

## **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL COURT OF THE MEMBERS OF MSSC HELD AT 11.30 AM ON WEDNESDAY 11 OCTOBER 2023 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

Able Cadet Sara, cadet speaker was present.

Rachael Evans MA FCMI, special guest and speaker was present.

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### **01/23 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, Able Cadet Sara and welcomed the guest speaker, Rachael Evans.

The Chair welcomed Hilary Greaves, the granddaughter of Vice Admiral Sir Gilbert Owen Stephenson, KBE, CB, CMG, DL, for which the Stephenson Trophy is named that is bestowed to the best unit of each of the six Areas.

The Chair expressed his thanks to Trinity House for the use of its venue for the Annual Court.

Apologies were received from many Members and these had been recorded, 31 were present meaning the Annual Court was quorate.

The Chair asked Members to note with sadness the passing of former Area Officer, MD and Co Sec of the Sea Cadets Association, Commander Malcolm Fuller, noting that the CEO is to attend Commander Fuller's funeral on behalf of the charity later in the week. The Chair led the Annual Court in a moment of silence to reflect on his passing.

### **02/23 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the MSSC Annual Court held on 12 October 2022 were confirmed as accurate and signed by the Chair.

### **03/23 Report and Accounts**

MSSC Chair, Mr Jeremy Penn, presented the Report and Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2023.

Members were invited to receive the Report and Accounts, which had been approved by MSSC Council on 1 August 2023. The Accounts had been audited by Mazars LLP.

The MSSC Chair expressed his thanks to:

- The Board of Trustees, the Senior Management Team and MSSC employees.
- Mrs Kirsten Hopkins and Mr John Denholm CBE who are standing for election as MSSC Council members.

The MSSC Chair highlighted how the Report and Accounts showed an annual increase due to the return to activity.

No questions were raised at this point

#### **04/23 Proposed changes to the Governing Instrument**

The Chair presented the proposed changes to the Governing Instrument. The CEO read out two questions posed by members:

- Would the proposed wording be best served if it referred to a majority of proxy votes?
- How many members are thereby type?

The CEO said that the wording would not need to be amended as all votes are conducted by the relevant majority as outlined by the Governing Instrument. The CEO said the roles available to vote are:

- Honorary life members – 33
- Life members – 102
- MSSC members – 155
- MSSC members plus – 67
- Vice Presidents and President – 39
- MSSC Trustees – 18

The CEO said the total number of people therefore able to vote is 414.

The proposed changes to the Governing Instrument. Proposed by Vice Admiral Sir Jonathan Woodcock KCB OBE, seconded by Mr David Dingle CBE and was passed by all Members present and voting.

#### **05/23 Retirements and election of MSSC Council members**

The Chair thanked the retiring MSSC Council members for their exemplary service and noted that two were proposed for short-term re-election to manage the succession process.

The retirement of Mr Simon Figgis, Miss Liz Cassidy, Captain Ian McNaught CVO MNM, Mr Jonathan Robertshaw and Mr David Dingle CBE was noted.

The resolution is that Mr Simon Figgis (until 31 March 2024), Miss Liz Cassidy (until 31 March 2024), Mr Jonathan Robertshaw and Mr David Dingle CBE who is retiring by rotation, be re-elected as a Member of the Council for one year. Proposed by Gareth Hampton, seconded by Vice Admiral Sir Jonathan Woodcock KCB OBE and was passed by all Members present and voting.

The resolution is that Mrs Kirsten Hopkins, a current committee member, is elected as a Member of Council. Proposed by Vice Admiral Sir Jonathan Woodcock KCB OBE, seconded by Mr David Dingle CBE and was passed by all Members present and voting.

The resolution is that Mr John Denholm CBE, a current committee member, is elected as a Member of Council. Proposed by Mr Alan Marsh MBE FICS, seconded by Mr David Dingle CBE and was passed by all Members present and voting.

#### **06/23 Retirement and Elections of Vice Presidents**

The Chair expressed his gratitude for the service of Colonel Paul Cautley CMG OBE DL.

The retirement of Colonel Paul Cautley CMG OBE DL was noted.

The resolution is that Captain Ian McNaught CVO MNM, Miss Liz Cassidy (from 01 April 2024 on retirement as a Member of Council) and Mr Simon Figgis (from 01 April 2024 on retirement as a Member of Council) are elected as MSSC Vice Presidents. Proposed by Vice Admiral Sir Jonathan Woodcock KCB OBE, seconded by Mr David Dingle CBE and was passed by all Members present and voting.

#### **07/23 Appointment of Auditors**

The resolution is that Mazars LLP be re-appointed as MSSC's Auditors for a further year. Proposed by Vice Admiral Sir Jonathan Woodcock KCB OBE, seconded by Mr Jonathan Robertshaw and was passed by all Members present and voting.

#### **08/23 Chief Executive Officer's report**

Martin Coles CBE, MSSC CEO, began by saying how the year to April 2023 had been one of great success and achievement.

The CEO mentioned how the visibility of the Sea Cadets has expanded with 38,000 Cadet days participating in community events had been delivered. This had raised Sea Cadets profile and connection with communities and also profiles our strong connection with the Royal Navy.

The CEO expressed his thanks to the 9,000 volunteers who provide activities to our young people. MSSC has delivered courses, offshore voyages and summer camps that have attracted 6,000 new cadets in the year (with a further 3,000 joining in the first half of this financial year). The CEO said that Sea Cadets is forecasted to have over 14,000 Cadets by April 2024. The strong demand to join the Sea Cadets has resulted in a 3,500 waiting list. The CEO said these positive numbers highlight how Sea Cadets is launching more young people for life.

The CEO said that the growth of the Sea Cadets had been helped by opening in the year of 21 new junior sections and three new Royal Marines Cadet Detachments (RMCD). Sea Cadets has also secured funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) for 58 new senior sections to be opened over the next two years.

The CEO outlined how the Marine Society had also expanded its offer in many areas during the year. Whilst the number of apprenticeships was slightly down, the 90% success rate was impressive. The CEO introduced the new Marine Society promotional video. The CEO said Darrell Bate, Director of Maritime Training & Development and his team have been highly effective in building industry relationships to benefit the Marine Society.

The CEO said that global changes with heightened international conflicts and concerns about Artificial Intelligence (AI) have created a feeling of uncertainty. During these changing times society seeks to hold onto tradition. The Marine Society is the oldest maritime charity in the UK and Sea Cadets are a traditional part of local communities. The CEO said as society clings to these expectations MSSC must deliver.

The CEO said the charity is delivering the solution to help young people and seafarers by instilling confidence, resilience and adaptability to all beneficiaries. Whether through opportunities and support for seafarers to upskill and reskill throughout their careers or by equipping young people with the critical life skills the modern world demands. Yet MSSC must continue to change to remain relevant. This will involve meeting the needs of Maritime 2050, delivering an exciting sea cadet experience reflective of today's RN being inclusive and representative, whilst also equipping volunteers to work with young people.

The CEO said the Future Ready Strategy that was launched and delivered by Cadets at the House of Lords would deliver on this but also critically planned work to change our

approach. This will include ensuring MSSC becomes fully youth-focused, full inclusive, really open to flexible volunteering and growth.

The CEO highlighted the financial challenges that have had an impact on MSSC with 25% inflation since 2021, budgetary cuts across the UK Government leading to the 6% cut in the Grant-in-Aid by the Royal Navy. He anticipated the financial challenges will continue for the near future.

The CEO said that given the challenges for the RN, it is good to see their support is undiminished and excited by the Programme Powerful plans for the essential replacement of the 12k cadet bed nights by the loss of HMS Bristol and the interim funding currently provided for alternative accommodation for cadets. MSSC is also working with the Royal Navy on the review of the future of cadet forces.

The CEO said that the Future Ready Strategy sets a clear course for success, ensuring that we are future ready and that cadets and seafarers are ready for life.

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

The CEO ended by introducing the new Sea Cadets video made in collaboration with DCMS highlighting juniors.

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

## **09/23 Sea Cadet presentation**

The Chair introduced Able Cadet Sara's journey at Sea Cadets commenting that the Commanding Officer of Southampton Unit, Lt (SCC) Lindsay Bassett RNR wrote that Sara is a "beacon of determination and a positive role model within the cadet community".

Able Cadet Sara gave a presentation on her experiences and journey as a Sea Cadet, highlighting:

- Fantastic opportunity to do boating that was not readily available elsewhere.
- The Sea Cadets provided a welcoming environment.
- Enjoyed and fully incorporated the Sea Cadets values.
- Six months after joining the UK went into lockdown and virtual activities provided essential support for her wellbeing.
- Completed the basic Naval Aviation course.
- The instructors were essential in her development.
- Won the District and Area Drill competition.
- Gained a silver medal in the Single Girls Drill competition in 2022.
- Selected as Sea Cadets Standard Bearer for King Charles III Coronation
- Was interviewed by the Southampton Echo on her participation at the Coronation.
- Working towards completing her Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award.
- Plans to become a unit volunteer once leaving the cadets.
- Would like in the future to join the Royal Navy and follow in the footsteps of her grandfather.

Sara added that Sea Cadets provided her with involvement with the community whilst parading in events and Remembrance Day. She enjoyed meeting with other cadets and maintaining the highest presentation of uniform for the Coronation parade.

Sara said it is a huge privilege to be part of the Sea Cadets and wishes to inspire others to join. The Sea Cadets have given her the confidence to take on any challenge.

Sara ended by thanking all attendees of the Annual Court.

The Chair thanked Able Cadet Sara for her presentation.

## **10/23 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, Edward Clarke, who gave his apologies for being unable to attend.

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

## **11/23 Annual Court address**

The President introduced the guest speaker, Rachael Evans MA FCMI.

Rachael summarised her biography and said it gave her immense pleasure to speak at the Annual Court.

Rachael said that the current political climate in both government and media concerns the transgender community. Rachael commended the presentation given by Able Cadet Sara as an example of equity, diversity and inclusion.

Rachael said the presentation was not focused on her but on the future. Rachael asked why we judge people. Judging can hinder the potential that everyone can achieve.

Rachael said that people naturally are nervous when engaging with a transgender individual. This is in part because that person challenges what is defined as 'normal'. Rachael said you should expect to get your communication wrong and move on.

Rachael said that there is much legislation that states how we should act, but we should do so out of choice rather than due to the law. People should want to make a difference rather than feel forced to comply to make a better society.

Rachael said that unconscious bias is inherent within us all and is ingrained in us by society. We should be aware that we have an unconscious bias. It is one of the main reasons why people apply labels.

Rachael highlighted her biography. She was retired from the Royal Navy and did not want to give up her role. However, she moved on to be an Army Cadet instructor which was a challenging role. While being hospitalised, she was told that she had a hysterectomy and was surprised to learn she was intersex. Rachael said that she felt she would need to resign due to the discovery. Using the tenacity learnt from the Royal Navy, she trained as a computer programmer helping to develop the famous Xbox games console.

Rachael said that due to societal pressure labelling her a man, she took testosterone to try and cope. Having a stroke made her realise she had pushed her body to the limits to be something she was not. She is aware that people assume that she is transgender. Her intersex identity is a strength. Rachael said she speaks on diversity

and now works for MSSC as an external advisor on their Trans-Inclusive working group.

Rachael said that many cadets deserve a chance and that we may be wrong in the labels that we assign them. Every cadet has real potential and should have the opportunity to be what they want to be. Rachael ended by saying that we should ask what can tomorrow's cadets achieve and should not constrain them.

The audience asked what percentage of the population is intersex, how to approach marginalised groups for volunteers, how culturally divisive is the UK, how to support those who are not open to disclosing their protected characteristics, whether Rachael would consider being part of the induction course and how to deal with bigots.

Rachael said that most people are not aware of intersex and that she estimates 2% of the population falls under that category.

Rachael said that change has to be encouraged and that proactive recruitment of volunteers from marginalised groups is required. It should be stated that MSSC is open and ready for change.

Rachael said that immigration is not new for the UK and it is a case of us holding people back rather than them.

Rachael said that we need to treat everyone as an equal. We may be applying labels in expecting people to disclose their protected characteristics. We should not make assumptions and allow people to be themselves. We should allow people to live their lives authentically.

Rachael said that it is too late for her generation to fully change, but hopes today's and tomorrow's youth get better support. Cadets deserve a better future and she is happy to help with the induction course where possible.

Rachael ended by responding to the last question on responding to bigots. She said that bigots have to be called out and held accountable. They must be informed of what is inappropriate and if necessary removed from the post.

The Chair thanked Rachael Evans for her honesty and openness in her presentation.

## **12/23 Closing remarks**

The Chair opened the floor to questions.

The audience asked that the age demographic of members is reviewed and to introduce the new Head of Offshore.

The CEO said that the charity is reviewing how to grow its membership. There is a focus for the MSSC community to understand the opportunities and benefits of membership.

The CEO introduced Ben Swain, Head of Offshore. Ben has volunteered for numerous offshore ships. He was the Commanding Officer of TS John Jerwood for three to four years. He gained essential qualifications in the maritime sector relevant to the role. Ben Swain said that he was pleased to be back with the Sea Cadets. There are challenges with improving the diversity of cadets and returning the full offshore fleet to the water.

The CEO added that he had attended both the Conservative and Labour Party Conferences with cadets to raise the profile of the organisation in workshops the cadets delivered at the conferences. The CEO said that MSSC is a nonpartisan organisation and that the cadets had been a fantastic advertisement.

The President closed the meeting at approximately 13.10 pm 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 Captain Ian McNaught CVO MNM, Deputy Master of Trinity House for allowing MSSC to use the venue. The President said Captain Ian McNaught CVO MNM had contributed greatly in his 12-year tenure as Deputy Master of Trinity House and additionally across the maritime sector. The President added he was grateful for the work Captain Ian McNaught CVO MNM had done with the MSSC Council and wished him well as MSSC Vice President.

The President welcomed Cdre Jo Adey as the new 1 star for RN cadet engagement. The President said he looked forward to her leadership and hoped her attendance today provided good learning. The President said he welcomed working with Cdre Jo Adey.

The President thanked all the speakers for their inspirational words.

The next Annual Court is scheduled for Wednesday 9 October 2024 at Trinity House.

**Signed:**  
**Chairperson**

**Date:**