cadets initiative. Feedback from 3,000 former cadets supported the creation of an alumni and membership program to keep former members engaged.

The CEO thanked retiring trustees for their service and welcomed new trustees to the leadership team.

The CEO thanked the Trustees, the Royal Navy, the Senior Management Team, employees, colleagues, volunteers and sponsors.

The CEO ended by introducing the new Friends of Sea Cadets video.

The Chair thanked the CEO for his inspiring words and for showcasing the video.

## **09/24      Sea Cadet presentation**

The Chair introduced Cadet Corporal Madison Grace from the North-West Area Trafford Unit. The Chair said that Cadet Corporal Madison should be recognisable to attendees for her work at the D-Day 80 commemorations, representing Sea Cadets out in northern France earlier this year.

Cadet Corporal Madison Grace gave a presentation on her experiences and journey as a Sea Cadet.

Cadet Corporal Madison Grace said how joining the Royal Marine Cadets profoundly changed her life. Before joining, she rarely left the house, but inspired by her sister, who attended Air Cadets, Madison chose Royal Marine Cadets for a new adventure. Her first months were memorable, and she formed strong friendships.

Her first cadet camp in 2020 was just before the lockdown. Attending cadets online provided her with purpose during a difficult time, motivating her to stay active. She earned her Lance Corporal promotion online, which she views as a turning point in her cadet journey. She credits her detachment commander, Stuart Hurston, for supporting her through all her promotions and providing opportunities, including attending the King's Coronation and becoming the first Mayor's Cadet for the Trafford Council. This

role allowed her to represent young people and give back to her community, especially as an immigrant, promoting values of tolerance and openness.

Cadet Corporal Madison Grace said she was honoured to represent the Commonwealth and cadets on an international level and met HRH Princess Anne during the event. She recalled the moving sight of gravestones illuminated during the vigil at Bayeux Cemetery, feeling humbled to represent a new generation of cadets, as well as all young people across the commonwealth, many the same age as those who had fallen.

The friendships formed during her time on TS Jack Petchey, the support she received from her unit, and the experiences gained through cadets gave her confidence and pride. Madison expressed gratitude to everyone who has supported her journey, emphasizing how cadets have shaped her life and launched her future.

Cadet Corporal Madison Grace ended by thanking all attendees of the Annual Court.

The Chair thanked Cadet Corporal Madison Grace for her inspiring presentation.

## **10/24 Marine Society Prizes**

The Chair introduced Mr Darrell Bate, Director of Maritime Training & Development, to present the awards.

Mr Darrell Bate introduced the J W Slater/Marine Society Award for Outstanding Achievement. He read the citation for the recipient, Dean Hodgson, who gave his apologies for being unable to attend via a recorded video that was played.

Mr Darrell Bate introduced the Marine Society Outstanding Achievement for Career Progression. He read the citation for today's recipient, George Jenkins.

## **11/24 Annual Court address**

The President introduced the guest speaker, Rear Admiral Iain Lower CB MA AFNI.

Rear Admiral Iain expressed his gratitude to the President, MSSC Chair, CEO, Trustees, and friends for the invitation to speak at this prestigious gathering. He congratulated the MSSC and Sea Cadets on their remarkable achievements over the past year, particularly in successfully navigating financial challenges. Special recognition was given to award winners, including Cadet Corporal Madison Grace for her promotion and for leading the Princess Royal with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) D-Day commemorative torch.

Rear Admiral Iain shared a personal connection to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), where he had previously served as Director of Strategy and International Affairs. He spoke about the origins of the D-Day torch, an idea that emerged during the planning for the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings. He explained that the symbolic theme was to pass the "baton of commemoration" to the next generation, which culminated in the lighting of torches at a vigil in Bayeux and other cemeteries.

Rear Admiral Iain praised Cadet Corporal Madison Grace for carrying the D-Day torch at a ceremony led by HRH The Princess Royal at Bayeux Cemetery. He recalled a moment of pride when the very same torch was later brought to Trinity House, where he had the honour of passing it on to the Trinity House Cadets.

Attendees were invited to explore the displays at Trinity House, particularly those showcasing its involvement in the D-Day landings. Rear Admiral Iain highlighted the role of the light vessel Juno, which guided ships to the British beaches. He paid tribute to the courage of those stationed on unarmed vessels, tasked with making themselves

conspicuous to guide the fleet during the largest amphibious landing in history.

Rear Admiral Iain reflected on the overarching mission of Trinity House, which is dedicated to the safety and benefit of all mariners. Under the Merchant Shipping Act 1995, Trinity House is responsible for the maintenance of 64 lighthouses, 8 light vessels, 450 buoys, and over 11,000 local aids to navigation. He noted the critical role that this infrastructure plays in ensuring maritime safety, protecting the UK's economy, safeguarding the marine environment, and saving lives.

Trinity House also has a strong charitable arm, supporting mariners in need and training Merchant Navy officers. Rear Admiral Iain said that the charity is now training young Ukrainian officers, which demonstrates Trinity House's commitment to supporting global maritime education.

Rear Admiral Iain emphasized the pride and dedication of the Trinity House staff, sharing personal anecdotes from his visits to operational sites where he engaged with technicians, seafarers, and engineers. He praised their commitment to maintaining and modernizing some of the UK's most iconic and isolated rock stations. Rear Admiral Iain also mentioned the "Futures Afloat" ship replacement program, highlighting how the marine team is actively involved in shaping the future of Trinity House's fleet.

He noted the importance of teamwork and the close bond he had observed among the staff. He reflected on the 500-year legacy of Trinity House, which is built on a foundation of service, excellence, and innovation.

Rear Admiral Iain discussed the need for continuous innovation in Trinity House to address evolving maritime risks. With new challenges such as offshore wind farms, changing economic conditions, and advancements in technology, he stressed the importance of using new materials, data, and digital tools to ensure Trinity House remains at the forefront of maritime safety.

He pointed out that the increasingly congested waters, such as those around the Hornsea Windfarm (the largest offshore wind farm in the world), require new approaches to navigation and risk management. Trinity House is investing in research and development to meet these challenges and to maintain its global leadership in maritime safety.

Rear Admiral Iain highlighted the longstanding relationship between Trinity House and the MSSC. He explained that a significant portion of the Trinity House grant supports the Annual Premises Fund (APF), which helps local units with infrastructure improvements, benefitting hundreds of cadets. He also mentioned the role of Trinity House in supporting MSSC's on the water outreach programs, which provided opportunities for 779 children and young people last year, particularly in areas like East London and Birmingham.

Rear Admiral Iain spoke of the apprenticeship program Trinity House runs in collaboration with the UK Sailing Association (UKSA), which is helping to shape future maritime talent, noting the close working between MSSC and UKSA on apprenticeships.

He shared his personal reflections from his time as Assistant Chief of Naval Staff, noting the critical role that the Sea Cadets play in inspiring young people to pursue maritime careers. Rear Admiral Iain was pleased to note that 61% of Sea Cadets are inspired to enter the maritime industry, with 37% going on to do so. This connection, he said, is vital for fostering future talent in the maritime sector.

Rear Admiral Iain concluded by reaffirming the vital importance of maritime organizations such as Trinity House and the MSSC in ensuring the UK's prosperity, security, and environmental protection. He stated that for an island nation like the UK, the work done by Trinity House and the Sea Cadets is not just important—it is

"priceless."

In his closing remarks, he reiterated the words: "The Sea Cadets are everywhere the Royal Navy and maritime sector are not, improving our visibility, profile, and awareness of all things maritime, which, for an island nation, is invaluable."

The Chair thanked Rear Admiral Iain for his stimulating and insightful presentation, acknowledging the critical role of Trinity House in maritime safety and the deep collaboration between Trinity House and MSSC.

## **12/24 Closing remarks**

The Chair opened the floor to questions.

The audience provided details on the Sea Cadets gaining a plot at the field of remembrance at Westminster Abbey for the former cadets who died in the conflicts. Ray Mitchell encouraged colleagues to visit the Westminster Abbey field of remembrance during the November ceremonies.

The President closed the meeting at approximately 12.53 pm on 9 October 2024 by thanking Trinity House, the Members present, Daniel McAllister, the Communication team and Tricia Smith for their logistical support and organisation of the Annual Court. The President expressed his thanks to Rear Admiral Iain Lower CB MA AFNI, Deputy Master and Chief Executive Officer of the Lighthouse Board, Trinity House for allowing MSSC to use the venue.

The President thanked the MSSC Chair and CEO.

The President thanked Cadet Corporal Madison Grace for her inspirational words.

The President expressed his thanks to all those standing down as Vice Presidents, as members of the Council and Committee, and to welcome and thank those standing up for election in all the roles.

The President concluded by saying that Annual Court is a day in which we remind ourselves of everything we have done and give a sense of hope and future for all we plan to do, but none of it happens without the support of all those who either work directly, who volunteer for or who fundraise and support at everything that's so special about Sea Cadets.

The next Annual Court is scheduled for Wednesday 8 October 2025 at Trinity House (TBC).

**Signed:**  
**Chairperson**

**Date:**