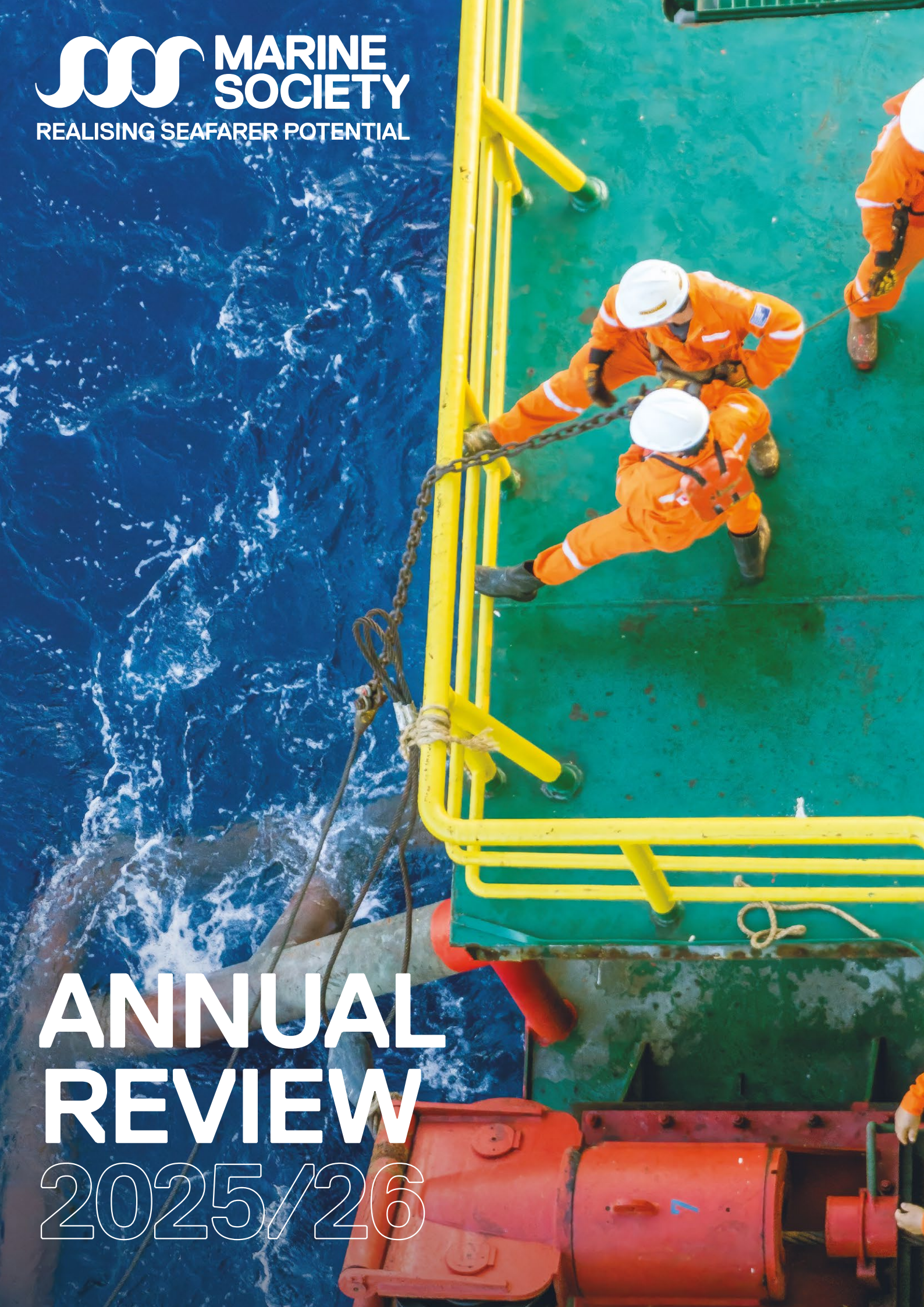




ANNUAL REVIEW 2025/26

WELCOME

HRH The Princess Royal, Marine Society & Sea Cadets Patron



In my second year as Patron of Marine Society & Sea Cadets (MSSC), I have been pleased to see significant growth in the vital support it provides to seafarers and maritime professionals.

The future strength of the United Kingdom's maritime industries depends upon the skills of the next generation. The past year saw 119 scholarships and bursaries awarded to people seeking to advance their careers and I commend Marine Society's team for continuing to expand its apprenticeship programme. I am particularly pleased to see a growing number joining from Sea Cadets.

I send my thanks to the employees, supporters and partners who enable Marine Society to achieve so much: from the growth of its digital library to the Coming Ashore programme to help increasing numbers of seafarers transfer their knowledge and experience into new roles on land. Their commitment ensures that Marine Society's beneficiaries will continue to make an important contribution to our coastal communities and national prosperity for many years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Anne'.

Jeremy Penn MBE, Marine Society & Sea Cadets Chair



As this Annual Review demonstrates, Marine Society delivered life-changing experiences and outcomes for our beneficiaries in 2025/26. Thanks to the vision and leadership of our Director of Maritime Training & Development, Darrell Bate,

and the efforts of his exceptional team, we made our limited resources go further than ever during the year.

Our vision is to ensure that current and future seafarers and maritime professionals are skilled for life – and the continued growth of our apprenticeships, bursaries, mentoring schemes and library services are empowering them to thrive in a rapidly changing world. By helping them to gain new skills and qualifications, we are also playing our part in developing the flexibility and expertise

needed to grow the maritime sector – which also gains so much from our promotion of career opportunities and provision of high-quality training packages. All of this work is about creating a virtuous circle, in which our beneficiaries and their employers become part of a revitalised sector; one that doesn't just support new jobs and apprenticeships, but is critical for the ports, shipping and offshore infrastructure that sustains daily life for us all.

With 2026 marking the 270th anniversary of our organisation, we have launched a Friends of Marine Society membership scheme dedicated to strengthening our networks and supporting seafarers and maritime professionals. Please consider becoming a member; both to help secure Marine Society's long-term future, and to ensure that every one of our beneficiaries fulfils their true potential in 2026/27.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Jeremy Penn'.

Join the Friends of Marine Society at marine-society.org/become-a-member

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS



apprentices on programme at year-end
– up from 21



new apprentices recruited during the year
– no change



apprentices passing end point assessments
– up from 4



apprentices nominated for British Marine Apprentice of the Year 2025
– up from 3



hours of one-to-one mentoring delivered by 18 Coming Ashore mentors
– up from 290



Coming Ashore mentees securing jobs ashore
– up from 7



Slater Scholars supported
– up from 79



other scholarships and bursaries awarded
– up from 20



seafarers accessing our free digital library service via five Port Welfare Centres
– up from 82



Learn@Sea/Shore courses sold
– up from 240



e-books supplied to seafarers through our digital library
– up from 3,508



crew libraries supplied to ships
– up from 24

DELIVERING MARINE APPRENTICESHIPS

Marine Society's apprenticeships combine hands-on training with expert tuition and guidance. This is all offered at no cost to the employer, thanks to the contributions of our industry partners and our ability to access government levy funding. We are proud to provide apprenticeships in seven standards – from Marina & Boatyard Operative to Ship's Master 500gt (Near Coastal) – through courses delivered by experienced trainers at leading employers.

The additional support provided by Marine Society makes the programme ideal for school leavers, new entrants and existing maritime workers looking to learn while they earn. As well as gaining new skills and confidence, our apprentices achieve national qualifications that lead to permanent roles – putting them on a path to a successful maritime career.

REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

A record **28** aspiring maritime professionals were on programme at the end of 2025/26, following a year in which we matched 2024/25's high-water mark for recruitment – with **17** new apprentices coming aboard.

Our apprenticeship programme is now flourishing in every region of England, thanks to a growing cadre of employers choosing to be our apprenticeship partners – with Stena Line, DFDS Ferries, Yacht Havens Marinas, and Shoreham Port joining in 2025/26. We have been delighted to work with such reputable shipowners, marinas and ports, who help us to attract new recruits by offering excellent working conditions and exciting future career paths.

The quality of our employers, along with our ongoing enhancements to the programme, meant that **nine** apprentices were able to pass their end-point assessments during the year (up from four in 2024/25). Along with the growing numbers of our apprentices securing full-time roles with their chosen employer, or going on to further training or specialisation, their success confirms that Marine Society's programme is adding great value to the maritime sector.

CELEBRATING APPRENTICES

Among the many individuals we have helped to thrive is Erin Broad, who was named Marine Society's Apprentice of the Year at the MSSC Annual Court held in Trinity House in October 2025. Erin's outstanding progress with CLdN Ports has done much to promote the value of our Port Operative Apprenticeship Standard, which delivers the essential skills needed to keep ports running safely and efficiently. "What drew me to being a Port Operative was the opportunity to operate large machinery," says Erin. "I find the process interesting and exciting! **Marine Society has been exceptional in supporting me through my end-point assessment and helping me with any queries or issues.**"



Erin receives her award from MSSC President, Admiral Sir Philip Jones GCB DL

The Seawork 2025 trade fair in Southampton in June proved to be another excellent showcase for Marine Society's apprenticeships, with our stand in the Workboat Association Pavillion visited by **16** Marine Society apprentices – many of whom were accompanied by their employers. Some had travelled over seven hours to be there, but all were inspired to discover a huge range of career options within the workboat sector and found the networking opportunities to be highly beneficial.



The Southampton International Boat Show in September 2025 (above) then helped to promote our Marina & Boatyard Operative apprentices, several of whom took part in skills demonstrations at their employer stands. The show's annual presentations by British Marine included two achievement awards for our apprentices Oliver Rickard (below) and Tina Swan, further raising our profile as a leading apprenticeship provider.



ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION

At both Southampton events, Marine Society exhibited at careers fairs attended by a combined total of over 500 Year 9-11 students from local schools and colleges – providing a valuable opportunity to engage with the seafarers of the future. 2025/26 also saw us increase our promotion of maritime careers within our sister organisation, Sea Cadets. As a result, we saw continued growth in the number of serving cadets and young volunteers joining our apprenticeship programme, where they were able to make full use of the nautical grounding gained in the Sea Cadet Corps (SCC).

Dawson Hill, one of our Small Commercial Vessel Crewmember apprentices – who joined while still a sea cadet – even took part in a keynote Q&A at the MSSC employee conference in January 2026. Dawson (below left) was interviewed on stage by CEO Guy Holloway, just days before ageing out of Littlehampton Unit. Explaining how his cadet experience had strengthened his apprenticeship application and helped him to thrive at Shoreham Port (see p11), Dawson also praised the way his learning was structured to take account of his autism diagnosis and provide additional support.



Alfie Bean (above right) is another former sea cadet – and now a volunteer Petty Officer (SCC) with Fishguard Unit – who is thriving in his Small Commercial Crewmember apprenticeship with Williams Shipping, based in Pembroke Dock. As well as gaining experience on barges and multicat vessels during port operations and deliveries to gas tankers, Alfie is also earning a range of qualifications – from Standards of Training, Certification & Watchkeeping (STCW) to Approved Engine Courses. **“Marine Society really supports me with regular catch-ups and teaching sessions and are always available if I need help.”** says Alfie, who also volunteers as an RNLI crewmember. **“But I wouldn’t be doing my maritime apprenticeship if it wasn’t for Sea Cadets – it helped me realise what I wanted to do,”**

With Dawson and Alfie acting as outstanding advocates for apprenticeships, we continue to strive to attract many more sea cadets and other young people into the maritime sector – including by working to provide new opportunities in 2026/27, such as fully sponsored Merchant Navy and Superyacht cadetships.

COMING ASHORE

We continued our work to help experienced seafarers transition to shore-side roles, with the Coming Ashore programme playing a vital role in retaining priceless knowledge within the maritime sector. With the leadership, problem-solving and decision-making skills gained at sea often translating to roles at ports and marinas or shipping and insurance offices, Coming Ashore provides a unique service in linking movers with employers.

One-to-one mentoring from those who have already made the same transition gives our mentees the confidence to sell their experience as relevant and transferable. They also gain clarity on their career options and the backing of a whole new support network – including help with identifying training, finding appropriate roles, tailoring CVs and preparing for interviews.

While new registrations were down significantly (to **54** from 77) during the year, the number of seafarers finding jobs ashore rose from seven to **12**. We also achieved another increase in the amount of one-to-one mentoring provided – reaching **297** hours in 2025/26.

Our mentoring capacity benefitted from some very knowledgeable professionals joining our team, including Warsash Maritime Academy lecturer Claire Hogan, with her experience of coming ashore to roles in vessel traffic services and operations. We also welcomed Andrew Cleaver, a former Chief Mate on a range of vessels who now works as a marine quality assurance specialist in Asia.



Despite the ITF Seafarer funding having ended, we continue to deliver Coming Ashore's services using our own funds – demonstrating our ongoing commitment to this vital programme. We also redoubled our efforts to promote the huge variety of expert advice and bespoke support it offers – both through social media and our Seafarer News email newsletter.

With our new Friends of Marine Society group further increasing awareness of Coming Ashore, we look forward to helping many more seafarers plan their next move in 2026/27.

“

The best thing about Marine Society's support was the guidance and mentorship. It helped me navigate an unfamiliar area of the industry and highlight my unique attributes and valuable transferable skills to shore-based employers.

Coming Ashore mentee

”

SCHOLARSHIPS AND BURSARIES

For half a century, the JW Slater Scholarship has provided life-changing financial support for an average of 60 ambitious seafarers each year. Having been administered by Marine Society for the past forty years, 2025/26 marked our first year in full control of the £5.1m JW Slater Memorial Fund.

INCREASING IMPACT

Thanks to the wisdom and generosity of the Slater trustees and Nautilus International in approving the transfer, Nautilus Slater Scholars now enjoy even greater convenience and flexibility in accessing up to £20,000 – which can make the crucial difference in helping them to become officers or gain STCW certificates of competency. The new arrangements helped us to increase the number of Slater Scholarships we support from 79 to **86** during the year, with **38** ratings achieving their first certificates of competency.

The scholarship's enduring impact was demonstrated by the journey of our Slater Award recipient for 2025, Grant Guechdi – who received his award from MSSC President, Admiral Sir Phil Jones GCB DL, before being congratulated by Slater trustee John Slater (below). Having left school at 15, Grant has shown great motivation to forge a successful career at sea. After a tough but rewarding period on fishing trawlers and merchant vessels, he gained the experience needed to access his chosen course – which was made affordable by the Slater Scholarship. Putting in months of intense study to get up to speed and overcome the challenge of dyslexia, he passed his written exam at the third attempt and is now a qualified officer with Stena Drilling (see p11).



FEEDBACK ON THE NAUTILUS SLATER SCHOLARSHIP

“The Slater funding has been immensely beneficial, enabling me to undertake all necessary modules in a relatively short period of time. Marine Society provides exceptional support for students aspiring to achieve their first certificate of competency.

Charles Brereton

“Being able to take the financial pressure off and put my spare time to use furthering my career was invaluable. The Marine Society team were extremely attentive and very fast to organise anything I needed, be that courses or books.

Lydia Thompson

WIDENING ACCESS TO FUNDING

From 2026, the Nautilus Slater Fund generously agreed to support three other Marine Society bursaries which align with its objectives to help seafarer's progress in their careers: the Hanway Scholarship, supporting seafarer qualifications and continued professional development; the Worcester Scholarship, funding higher academic or professional qualifications; and the Green Skills Bursary, for those looking to gain essential qualifications to work in the offshore and renewables sector.

We were delighted that **33** seafarers took advantage of these funds during the year (a **65%** increase on 2024/25), and hope that the additional support from Nautilus Slater will see that trend continue for years to come.

SEAFARER LEARNING AND WELLBEING

We continued to grow and diversify our curriculum in 2025/26, with **six** enrolments on our Level 3 Diploma in Maritime Studies course. Progress was also made in delivering an affordable option for apprentices looking to access the RYA Yachtmaster qualification, while we looked to develop a Maritime Skills Bootcamp to tackle skills shortages in the workboat sector. Our work to create new learning resources and improve our support for seafarers will be greatly enhanced by our new content partnership with the Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology (IMarEST); the memorandum of understanding signed in October 2025 marked the beginning of an exciting collaboration that will benefit the development and wellbeing of seafarers.

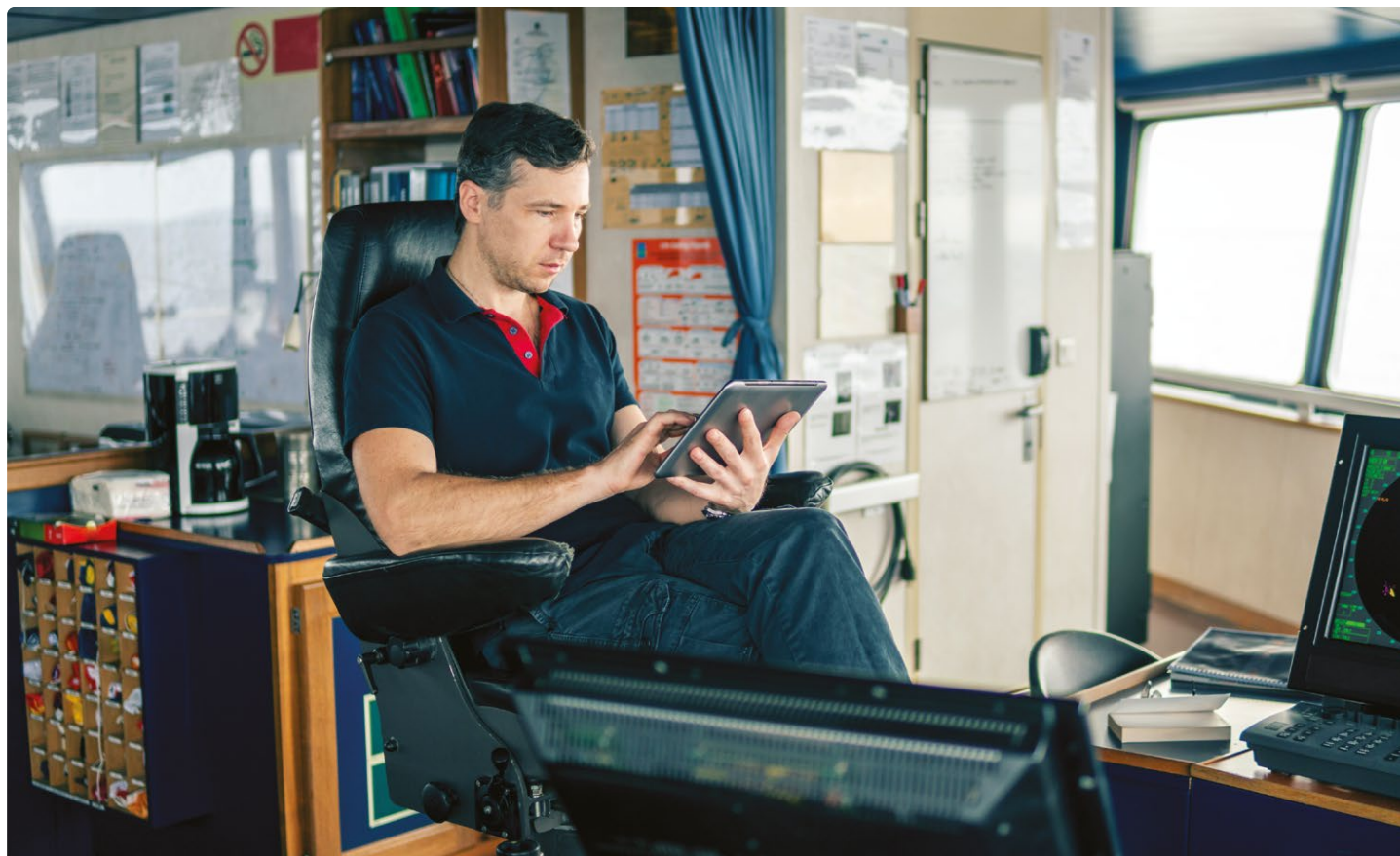
ENHANCING ACCESS TO LEARNING

Our popular Learn@Sea and Learn@Shore digital curriculum helped even more seafarers and maritime professionals to gain qualifications during the year, with a **12%** growth in courses purchased raising **£26,289** for our charity.

Our digital library app also continued to grow in popularity, as more seafarers discovered the benefits of being able to access thousands of educational and recreational titles at sea. Once again, we saw an increase in the number of e-books being read by seafarers, with **3,648** supplied in **17** languages during 2025/26. We also provided more magazines (**6,168** in **33** languages) and saw a **70%** increase (to **832**) in the number of audiobooks being enjoyed.

REACHING THOSE IN NEED

Thanks to the Merchant Navy Welfare Board's decision to renew its support, we were able to extend our digital library project for five major welfare charities – providing their users with free and unlimited access to our digital library app. The service proved to be a valuable learning and wellbeing resource for seafarers arriving at UK ports in real need of reading material – combatting the mental health impact of isolation for **86** seafarers in 2025/26.





Promoting our digital library app to seafarers

Because the app works offline, it has become the perfect companion for long voyages and an essential tool for boosting wellbeing and professional development at sea. And we made things even more convenient in 2025/26, by creating a multilingual information and instruction hub accessible via a single QR code – reducing the need for multiple printed translations and ensuring a smoother user experience.

We are deeply grateful to the welfare charities, chaplains, and volunteers who have helped to make the initiative a success. To give something back to ports communities, Marine Society team members continue to visit welfare centres to engage directly with seafarers and support other voluntary initiatives – including helping to wrap over 3,500 Christmas gift parcels for the Queen Victoria Seafarer's Rest in the Port of Tilbury.

“Marine Society’s digital library for seafarers project supports personal and professional growth, mental health, and enhances quality of life at sea. It brings a smile to seafarers’ faces to know someone is thinking of them.”

Paul Kirker, Belfast Mission to Seafarers

A LEADING BOOKSHOP AND LIBRARY SERVICE

While global trade barriers and conflicts reduced our income from supplying crew libraries and books, Marine Society remained a valued provider of these vital services – with our Books & Libraries Team achieving an impressive total revenue of **£180,079**. Book sales fell slightly to **2,051**, although we increased the number of crew libraries provided for ships from 24 to **28** – including three hardback research libraries for the scientists on board National Oceanography Centre and British Antarctic Survey ships, and a new contract to supply three Fred Olsen cruise ships.

“The provision of books by Marine Society is a vital and welcome service, allowing crew, technicians and scientists an alternative to electronic entertainment and interest. It is always fun looking through the latest delivery, knowing that your returned books will provide similar on another ship, for another crew.”

Stewart Mackay, Captain, RRS Discovery



Second Officer Graham Stringfellow enjoying the Marine Society library on board the RRS Discovery

LOOKING FORWARD: PRIORITIES FOR 2026/27

With Marine Society once again achieving the Matrix Standard benchmark for high-quality information, advice and guidance in 2025/26, our continued focus on improving learner experiences and outcomes is set to make 2026/27 another year of enhanced services for our beneficiaries. We will continue to grow and broaden our maritime curriculum by exploring new partnership opportunities, while working to improve seafarer welfare and career progression by increasing their access to funding and resources.

But as we enter the fourth year of our Future Ready Strategy, we continue to prioritise our efforts to expand the apprenticeships and adult skills programmes which allow us to maximise our impact on behalf of the maritime sector. This will mean leveraging our ability to access government funding and reach established networks, to engage more employers and training providers and attract a more diverse range of new entrants – including many more new apprentices from Sea Cadets.

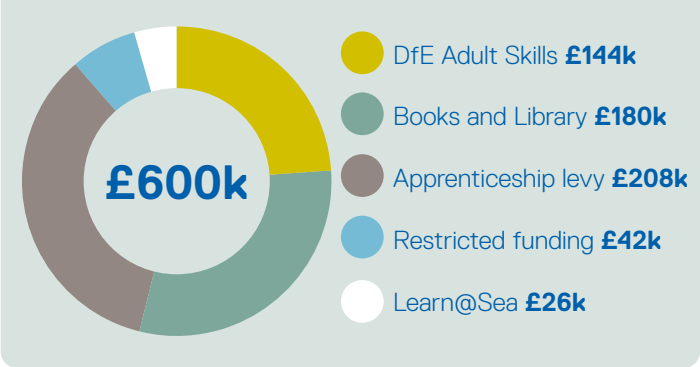
KEY OUTCOMES FOR 2026/27:

- 1 30 additional apprentices enrolled
- 2 12 Level 3 Maritime Studies students enrolled
- 3 20 Careers Awareness sessions delivered and promoted to sea cadets
- 4 2 individuals recruited and sponsored for Merchant Navy Cadetships
- 5 300 seafarers making use of our free Digital Library service
- 6 40 bursaries awarded for Seafarer Professional Development
- 7 £20k in funding secured for the Coming Ashore programme

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.

MARINE SOCIETY INCOME 2025/26



OUR FUNDERS

We thank the generosity of those who made so much of our vital work possible in 2025/26:

- Skills for England
- Nautilus Slater Fund
- ITF Seafarer’s Trust
- Merchant Navy Welfare Board



HOW MARINE SOCIETY CHANGED MY LIFE

“

My apprenticeship has helped me learn so much, including health & safety, engineering, and diesel engines. Learning to manoeuvre larger vessels has also been a big part of the job at Shoreham Port, along with a lot of helming and watchkeeping. And going to UKSA on the Isle of Wight to start the training courses was amazing.

The help I get from Marine Society has been extraordinary – I can't thank them enough for their support with coursework and deadlines. In five years, I'd like to have finished my apprenticeship and have my Yachtmaster qualification. I'd love to start as a deckhand on the tugs and eventually progress to becoming a tug master.

Dawson Hill, Small Commercial Vessels Crewmember apprentice

”

“



I started working on deck on fishing vessels before joining the Merchant Navy to work on standby boats. I wanted to become an officer, but never really had the qualifications to do a cadetship. I found out there was a way of doing the experienced seafarer route, but without the Slater Scholarship I may never have got the chance to do the course I needed to become an officer.

Marine Society hasn't just made a difference in my life; it was also a massive help throughout my studies.

Because of this, I have now started my new role within Stena Drilling as a Trainee Dynamic Positioning Officer on board drill ships in the Gulf of Mexico. Winning the Slater Award means that all the hard work at college has been recognised. There is still a lot to learn, but I'm looking forward to it.”

Grant Guechdi, Slater Scholar and John William Slater Award winner

”

A large red ship's hull dominates the upper half of the image. A person wearing a white hard hat and an orange safety vest stands on a metal platform or ladder attached to the side of the ship. The lower half of the image shows the dark blue water of the sea, with a small, light-colored object visible on the surface.

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