

### NORTH WEST ENGLAND & NORTH WALES BRANCH

#### Seminar on maritime leadership

→ Around 120 deck, engine and ETO cadets and early-career officers came together with over 40 experienced maritime leaders for a seminar on maritime leadership at Fleetwood Nautical Campus in late May. Attendees came from across the UK's North West and beyond, representing multiple sectors and disciplines, including: command; pilotage; salvage; drydock, repair and construction; ship owners and ship management; law, insurance and P&I; harbour operations, dredging, SOVs; MCA, flag state administrations and IMO; wet trades; dry trades; container; gas; ferries, passenger and super yachts; charities and maritime support; maritime education and training; The Nautical Institute; offshore, DP; ice navigation; the Royal Navy, and the UK's Border Force and Coast Guard.

In lively 'carousel' and 'reverse-mentoring' sessions the participants enthusiastically swapped their experiences, knowledge, and wisdom. The cadets were pleased to interact with experienced leaders and explore facets of maritime leadership from different perspectives. They gained new insights into leadership – transferable into their behaviours at work – while the experts, for their part, learned much about the experiences and aspirations of the upcoming generation of seafarers. The seminar confirmed the importance of professional networking, CPD and the important role of The Nautical Institute.

The seminar included an informal panel Q&A session and offered an unprecedented opportunity to meet, talk to, and learn from, current practitioners at the very cutting edge of our industry. Cadets were invited to submit their experiences in the form of a report, with a small prize for the best.

Congratulations to our winners, Katie Walmsley and Zeta Rutherford, whose report appears below. Katie is a phase 4 cadet in HNC Nautical Science, sponsored by Princess Cruises. Zeta is a phase 3 deck cadet sponsored by the RFA. Congratulations to both our winners!

#### Leadership seminar – cadets' report

In the maritime industry, good leadership is vital to running a safe and successful ship. When speaking to maritime leaders at the seminar, one of the questions that we posed was, 'Do you ever struggle with isolation due to your leadership position? If so, how do you cope with this?' The common theme found in their answers was that isolation was more prominent as they went up the ranks and into more leadership-oriented roles. As a junior officer, asking questions and socialising is appropriate; however, as you reach levels of leadership and authority, you must take more of a step back. The number of questions that can be asked decreases and many more decisions must be made alone.

Throughout our studies, we have learned that good leadership cannot be carried out alone; it is a team effort. This was another recurring theme; that leadership is not something that only comes from the top, but is rather a two-way system. Being successful in a leadership role requires approachability, allowing the possibility of correction if the leaders are wrong. One example discussed at the seminar was a Master blowing the fog whistle without informing those standing directly below. The next day, after a discussion on the situation, he radioed down before sounding the whistle. This shows that although the Master may be one of the most experienced personnel on board, there are still situations they can learn from, if it is brought to their attention.

The maritime leaders highlighted that more courses were now being offered for those in leadership roles on board ships. Furthermore, many companies are now bringing in professionals such as psychologists to enable their leaders to acquire 'soft' leadership and management skills. This could support leaders in understanding the various personality types, and how different people and situations may need to be approached. This may also provide an opportunity for them to reflect on their own leadership style.

One of the leaders who spoke during the panel at the seminar commented that being a leader isn't always about being the one at the front; it is also about supporting individuals and 'giving them the tools to achieve what they want. Through doing this, you are reaching a shared goal.' This creates an atmosphere on ship that people may learn from. Having a leader who encourages goals and achievements is a great environment to enable personnel to carry out their own

personal development without being afraid of making mistakes or asking questions.

Another comment which could influence our jobs in the future was that we can regard even bad leaders as an opportunity to learn. 'We can use our own mistakes to learn from; however, learning from another person's mistakes makes you the richer person. Not all mistakes are to be battled; many can be seen as an opportunity to learn.' Going forward from this seminar, we will be more conscious in how we can learn from situations, gaining support from peers and other leaders.

Another important topic discussed at the seminar was dealing with toxic leadership. The leaders discussed how you can become more beneficial to the ship, and the leadership on board if you get to know the ship as quickly as possible and keep asking questions. Understanding the leader's situation may help you become one step closer to breaking down the toxicity. It was said that sometimes the toxicity may come from hidden insecurities, and having the support of an experienced crew, may help to resolve the toxicity and help the leader learn from this situation.

Thank you to The Nautical Institute for putting on this informative seminar. It was an afternoon with a great atmosphere and enjoyed by all. We are looking forward to attending another Nautical Institute event in the future. The variety of maritime areas represented at the seminar provided something for everyone to learn from and included a vast range of experience.

We would love to see leaders from a greater variety of the different routes into maritime leadership roles, such as engineering and electro-technical, to provide a more rounded view of maritime leaders and provide a point of inspiration for all cadets attending.

**Katie Walmsley and Zeta Rutherford**