



# the seafarers' charity

IMPACT REPORT

# 2020



# Welcome from the Chief Executive Officer

## Catherine Spencer



Welcome to The Seafarers' Charity Impact Report 2020. In an exceptionally stormy year, we have continued to achieve and deliver for seafarers. We worked throughout 2020 to understand the needs of seafarers and fishers, and how to address these through our Charity and delivery partners.

In early 2021, we announced that the Charity is now to be known as The Seafarers' Charity, at the time when we also revealed our ambitious new strategy. The strategy will reduce need by identifying the systemic problems that create disadvantage to tackle them at source.

We made the most of the extraordinary circumstances, driven by the knowledge that however difficult the situation in the UK has been, there have been hundreds of thousands of seafarers trapped at sea delivering the goods we need, while UK fishers have endured a staggeringly difficult year. It is their commitment and dedication that has shaped our work in creating a new strategy with an outcomes-focused approach.

Our loyal donors responded spectacularly to our COVID-19 Emergency Appeal, making it our most successful appeal in recent years.

In common with other charities, many of our fundraising revenue streams were decimated by the impact of COVID-19. Our new Development Director joined us during the pandemic, contributing to our strategy, particularly on work to rebuild our Fundraising Team and to significantly increase income.

The importance of the Charity's role was emphasised by the need for additional funds to support the response to COVID-19.

The Trustees of The Seafarers' Charity unanimously voted to release £2m. Split 75% merchant seafarers, 25% fishers, it enabled charities to continue supporting seafarers in most need. Immense work from our newly named Impact Team (formerly the Grants Team), excellent commitment from our Trustees and trebling the frequency of grant award meetings ensured that The Seafarers' Charity has been able to add exceptional support to the sector.

In summary, 2020 will long be remembered as a dire year for everyone who has suffered the consequences of the pandemic. However, Seafarers UK, now as The Seafarers' Charity, used the time usefully to award the largest ever amount of grants to support the sector, develop a new impactful strategy, and design an evolved identity, reintegrating the best of the past with a future to reduce seafarer hardship.

I am immensely proud to work for such a small organisation, that has had such a large impact during testing times, and thankful to our wonderful supporters for their incredible commitment in helping our cause during this difficult year.

## Who we are

We have been the UK's national maritime charity since 1917 and our legal name remains as Seafarers UK (King George's Fund for Sailors). Now we're embarking on our next voyage to reignite our work and commitment to all who work at sea.

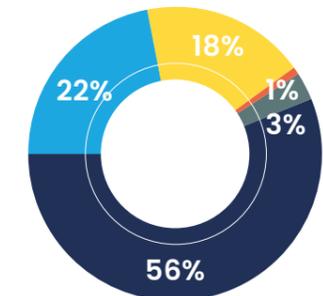
Our fresh identity, 'The Seafarers' Charity', is a clear progression from Seafarers UK. From first contact, it's more obvious what we do and better reflects where we work.

The Seafarers' Charity is proud of the work we do nationally within the United Kingdom, as well as the work we have always done internationally, and particularly in the Commonwealth. Thus, our new name reflects our global outlook.

In 2020, 78% of grants awarded were to support both UK and visiting international seafarers, 22% directly supported international work.

We're also integrating the use of 'King George's Fund for Sailors' as an emblem, alongside 'The Seafarers' Charity'.

### Main grants awarded by location in 2020



It is a name that we're proud of and many of our loyal supporters still like. Through the inclusion of 'King George's Fund for Sailors', we will commemorate our heritage and the thousands of seafarers whom we've helped since the First World War, when the need for a national maritime charity was first recognised.

## The impact of your donations

In a typical year, our annual grants programme awards more than £2m to support both core and project costs of many well-known maritime welfare charities.

But 2020 was a year unlike any other – COVID-19, lockdowns and leaving the EU hurt seafarers in need in the UK and beyond. We reacted quickly and increased our grants spend to meet these needs. A total of £3,568,373 in grant funding was injected into the maritime community by The Seafarers' Charity to support the wellbeing and welfare of active and retired seafarers during this difficult year.

By the end of 2020, a total of 81 grant awards had been made to 55 organisations, including eight grants awarded from the Merchant Navy Fund (a joint fund with the Merchant Navy Welfare Board) to support UK merchant seafarers.

**A total of £3,568,373 in grant funding**

**81 grants awarded**

**55 organisations supported**

**8 grants awarded from the Merchant Navy Fund**

# Grants awarded

Our grant-making was driven by the need to respond to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Not only were many of our grant-funded delivery partners constrained in their ability to generate income as their usual fundraising activities were curtailed, but at the same time they needed to innovate and find new ways to respond to the growing welfare needs of seafarers who reached out for charitable support, and in much greater numbers, than at any other time.

We ensured essential welfare services could continue for seafarers who found themselves at the sharp end of the coronavirus pandemic following the closure of international borders. We are fortunate that The Seafarers' Charity Trustees proposed a drawdown of an additional £2m from our reserves to support the maritime community in this exceptional year. This enabled the creation of our COVID-19 Emergency Fund.

Responding to COVID-19 resulted in changes to how we work. Normally, there are three in-person meetings of our Grants Committee and a grants budget of £2m. As additional funds were needed and, in many cases, needed quickly, nine Grants Committee meetings were held to meet demand. This tripling of our workload enabled an additional £1,567,193 of funds to be distributed to 40+ maritime welfare organisations specifically to support seafarers through the coronavirus crisis.

We were able to use the COVID-19 Emergency Fund to award additional financial support to many maritime charities providing advice, financial aid, and welfare support to active seafarers. Examples include:

- **ISWAN** who received an extra £80,000 to help with repatriation and abandonment of seafarers, as well as medical and other emergencies.
- **Mission to Seafarers** received extra funding to transform their quay-side ship visiting service into an online digital chaplaincy, as well as to ensure that their seafarer centres and transport for visiting seafarers were COVID secure.

- **Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest (QVSR)** received additional grant funding to respond to the needs of seafarers from six cruise ships who suddenly found themselves stranded in Tilbury as borders closed and visiting cruise companies discontinued their journeys.

A significant grant award was £200,000 which created the UK Maritime Anchor Fund for working-age merchant seafarers who had their employment affected by the coronavirus pandemic. This new Fund provides a holistic package of financial support, advice, and free mental health care as well as relationship counselling from Relate.

This integrated approach was in recognition that the problems caused by COVID-19 are often complex and require more than a single solution.

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**£200,000**

supported the creation of the UK Maritime Anchor Fund to help working-age merchant seafarers who had their employment affected by the COVID-19 pandemic

In partnership with the Merchant Navy Welfare Board and the Department for Transport, we awarded a grant to provide port-based maritime welfare charities with MiFi units – in effect a mobile Wi-Fi access point. This was welcomed by seafarers who could use the MiFi units to connect with family and friends at home, as well as download new films, books, games, and other online entertainment.

However, it wasn't just those working at sea that were impacted. Former and retired seafarers also required support. Both QVSR's hostel on the East India Dock Road, East London, and Mariner's Park, Wallasey, accommodate many elderly and retired seafarers. Each received additional grant funding to support the extra cost of providing Personal Protective Equipment and the employment of agency staff to cover for unwell and shielding staff members so they could continue to take care of their elderly former seafarer residents.

From the £2m COVID-19 Emergency Fund, £500,000 was allocated specifically to support the needs of commercial fishers who experienced the double impact of declining exports arising from the lockdown of the European hospitality sector, closely followed by a UK-wide lockdown of domestic hospitality. From this amount, £200,000 was awarded to The Fishermen's Mission to support their distribution of hardship grants to fishers in need. A separate amount of £250,000 provided match funding for a Rapid Response Grants Programme (RRGP) in partnership with the Fishmongers' Company Charitable Trust and this grant enabled fishing businesses to diversify, with many transitioning to selling directly to consumers. Direct selling helped fishers to continue fishing and prevented their reliance on welfare grants. The remaining £50,000 was awarded to several fishing associations around the coast to enable them to support and make hardship grants to those in need.

COVID-19 Emergency Fund

£2m

**£1,067,193**

was allocated to the international merchant seafaring community

**£500,000**

was allocated specifically to support the needs of commercial fishers



**£432,807**

remaining in the COVID-19  
Emergency Fund for  
distribution in 2021

**£200,000**

was awarded to The Fishermen's  
Mission to provide hardship welfare  
grants to fishers and their families

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**£1,067,193**

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seafaring community

**£50,000**

was reserved for  
organisations working with  
fishers around the UK

The COVID-19 Emergency Fund ensured the support and future continuation of welfare services for the maritime community. We awarded grants to seafarers' centres both in the UK and in Africa that were unable to generate sufficient income from their own sales and services as a result of being locked down and seafarers not being allowed ashore. At the end of the year there is £432,807 remaining in the COVID-19 Emergency Fund for distribution in 2021.

In addition to the COVID-19 Emergency Fund, our usual annual grant-funding programme to support maritime welfare services continued. Two interesting new grants awarded this year included:

- A grant to fund the national Relate charity to provide free relationship counselling for seafarers. This recognises that it can be difficult to sustain a relationship that has prolonged periods of separation. Importantly, it also ensures parity of welfare provision with the Royal Navy who already benefit from access to this grant-funded service.

- Funding to support the development of an online safety management system for commercial fishers. The free online Safety Folder, as recognised by the Maritime & Coastguards Agency, supports risk assessments and management of regular inspections and compliance checks for essential safety equipment, thereby helping to support safety improvements in the fishing industry.

## Research and sector efficiency

A significant amount of exploratory work to inform and develop our new strategy commenced in January.

We invited a small number of key partners to join us in a Scenario Planning session to consider what maritime welfare would look like in 2025.

The National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) worked with us to develop a Theory of Change. The Directory of Social Change (DSC) led a new piece of research into Understanding Perceptions of delivery partners and external stakeholders to inform our future direction.

Our new research report, Fishing Without a Safety Net, examining the financial resilience of UK fishers, was launched at a successful webinar in October. A follow-on from our 2018 Fishing for a Future report, the new research report, by Dr Paul A Jones from Liverpool John Moores University, exemplifies our new strategic approach to our grant funding. The research made recommendations for charities in respect of a UK-wide credit union, financial capability training, enabling access to appropriate financial services for fishers and raising awareness of the range of support that exists. Since July 2020, we have engaged numerous stakeholders in exploring these recommendations and we anticipate you will be hearing more about our evidence-based, grant-funded solutions arising from this research by the second half of 2021.

Sector collaboration and efficiency was assisted by our continued membership of the Maritime Charities Group (MCG). During the year, we said goodbye to Valerie Coleman, the MCG Programme Manager who was a valued and insightful colleague. The administration of the new MCG Programme Manager is now managed by the Nautilus Welfare Fund.

The coronavirus crisis meant that collaboration and sharing was vital, and we have collaborated and participated in numerous meetings and initiatives aimed at supporting seafarers throughout this year:

- We met on a regular basis with other maritime charitable funders such as ITF Seafarers' Trust, TK Foundation and Fishmongers' Company Charitable Trust to ensure needs were met, duplication of funding avoided, and joint funding facilitated. We launched the new UK Maritime Anchor Fund in partnership with Seafarers' Hospital Society and the Seafarers' Advice and Information Line (SAIL). Nautilus and The RMT Union assisted in promoting this new grant-funding support for UK merchant seafarers to their members.
- We are grateful to the Merchant Navy Welfare Board for their organisation, hosting, and chairing regular COVID-19 meetings for the sector.
- We were involved in and contributed to regular industry and charity telephone conferences led by Defra and had a seat at the Fishing Industry Safety Group meetings.
- We continued our funding partnership with Greenwich Hospital and Seafarers' Hospital Society to fund SAIL – a Citizens Advice freephone service for seafarers.



## Campaigning



We continued our campaigning, adjusting in the light of what was possible during the pandemic. Seafarers Awareness Week has been an annual summer event. An initial plan for an industry-wide safety campaign, collaborating with a wide range of industry stakeholders, was recognised as unachievable as the maritime sector focused on stranded crew and diminishing returns.

We refocused our efforts to an online campaign, specifically on seafarer suicide, highlighting the lack of official data on suicide and, more broadly, death at sea. Excellent media coverage during the week was followed with meetings with Protection & Indemnity Clubs (P&I Clubs) to better understand the issues. The Maritime Labour Organization has also recognised the problem, and the challenges. It is important that credible data is available to enable the maritime sector and maritime welfare charities to develop proactive services and solutions. Further collaborative work is ongoing, although the impact of coronavirus is still a priority for most in the sector, slowing down progress. We will continue to work with ISWAN, Mission to Seafarers and others on this issue.

Our 'Fly the Red Ensign' event for Merchant Navy Day was more difficult to run than in normal years, due to social distancing, but still went ahead.

We developed a social media toolkit to spread awareness and, with 1,034 participants from town, borough and parish councils to local Merchant Navy Associations and more, Fly the Red Ensign was a highly regarded event.

Our new strategy will increase the impact of our advocacy. We want to affect change, thus, in the future our campaigns will be issue-specific, led by our understanding of the root cause. The general 'Seafarers Awareness Week' will be replaced by issue-led campaigns managed by our Impact Team, and specific fundraising campaigns and events led by our Development Team.

Our excellent Fishing without a Safety Net research, and ensuing actions, is a good example of how we will use research and existing information to create real change from 2021 onwards.

## Fundraising

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on fundraising across the charitable sector. In line with most other charities, our most impacted income streams are events and legacies.

The cancellation of live events, like the London Marathon, and 24 Peaks, meant that we had to radically re-forecast our projected event income. Delays in probate have meant that legacy income has been vastly reduced. Trusts and Foundations have taken a varied approach throughout the pandemic – some ramping up their grant giving to tackle the fall-out from COVID-19 directly, others pausing decision-making until investment income is more stable. In recognition of the dire environment, we revised our forecast down substantially mid-year. Fundraising performance for the year exceeded the mid-year forecast, closing on a 32% reduction in voluntary income from our original 2020 budget.

We have an incredibly loyal supporter base, and we are so thankful to each and every one. It is testament to our generous supporters that through our various appeals, most notably our Emergency Appeal, we have had our most successful appeals year in the recent history of The Seafarers' Charity – raising more than £100,000 and exceeding our pre-COVID-19 target.

Despite the cancellation of live events, we were delighted that supporters created their own challenges to support us, including the Virtual London Marathon, and we are deeply grateful.

Cumulatively, this meant we exceeded our re-forecasted target for the year by £269,000.

We have worked to better engage our existing supporters and increase our reach whilst raising our profile. Finding new ways to engage and solicit financial support from a broader base of people is vital for our fundraising success – now and into the future. It is heartening that through improved messaging, improved insight into our supporter base, and investing in digital we have attracted double the number of new donors in 2020 compared to 2019.

Our Development Director joined us halfway through the year. A comprehensive analysis was conducted to assess the effectiveness of our fundraising activities and key messaging. The analysis highlighted gaps in our capabilities and skill sets which in turn guided our investment into resource that will, over time, produce returns. COVID-19 and its impact on our fundraising has accelerated our thinking, has forced us to adapt, innovate, and become more creative in how we fundraise. Lockdown has pushed the digital agenda forward significantly for everyone and we have capitalised on this opportunity. We have seen an uptick in digital engagement, which we plan to increase further in 2021. A robust approach to metrics and indicators will keep us firmly on track, ensuring our work is effective and gets results. Our focus for 2021 is to continue refining how we engage with loyal supporters and to inspire new supporters, particularly in a younger demographic, to ensure The Seafarers' Charity flourishes and is well placed to meet the continuing demand for our support. By connecting our heritage, our history, to our future, and maritime welfare need, we will build relationships, and inspire a broad range of donors and supporters to help improve the lives of seafarers.

We are investing in our capability and expertise within corporate fundraising, working and partnering with corporate organisations across the maritime sector, to raise our profile and need for support.



# Thank you to our supporters

The Seafarers' Charity is incredibly lucky to have many loyal supporters of our cause. Through their commitment and dedication, we were able to continue helping seafarers in need and their families during this very challenging year. We are extremely grateful to all our supporters, who made a donation, took part in a virtual event or organised their own in aid of The Seafarers' Charity.

We would like to issue a very special thanks to the following few supporters:

**The Laurence Misener Charitable Trust** for supporting our COVID-19 Emergency work.

**Asbjorn Kops (Maersk)** for running 210 laps of his garden to reach the marathon distance, following the cancellation of the London Marathon. He raised nearly £4,000.



**Mark Ashley Miller** for continuing his Harbour Master Sailing Challenge as soon as it was possible last year and supporting us throughout 2020. He has raised a total of £7,247 to-date.



**Lee Clarke and Isle of Man KGFS Committee** for submitting Snaefell and raising a total of £1,974 for The Seafarers' Charity, following the cancellation of Isle of Man KGFS Trafalgar Ball.



**Martyn Oates** from The Isle of Man Ship Registry who organised a Golf Day in support of the KGFS Isle of Man, raising £1,500.

**Richard Buckley (Maersk)** who got a team of nine to take on their own virtual 24 Peaks challenges which included running, walking and cycling, following the cancellation of the 24 Peaks Challenge. The event raised £5,941 for our Charity.



# the seafarers' charity

The Seafarers' Charity  
8 Hatherley Street,  
London SW1P 2QT

020 7932 0000  
[contact@theseafarerscharity.org](mailto:contact@theseafarerscharity.org)

[www.theseafarerscharity.org](http://www.theseafarerscharity.org)



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