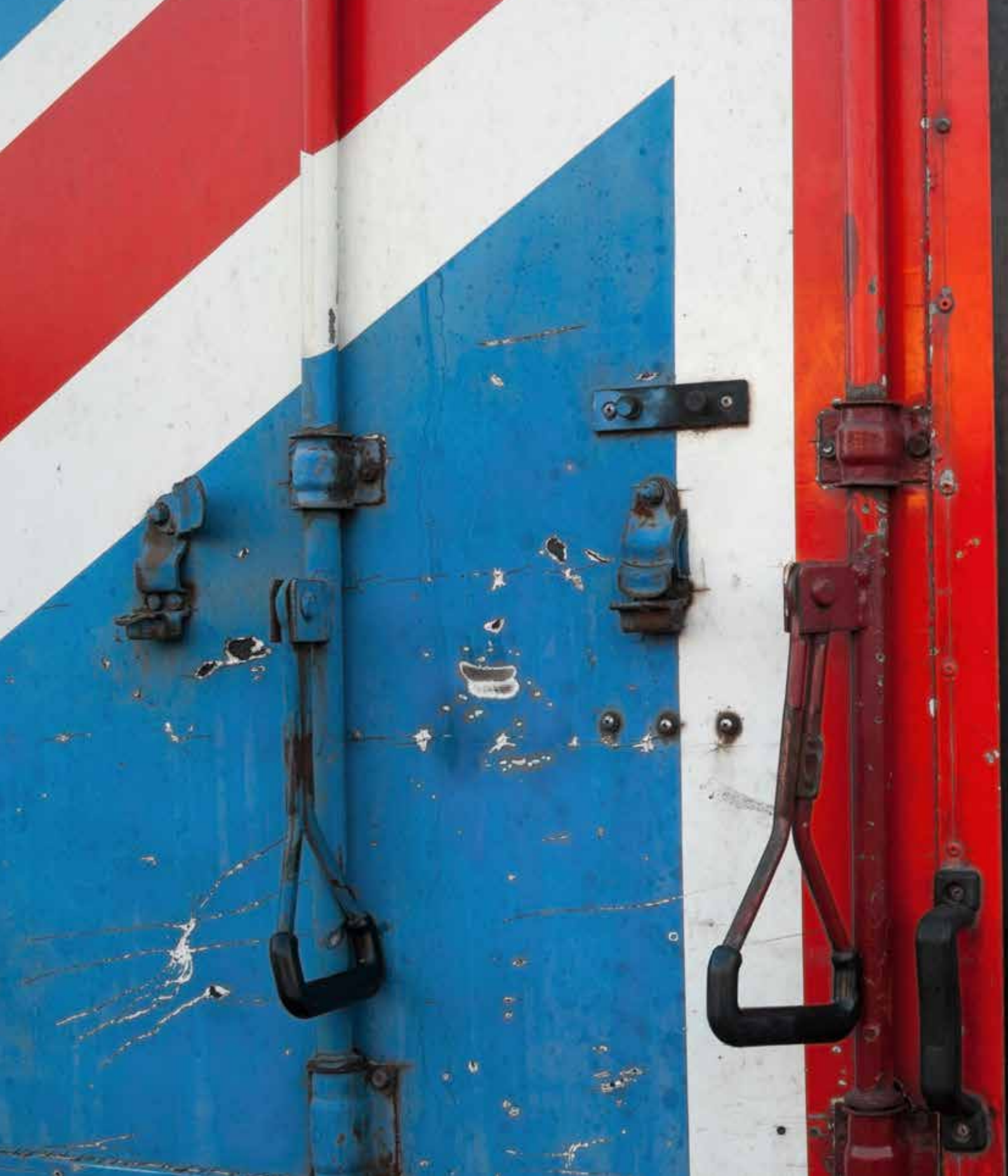


Safeguarding the future of  
British Maritime – a Manifesto  
Nautilus International



## Introduction

Shipping remains an essential industry for an island nation like the UK. More than 95% of the nation's trade comes and goes by sea and a strong and diverse merchant fleet is of crucial economic, social and strategic value.

However, the UK's maritime interests have continued to suffer deep and dramatic decline, despite the government's attempts to develop a strategic and long-term vision for the sector through the Maritime Growth Study and the Maritime 2050 initiative. From its historic highpoint of more than 1,600 UK owned and registered trading ships in 1975, the UK Ship Register (UKSR) has fallen to just 429 vessels in 2018. Over the same period, the number of British merchant seafarers has declined by around two-thirds.

The work to develop both the Maritime Growth Study and Maritime 2050 identified the value of the sector and the importance of measures to safeguard its international competitiveness. For example, the independent review of the Support for Maritime Training (SMarT) scheme showed that for every £1 the government spends on SMarT there is a £4.80 return to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Despite these positives, the number of British seafarers is poised to fall by around a further one-third over the next decade.

If the UK is to retain a shipping industry that sustains the country's global trading requirements and underpins the nation's continued global lead as a maritime services centre, much more needs to be done.

Britain needs ships and seafarers – perhaps more now than ever before. We live in a complex global economy and maritime trade is of fundamental importance.



## UK Seafarers

In the post-Brexit environment, the government must develop proactive policies to maximise the employment of British seafarers in the UK. There is a unique opportunity to refocus support for the UK maritime industry to enable the UK to be competitive in the international maritime markets, especially outside the restrictions of the EU's State Aid Guidelines (SAG).

The number of British seafarers has declined by almost two-thirds since the 1980s, and the current gap between numbers due to retire and numbers of new entrants means a further 30% decline can be expected within the next decade.

There is no shortage of young people wishing to embark on a maritime career, with applications for cadetships and ratings apprenticeships far outstripping the number of vacancies. Therefore, the government must do more to promote the sector and ensure that shipowners commit to provide opportunities for employment for UK seafarers.

### The government must:

- **Commit significant investment for maritime education and training, to build capacity, future proof seafarer skills, and develop state-of-the-art equipment and technology**
- **Increase investment in the Support for Maritime Training (SMarT) scheme to cover 100% of the cost of training UK-resident seafarers and require a commitment from employers to guarantee a period of employment on completion of a cadetship**
- **Support the employment of UK-resident seafarers by introducing stricter controls over the issue of UK Certificates of Equivalent Competency (CECs), work permits and visas**
- **Prevent the erosion of terms and conditions for UK seafarers through the promotion of collective bargaining, the application of the National Minimum Wage to all seafarers serving in UK waters including one-port voyages, and the active enforcement of Maritime Labour Convention requirements onboard all visiting vessels**



- Enhance the employment of British seafarers, especially in coastal shipping; passenger and freight ferry services (domestic and intra-European); the offshore renewables sector; and in offshore oil and gas exploration and decommissioning
- Lead the global promotion of quality shipping and fair transport; and an end to contradictory application of regulatory requirements and seafarer fatigue. This includes new amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention to improve minimum standards for paid leave, onboard accommodation, hours of work and rest, maximum tour lengths, maternity and paternity rights, end social dumping, and the eradication of the six-on/six-off work pattern

## British shipping

With the right proactive policies in place, the UK maritime industry could prosper – boosting the economy and revitalising employment and training in a high-skills, high-value sector.

Other countries have shown that decline is not inevitable for traditional maritime nations, and the UK must ensure that it can compete against flag states with more interventionist policies, as well as against the flag states that seek to grow by offering low-cost, low-standard and 'light touch' regulatory regimes.

A new report (Maritime Subsidies – do they provide value for money?) produced by the OECD-backed International Transport Forum found a broad scope for redesigning government subsidies to contribute more efficiently to public policy goals. This could include the decarbonisation of transport and reducing congestion and urban pollution.

Countries with substantial maritime subsidies could benefit from a systemic review of their subsidies, with support measures linked more clearly to the delivery of identified policy goals, such as employment and training, flag links, national security, and environmental performance.

Nautilus believes there is significant scope for the UK to conduct such a review of its support measures – including Tonnage Tax and Support for Maritime Training. A review could examine the way in which countries outside the EU have gone above and beyond tonnage tax to develop policy programmes to attract ships to their registers and grow their skills base.

The UK remains a global leader in many maritime business and services, including law, shipbroking, classification, education and training, ship management, and marine insurance. However, these all depend upon a continued flow of skilled and experienced seafarers, and other countries are making strong and concerted attempts to attract such services.

### The government must:

- Enforce the 'genuine link' requirement for ships on the UK Ship Register as required under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 to which the UK is a signatory
- Encourage British shipowners who use foreign flags to return to the UKSR and end support for the Red Ensign Group (REG), as these flags present significant unfair competition to the UKSR
- Examine the scope for 'cabotage' protection of domestic trades to increase economic output and create jobs
- Establish a national maritime strategy which responds to the maritime skills crisis and recognises the economic and strategic transport needs of the nation
- Improve the UK Tonnage Tax scheme so that it helps grow the UK flag by establishing a mandatory flag link, increases employment and training of UK seafarers and contributes to environmental objectives. The scheme should be continually re-evaluated to ensure it remains competitive

## Maritime safety

The waters around the UK are some of the busiest and most dangerous in the world, and maritime expertise is essential for many safety-critical positions.

British merchant shipping is strategically important and the wisdom of relying on chartered-in foreign-flagged and foreign-crewed tonnage at times of national emergency must be questioned.

The continued decline in the size of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) has seriously depleted the Ministry of Defence's (MoD) ability to rely upon British merchant ships and seafarers for vital operational tasks and delivering humanitarian aid.

Policies that recognise the vital role of seafarers in safe shipping are urgently required with measures that reflect the need to protect their wellbeing.

### The government must:

- Increase staffing and resources for the Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA), to ensure it can cope with the demands placed upon it and to maintain high standards of inspection, especially in areas such as maritime labour and the marine environment
- Take proactive efforts to secure better enforcement of international maritime safety regulations and conventions, to include more effective action against shipping companies violating global standards

- Reverse the cuts in UK Emergency Towing Vessel provision, and reinstate government support for the maritime element of the Confidential Hazardous Incident Reporting Programme (CHIRP)
- Eradicate fatigue amongst seafarers including the abolition of six-on/six-off work patterns

## Defence

The strategic importance of British merchant shipping and British seafarers has been repeatedly demonstrated in many conflicts and national emergencies. However, the decline in the number of UK-registered ships and the number of UK seafarers presents serious questions about the future ability of the nation to maintain supply lines and support British military operations. This has been exacerbated by the long-term reduction in the size of the RFA.

### The government must:

- Invest in the RFA to provide the fleet size and seafarer numbers needed to support the Royal Navy, and provide humanitarian relief and various maritime security responsibilities worldwide
- Reverse the cuts in the UK's strategic ro-ro sealift capacity
- Support the Britannia Maritime Aid proposals for a specially designed multi-purpose vessel to provide additional support for humanitarian aid and disaster relief operations – with a dual role as a state-of-the-art mobile training centre

## ABOUT NAUTILUS INTERNATIONAL

Nautilus International is the trade union and professional organisation for maritime professionals at sea and ashore. We represent 20,000 maritime professionals including ship masters (captains), officers, officer trainees (cadets) and shipping industry personnel, such as ship pilots, inland navigation workers, vessel traffic services operators (similar to air traffic control), harbourmasters, seafarers in the oil and gas industry, and shore-based staff.



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