

Statement to Parliament: Support for maritime training

I am proud that the United Kingdom has one of the most vibrant and competitive maritime sectors in the world. We are an outward-looking, global trading maritime nation proud of our maritime history but forward looking and ambitious for our future.

Our success though relies above all else on our workforce. The United Kingdom is recognised all over the world for its leading maritime education and training and for the very best seafarers that are produced. Our well-trained and skilled cadets are responsible for many of our vital needs bringing them efficiently and safely to our shores.

I am therefore pleased to announce that we will be [doubling government's financial support for maritime training](#), the so-called [SMarT fund](#), from £15 million to £30 million to introduce a new SMarT Plus option. I am committed to continue building capacity and diversity within our maritime workforce so it can capitalise on every opportunity the market provides. I recognise the importance of transferable skills and the essential role seafarers play in supporting the wider maritime sector when they return from sea to shore based careers. Increasing our support for maritime training is essential in order for our great maritime nation to maintain its global position as a market leader. This is never more important than it is today as we prepare to leave the EU and take an even more global outlook.

Seafarers are highly skilled professionals entering STEM related careers. SMarT Plus funding will be available from April 2018 and will also support the [Year of Engineering](#) though stimulating the availability of training opportunities for deck, engine and electro-technical cadets. The 2018/19 cohort of SMarT Plus cadets will begin their on-ship training in the months before we leave the EU.

A key strength of the UK's maritime sector is our strong relationship with industry. I value the work of the UK Chamber of Shipping, Nautilus International and the Merchant Navy Training Board in developing and refining the SMarT Plus proposal in conjunction with my department's officials. An opportunity was clearly identified to create a resurgence in maritime training and increase the competitiveness of SMarT. There is no shortage of people applying for cadetships and it is only right that we capitalise on this momentum and create the conditions for more UK training and employment opportunities within the maritime sector. I am delighted to be working with the maritime industry and trade unions and together we will build a stronger UK maritime workforce.

SMarT Plus is a package that will see SMarT funding doubled, over a 7 year period, from £15 million to £30 million per year.

This will enable the cadet intake to increase from 750 to 1,200 each year.

In return, shipping companies will create additional UK training positions and commit to employ newly qualified SMarT Plus officers.

This will enable SMarT Plus officers to gain the 12 months sea time experience that is required to enable them to progress to their second Certificate of Competency.

UK officers holding a second Certificate of Competency are particularly valued throughout industry. Their quality, leadership and training makes them highly employable