

Speech: Working together for a thriving maritime sector

Good afternoon everyone, it's a great pleasure to join you today (24 January 2019).

I'd like to thank the International Maritime Organisation for hosting this event.

One hundred and eighty years ago this country marked a great maritime first when Isambard Kingdom Brunel's Great Western steam ship – kicked off an era of transatlantic travel.

The first vessel purposely designed to take passengers across the Atlantic, it travelled at a record speed – taking as little as 13 days to make the crossing.

But there's a little known story behind this great feat of engineering.

Brunel was only inspired to build the ship after someone complained that his famous London to Bristol railway line was too long. Brunel hit back by saying:

'Why not make it longer? Build a steamship to go to New York and call it the Great Western?'

Well within just 2 years he had done just that and launched Britain on a trajectory which has resulted in the fast, efficient global travel we know today.

It's an anecdote which highlights not just this country's maritime heritage, but also what can be achieved by ambition and by thinking outside the box, no matter how big the challenge.

We need to apply that spirit of endeavour, imagination and fearlessness in our maritime industry today, as it faces 21st century issues such as climate change, the technological revolution and changing geo political trends.

For if we are to meet these challenges and make the most of the opportunities of the coming decades we need a clear pathway.

That's why today we are launching [Maritime 2050](#) – our shared vision for the industry over the next 3 decades.

A vision for every area of our maritime sector, from giant container vessels and huge cruise liners, to leisure ships, like those run on the Thames by City Cruises, which I visited earlier this afternoon.

And carbon fibre yachts – such as those of the Ineos Racing Team, which is aiming to bring the America's Cup back to British waters in 2021 under the leadership of Sir Ben Ainslie, the most successful Olympic sailor of all time.

But ultimately what underpins Maritime 2050 is a recognition of your sector's fundamental importance to our country's prosperity.

That's because you provide the international trade links on which the UK depends, with 95% of all British goods and exports moved by sea.

You boost our economy by £14 billion a year and create hundreds of thousands of jobs on ships and in ports, as well as in our tourism industry and world leading maritime professional services sector.

And as the UK withdraws from the European Union and seeks new trading relationships across the world it's never been more crucial that maritime succeeds.

For when it thrives, so does this country.

I know it may seem like Brexit is the only show in town at the moment.

But it's also vital that we look further ahead.

And this document does exactly that, examining how we can work together to further maritime's success over the coming decades.

For it's important to stress that this strategy has not just been formed by officials working in a Whitehall office.

It's has been shaped by you, through ongoing discussions, regular meetings with industry and through the contribution of an expert panel.

It's a document that reflects your concerns, your ambitions and which is shaped by your experience.

So we harness the considerable expertise we have in key disciplines like technology, safety and security, while also reaching out to our partners through cooperation on the international stage.

And although there's increasing competition from around the world Maritime 2050 calls for a bold approach to the future.

A future in which we can continue to be a global leader in the crucial fields where there's most growth potential.

Take maritime technology, an area where we have a proud history of innovation.

Back in the 19th century we created the first iron hulled armoured warships, played a crucial part in the development of the screw propeller and invented the plimsoll line.

That's of course to name just a few.

And in the 21st, here in the UK, companies such as L3 ASV and Hushcraft, are leading the way in the field of autonomous vessels.

While Artemis Technologies, led by double Olympic gold medallist yachtsman Iain Percy, has established itself as one of the world's leading high performance maritime design and applied technologies companies.

And our universities' research in the fields of maritime technology is world renowned.

But I want to encourage even greater ambition.

This document lays out how we plan to develop a legal framework for the testing of autonomous ships in our waters and spearhead the creation of an international regulatory framework for these vessels.

And today we are also publishing our [Technology and innovation in UK maritime route map](#), which sets out our approach towards introducing this technology in more detail.

But of course Maritime 2050 explores a host of other exciting developments, from developing a maritime innovation hub in a UK port by 2030 to helping maritime businesses seize the opportunities of digital technologies, and unlocking the economic potential of our waters through seabed mapping.

Maritime 2050 also looks at what we can do to become a trailblazer for green technologies.

Whether that's exploring ways to nurture the growth of zero emission shipping, closer collaboration between industry and government through the Clean Maritime Council or by setting bold targets for the long term future – such as aiming for all UK ferries to be emission free.

These are all steps that will not only help Britain meet its international environmental obligations.

But also help the industry to enjoy the economic rewards of the move to cleaner technology.

Of course shipping is already one of the greenest forms of transport.

But the most recent figures from the IMO show it still accounts for 2.2% of global greenhouse gas emissions – equal to a country the size of Germany.

So it's vital we continue to up our game.

And Maritime 2050 details how we will do that.

As well as setting out how we will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air quality pollutants from UK shipping, we will move to bring the UK's penalties for ships breaking environmental law in our waters in line with international

best practice, while encouraging the use of advanced technologies to help maritime environmental law enforcement.

We have a duty to deliver on the international stage here too.

So as well as ratifying treaties such as the Ballast Water Management and Hong Kong conventions that seek to lessen maritime's environmental impact, this document underlines how we will work with our partners at the IMO towards a global target of cutting maritime greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2050.

And we plan to use our international influence to tackle other environmental issues of global importance.

Such as marine litter and plastics, illegal fishing and protecting biodiversity.

While maintaining a regulatory framework which allows the UK to thrive and global trade to flow.

Great innovations, new trade horizons and environmental challenges, will make the coming decades an extraordinary time for the sector.

But to take full advantage of this exciting era – we need to make sure our workforce has the skills to keep pace with changing technology.

I know that the sector is doing some great work on this front.

And the government has launched its own initiatives, such as the [Year of Engineering](#), to inspire the next generation of engineers.

But there is still more to do.

Maritime 2050 lays out some of our solutions to the recruitment and skills issues facing your industry in future. About which my ministerial colleague [Nusrat Ghani will speak in more detail later](#).

Enabling the maritime sector to attract the brightest minds and the best skills will help ensure this country remains one of the best places in the world to do maritime business.

We have the largest global hub for maritime services in London and the lowest headline rate of corporation tax in the G7 and one which will fall to 17% next year.

Combined with world class universities and a UK flag that is a symbol of the very best quality.

But we can't rest on our laurels.

We have many global competitors who are quite capable of stealing a march on us.

So Maritime 2050 lays out the action we need to take to secure our long term

success.

With a clear commitment to working and listening to industry, to further improve this country's fiscal and regulatory environment for marine businesses, it's vital too that the whole country can continue to benefit from a thriving maritime sector.

It's one of the industry's strongest selling points that its attributes are spread across this country.

With different areas boasting their own specialisms, whether in maritime services, shipbuilding or training and education.

This document lays out how we will support these maritime clusters.

And how we will use our influence in the international arena to exert positive change for the global maritime sector.

We are of course delighted to be hosts of the IMO here in London.

And I'd like to take a moment to express my gratitude to Secretary General Kitack Lim for all his hard work on behalf of the maritime industry around the world.

Rest assured that in Maritime 2050 we have committed the UK to continue to maintain its leading role as an IMO member. Something that will continue long into future.

And this theme of collaboration and cooperation runs right through Maritime 2050.

If there is one message I'd like you to take home tonight it's that the government is on your side.

Whether that's through our support of Maritime UK, creating the right environment for maritime SMES to flourish.

Or showcasing Britain's maritime industry to the world through events, such as London International Shipping Week, to be held in September this year.

I look forward to seeing many of you there.

So finally I'd like to extend my thanks to everyone who contributed to this document.

The UK's maritime sector may not always hit the headlines or get the attention it deserves, but it is one of this country's great success stories, staffed by professional, dedicated and highly skilled people and part of a quality flag.

Maritime 2050 will enable those achievements to continue and allow the sector to further flourish over the coming decades.

So let's take inspiration from Brunel and our proud maritime past, let's

harness the excitement of the innovation of today and be ambitious for our maritime future.

Thank you.