



## Annual Conference Report 2024



The British Tugowners Association (BTA) AGM, Conference & Dinner took place at the Wotton House, Dorking, on 1 May 2024. The event brought together over 100 industry leaders, experts, and regulators with the conference focus on the most important of issues, People & Skills.

The preceding day (30 April) saw members undertake friendly competition at the Annual Golf Competition for the Sir William Crosthwaite Cup, played in the sun at The Drift Golf Club, East Horsley.

The Conference closed with the Annual Dinner, address from the President of the UK Chamber of Shipping and the awarding of BTA Tug Personality of the Year.



The British Tugowners Association Annual Conference 2024 was kindly sponsored by Sanmar (Gold), BMT (Silver), and Sensor Technologies (Gold)

## Annual General Meeting

At the 89th AGM, Mr Nick Jeffery, was re-appointed as Chairman for the forthcoming year (2024-25). Michael Paterson of Svitzer was appointed as the incoming Vice Chair to serve a one-year term, and both were warmly thanked for agreeing to dedicate their time and expertise to the Association.

## The Conference

The **Chairman of the BTA, Nick Jeffery**, welcomed delegates to the meeting and commended the opportunity for industry leaders to provide thought leadership on shaping the training, skills and education that trainees, cadets and apprenticeships will receive in the years to come.



The Conference was pleased to welcome, **Rhett Hatcher, the new CEO of the UK Chamber of Shipping**, who welcomed the opportunity to engage and interact with the Chamber's membership and wider stakeholders. Rhett stated that he had a personal focus on the three D's (decarbonisation, digitalisation and data management) and was looking forward to addressing these areas as shipping industry moves towards a cleaner, greener and data-oriented one.

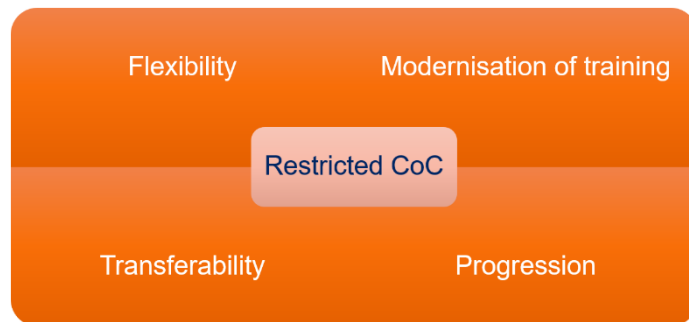
**Lars Lippuner, the newly appointed Director of the UK Maritime Customer Service Directorate at the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)** highlighted a strong voice of the MCA at the International Maritime Organisation. Lars recognised the new Customer Maritime Services Directorate would incorporate the existing UK Shipping Concierge service that would connect the right industry personnel with the right people in government. Further areas of the directorate include a customer operations team, seafarer technical delivery and regulatory innovation which will amplify technical expertise across the MCA to ensure readiness to meet future needs of the shipping industry.

### UK Customer Maritime Services Directorate



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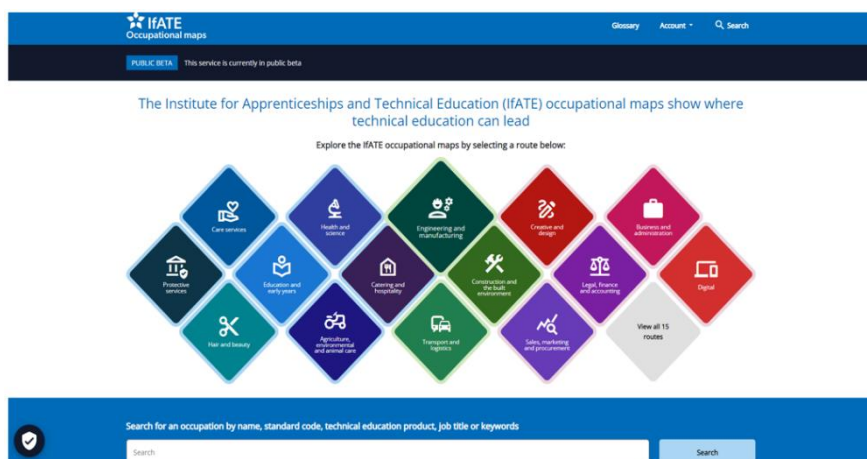
**Ajit Jacob, Chief Examiner at the MCA** provided an update on the modernisation programme for training and assessments. The Training and Modernisation Programme was a collaborative effort between MCA as the regulator, shipping company representatives, college representatives, unions and seafarers themselves.



Maritime & Coastguard Agency

Key changes to the syllabus include a shift towards digitalisation, a focus on decarbonisation and an improved availability of immersive training tools. Ajit shared that for the pilot Bridge Watchkeeping Simulator Project which MCA was undertaking, a ratio of 1:3 for simulator time in lieu of actual sea service to actual seagoing service, up to 30 days actual seagoing service was to be trialled. This world's first will be shared with the IMO as part of the Comprehensive Review of STCW.

Ajit also discussed the development of the new Restricted CoC (II/3 less than 500gt Near Coastal) which would modernise and bring together a large number of pre-existing routes into something that offered flexibility, progression and transferability to holders.



**Neil Atkinson, Head of Fleetwood Nautical College** and Chair of the Transport and Logistics Route Panel at the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) discussed the development of maritime apprenticeships and how industry could

ensure their continued success. Neil highlighted that IfATE are an employer led organisation with the aim to put employers at the heart of apprenticeships. Within IfATE trailblazer groups develop new and revise existing apprenticeships.

The Trailblazers are instrumental in developing the knowledge, skills and behaviours used to determine what apprentices need to know. As Trailblazer groups are employer led Neil advocated for continued engagement with industry to ensure IfATE qualifications remain relevant to the needs of organisations and industry.

**Kathryn Neilson, Director of the Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB)** spoke on how the MNTB is fulfilling its purpose to be the maritime industry's authoritative voice on all aspects of seafarer training and education. Kathryn informed delegates that the MNTB's key focus areas included recruitment and retention of seafarers and ensuring that education remains relevant and future proof.

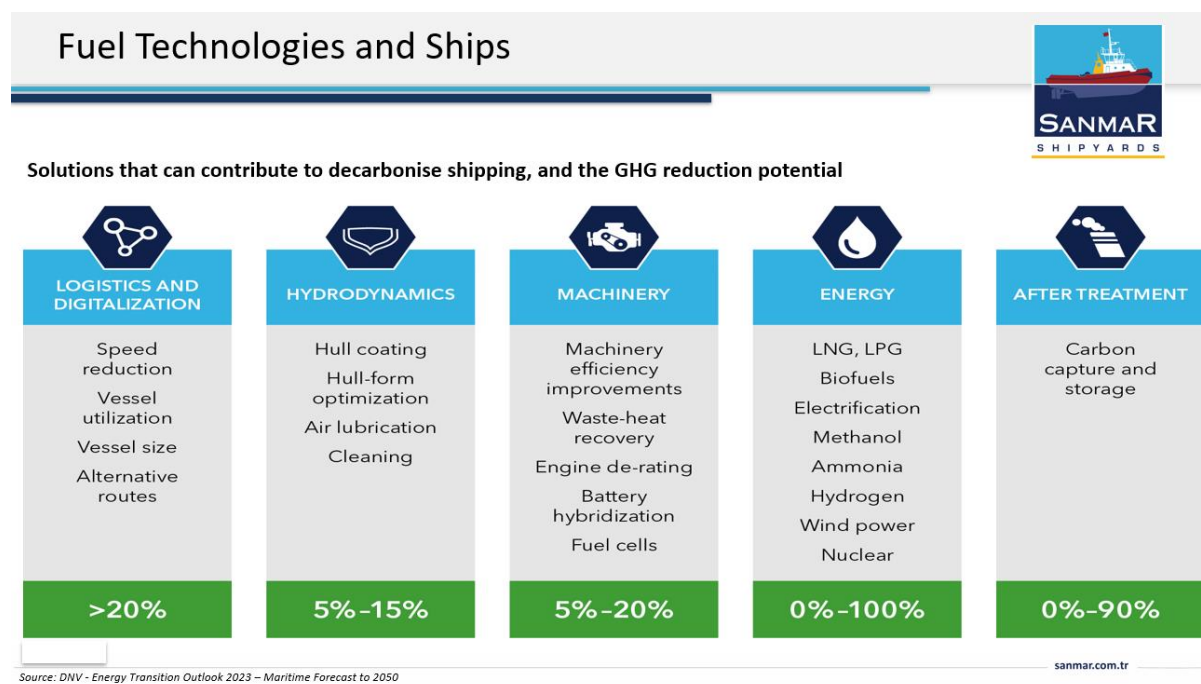
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Kathryn presented the National Awareness Campaign which aimed to address the decline in cadet numbers that commenced at the beginning of the pandemic and showcased feedback from the cadet survey that highlighted some of the key appeals and challenges of a career at sea. Delegates were also informed of the project nearing completion through SwiftTrack, bringing electronic Training Record Books to the industry that enable enhanced seafarer learning through a digital, totally accessible, customisable and targeted learning resource.

What aspects of a career at sea most appeal?	What challenges do you think you might face whilst at sea?
<i>Continue learning new things and keep challenging myself.</i>	<i>Isolation / home sickness – 52%</i>
<i>Getting to travel around the world and earning a decent living.</i>	<i>Missing out on home events – 37%</i>
<i>Working in and job that is completely different and unexpected</i>	<i>Language / culture issues – 25%</i>

**Gary Dockerty, Sales Director Middle East and Africa at Sanmar Shipyards** provided a shipbuilder's perspective on people and skills in a new era for towage. Gary observed how the global towage sector has been adapting to the growing pressures to cut emissions in harbour and coastal operations and to become better prepared to handle the world's largest ships.

Gary highlighted the importance of transitioning to a low-emission global economy, emphasising the creation of new 'green jobs' and the necessity for reskilling. Sanmar is leading the charge by through the introduction of cutting-edge products such as electric, LNG, and methanol-powered vessels, ensuring they remain at the forefront of innovation.



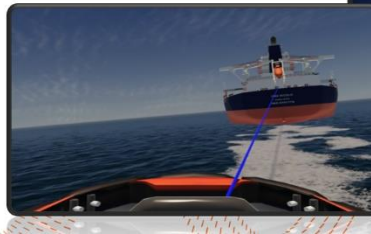
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**Debbie Cavaldoro, Chief Executive Officer at Port Skills and Safety (PSS)** discussed the skills, knowledge, attitude, training and experiences that are required to drive safety across the port sector. A range of entry routes into ports were highlighted such as apprenticeships, graduate programmes, t-levels and internships with progression widely available through further qualifications as well as training and development. She highlighted that careers for the wider port eco-system in areas such as pilot transfer, mooring and dredging needed to be supported to ensure a robust and safe maritime sector. She noted that there was further opportunity for collaboration between the stakeholders, including the towage sector to provide fulfilling careers.

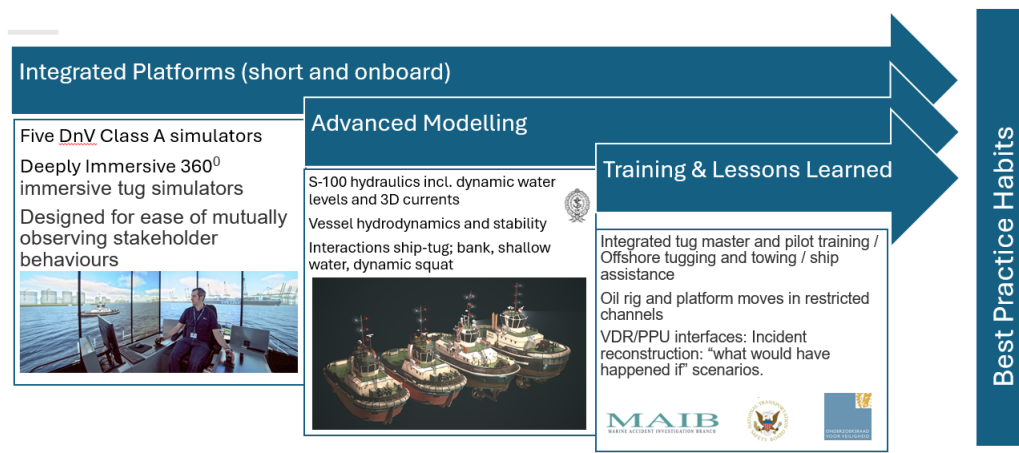
**Mark McBride and Dr James Clarke from HR Wallingford** showcased their simulator facility, with a specific emphasis on bolstering safety for tugs and pilots through simulator use. Their simulators have the capability to integrate various vessel manoeuvring models, simulate escort towage scenarios, and depict ship-to-tug interactions, while factoring in diverse equipment and weather conditions. They emphasised the importance of feedback from towage operators to continuously improve simulator training and uphold safety as a core principle.

What is now possible in simulation?



**Phil Thompson, Director of Maritime Products at BMT** discussed how the REMBRANDT Tug Simulators allow for deep dive immersion and for high modelling fidelity. Through work with the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office BMT have been able to implement S-100 data standards which allow for enhanced situational awareness and realism in pilotage and tug master training. Senior Training Consultant Jim Price reflected that simulator training allows for fluency in real life scenarios so that crews can address out of the ordinary incidents and avoid accidents.

## Enhancing Situational Awareness in Training



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**Ryan Verhagen, Chief Commercial Officer at Simwave**, illustrated how their simulators can significantly enhance emergency response scenarios. He noted the evolving industry demand and regulatory shifts are pushing towards alternative propulsion methods like lithium-ion and ammonia. These alternative fuel sources introduce added complexity to emergency response protocols, underscoring the role Simwave can play in training the industry to meet these new challenges. Simwave are collaborating with REACT Emergency Response, a maritime salvage company to replicate real-life situations for firefighting training.



The BTA was delighted to present its inaugural **Tug Trainee of the Year Award** to **Paul Buckley from Boluda Towage Europe** at the Annual Conference. Sponsored by Sanmar A.Ş., the award honoured Paul's excellence, determination, and ability to overcome adversity. The judging panel was greatly impressed by Paul's dedication and proactive approach to his training.



*BTA Chairman, Nick Jeffery with Paul Buckley*

The conclusion of the Conference was followed by the **Annual Dinner**, offering delegates a valuable opportunity to contemplate and engage in meaningful discussions on the day's enlightening presentations and key takeaways. The President of the UK Chamber of shipping addressed attendees highlighting the vital role that Towage plays in the UK Shipping ecosystem. A noteworthy highlight of the evening was the recognition given to **Iain Mackinnon, Chairman of Maritime Skills Alliance** as he received the **BTA Tug Personality of the Year** award for services and efforts to maritime education, in particular across the Small Vessel sectors.

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## The Annual Golf Competition – 30 April

The Drift Golf Club, East Horsley, played host to the prestigious Sir William Crosthwaite Cup, drawing towage professionals, industry experts, and passionate golfers for a day of competition on the fairways and greens in the Surrey hills.

Attendees enjoyed favourable weather conditions, filled with friendly competition, networking opportunities, as well as displays of both excellent and questionable golfing skills. The occasion not only fostered professional and personal connections but also served as a platform for the exchange of knowledge and the cultivation of collaboration within the towage community.

**Stephen Packer from Targe Towing** emerged triumphant, claiming the Sir William Crosthwaite Cup, a distinction he'll proudly hold until 2025.

The BTA would like to extend our gratitude to **Sensor Technologies** for their generous sponsorship of the Sir William Crosthwaite Cup.



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## Annex – Chairman's Address to AGM

Good morning all and welcome to the 89<sup>th</sup> annual general meeting of the British Tugowners Association.

This is the end of my first year as Chairman – Scott Baker having completed what would have been my first year, last year, having been invited into doing an extra year to make up for having had a limited and perhaps easy time of it during the pandemic in 2020!

So, what have we been up to since we last met?

Our Association is a bustling, productive place where there is always plenty to do and achieve. We are very fortunate to have a membership who want to engage, and who volunteer to assist with the various tasks, projects and initiatives which we undertake.

In the past 12 months the Association has continued with work commenced in the previous year, and embarked on new projects.

Under the working group chairmanship of David Carter, the Royal Navy's Merchant Navy Liaison Officer, we have been very instrumental in the development of the standard for generic, STCW sub 500 GT deck apprenticeships, working with the Institute for Apprenticeships, IAMI, Fleetwood College and the Maritime & Coastguard Agency. As we gather here today, I am pleased to say the Master 500 Apprenticeship pathway is very close to becoming a reality.

Whilst mentioning the MCA, we will be joined later by Chief Examiner Ajit Jacob, and Lars Lippuner, recently appointed Director of UK Customer Maritime Services for the UK Ship Register.

The MCA have been working constructively with industry developing a new pathway for the restricted deck route. This new pathway, which seeks to create a streamlined route to allow for progression across the different sectors is nearing completion and the MCA very recently issued a draft MSN on the Requirements for Deck Officers Restricted Certificates of Competency. As with all multi-stakeholder processes, there are some issues within this draft which require our attention and we will be responding to the MCA accordingly to ensure workable outcomes.

Under the group chairmanship of our own Nick Dorman, the Association embarked on a careful and thorough review of the UK Standard Terms for Towage and other Services, last reviewed in 1986. As custodian of the Terms, it is only appropriate that the BTA continues to ensure their prominence of use across industry worldwide for another 40 years. We are sincerely grateful for the expert knowledge and experience offered by a number of eminent lawyers and P&I Club members who have made this review possible. The revision is nearing completion, and once complete, we will have it further expertly reviewed, before circulating to industry for use by the end of this year.

The reviews of the Port Marine Safety Code and its associated Guide to Good Practice have remained firmly on our agenda during the year, with significant input into the shaping and content of both by the Association. Through cross industry working, with the BPA, Harbour Master's Association, Maritime Pilot's Association, Ports Skills & Safety, and Workboat Association amongst others, stronger relationships and collaboration pull us in the right direction. We cannot be complacent though and must strive for continued safety improvement. Working jointly with the WA and BPA throughout the MAIB's investigation into the 'Biter' tragedy, we await the lessons to learn.

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Our Technical Committee, the engine room of the BTA, continues at full steam ahead! Ably led by Alasdair Smith from Targe Towing, the committee has followed on from the launch of the 'Recovery of Persons in Water – Guide to Good Practice for Small Vessels' guide in November 2022, with a project to produce a guide on assistance rendered by tugs in fire-fighting situations. First discussed at the Annual Conference last year, the guide will also consider I with fire-fighting assistance for future and alternatively fuelled vessels. This work is well underway, and again, I must commend the willingness of members of the Technical Committee – who all have very full 'day jobs', who have engaged in this process.

The BTA has continued to engage with, and support, the work of the European Tugowners' Association, the British Ports Association, UK and International Harbourmasters Associations and the UK Maritime Pilots Association, and we are pleased to welcome representatives from some of those organisations to today's conference.

As I said at the outset, it's been a busy year. Alongside giving thanks to colleagues who continue to give of their time during the year – namely the members of the Executive Committee and those who form the Technical Committee, we must thank the team who keep us all glued together. Robert consistently does a grand job, ably assisted by Will, and when it comes to organising events such as this, we must also thank the Chamber team of for all that they do.

And so, to the business of the AGM.

**Nick Jeffery**

**1 May 2024**