

BRIDGE

Issue 04

A PD Ports Publication

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Guardians of the River Tees

Tees Guardians
Jerry Hopkinson

Starting Young
Katrina Morley

Local Hero
Bill Scott

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Credits

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*Words and image for Mike Kane MP supplied by his office.

Foreword from **Kirsten Donkin**, Editor.

Dear Reader, welcome to the latest edition of Bridge, as we continue to share and highlight the people and businesses who are at the forefront of efforts to strengthen and rejuvenate the Tees Valley, using their influence and success to improve the future for our environment and young people.

The Tees Valley is home to some of the UK's key industries, with more on the horizon, offering quality careers and exciting opportunities.

At the same time, as a coastal community, we continue to face socioeconomic challenges and often rank as one of the most disadvantaged regions in the country, with too many poor outcomes for children and young people. Too often we hear that young people feel there are no opportunities for good jobs and that they must leave the Tees Valley to succeed.

This issue of Bridge aims to shine a light on the people working to change that misconception, the business owners, educators and ambassadors who put the weight of their organisation's influence – and often their own personal time and effort – into helping children and teenagers understand the career paths available to them.

The Tees maritime sector has long been at the forefront of careers-based education efforts, offering work experience and site tours to directly show young people the kinds of roles available, and to raise aspirations and understanding of skills and training.

Highlighting their experiences and hopes for the future in this edition are Katrina Morley, chief executive of Tees Valley Education, who passionately believes in the need to extend

careers-based learning to primary schools, and Kevin Shakesheff, recently awarded an MBE for his efforts as co-founder of the High Tide Foundation, which offers careers experiences to 12 – 18 year olds.

Our lead feature in this edition is an interview with Jerry Hopkinson, executive chairman of PD Ports, who gives his views on the company's historic role as Statutory Harbour Authority for the Tees and its continuing importance in the modern world.

We also welcome Mike Kane, Shadow Maritime Minister, who gives his thoughts on the role of ports and maritime as a conduit for investment and environmental change – a follow up to a piece written in our previous edition by Baroness Vere, then Maritime Minister.

We are also extremely pleased to welcome contributions from Tees businessman Bill Scott, sharing his passion for the region as our Local Hero; Gavin Girling, marine superintendent at tug operator Svitzer; Mark Simmonds, director of policy and external affairs at British Ports Association; Ben Lamb and Judy Power from Tees Rivers Trust and Jane Armitage, who speaks about her role with Power of Women and what makes the Tees Valley her adopted home.

We hope you enjoy the latest edition of Bridge.



As custodian of the River Tees since 1852, PD Ports is intertwined with its history, industry and communities. Here, the company's Executive Chairman **Jerry Hopkinson** speaks about why the effective management of the river is so important to the strength and wellbeing of Teesport and its surroundings.

Guardians of the River Tees



I want you to close your eyes and imagine that you are standing on the banks of the River Tees on a quiet sunny afternoon in mid-springtime at Yarm, looking out across the water to a grassy treelined bank on the far shore.

The year is 850 AD and you are a shepherd. You have spent the best part of the last month lambing your sheep and shearing your flock and now the bundles of wool that you and your family have carefully roiled and secured with rope made from intertwined grasses are piled on the wooden quayside that juts into the river.

Berthed on the quay is a cargo ship which, in three days' time, is going to set sail for France laden with wool, as well as leather hides and pottery. The master of the vessel is busy talking with the leader of the men who are carrying the goods along the gangplank and carefully stowing them under covers onboard the deck of the ship.

In the meantime, a clerk is busy delving into a large leather bag collecting and counting coins that various folk are handing over to him for the passage of the ship.

I portray this scene for you to emphasise the point that this port and this river, of which we are the guardians, has been operating for well over 1,000 years as a major route for trade into and out of the North East of the UK.

As ships have become progressively larger and cargoes have progressively changed from, say, wool and pottery to steel and chemicals, so the location of the port has shifted further towards the deeper mouth of the river to reside finally in the position that it occupies today.

Whilst the operation is arguably more complex, the principles that underpin the port itself remain unchanged – a gateway into the North of England that we are privileged to safeguard – and I'd strongly argue that the people loading the ship, safeguarding the quay, sailing the vessel and counting the pennies are fundamentally no different from their early medieval counterparts.

In short this port, this river, we people who run it go back a long way.....

This modern-day port of ours is established under various Acts of Parliament, the most recent and relevant being the 1966 Act, which designated the then Tees and Hartlepool Port

Authority – now PD Ports – as the Statutory Harbour Authority (SHA) for the River Tees and the Tees Estuary.

In essence, the Act bestows upon us the responsibility for managing and safeguarding the passage of vessels from the mouth of the River Tees all the way along approximately 12 miles of river, as well as the access and egress into the Port of Hartlepool.

Our role as SHA is one that carries many responsibilities, gives a great deal of gravity and weight in the fair and reasonable operation of the river and grants us an independence from interference in our port that we fiercely maintain.

Not only do we manage the safe navigation and operation of the lower reaches of the Tees, we also have a role in supporting the wider prosperity of Teesside, driving investment and encouraging growth for the benefit of the communities we operate in.

Teesport is the sixth largest seaport in the UK, including the fifth largest container terminal – we are a significant part of UK PLC.

The infrastructure in this area is incredibly important, including the second largest chemistry set in the UK on the north bank of the river.

Keeping trade flowing on the Tees, and safeguarding that trade, is extremely important.

We all can be very proud of the business that we operate here on the River Tees. It is a vital asset within the region and arguably is the most critical of businesses.

Some 4,000 vessels make their way up and down the Tees every year, to berths and wharfs serving the industry that lines its banks, supporting tens of thousands of jobs.

It provides and maintains the artery right into the heart of the region and enables trade to flow 24 hours a day, 365 days per year, safely, effectively and seamlessly.

We have the utmost respect for the wider responsibilities placed on us for the good of the river and everyone that makes use of it.

We meet our operational commitments through the hard work and expertise of our marine team, including conservancy vessel crews, pilots, foyboatmen and tug crews, operating under the Harbour Master and his Team at the Harbour Office.

Meanwhile, our conservancy dredging operations maintain the depths of the river's channels and berths to allow vessels of all shapes and sizes to access their final destinations, while our dedicated Harbour Police and security teams keep us safe and secure with 24/7 patrols of the port and its surrounds.

In addition, the North and South Gares and the Hartlepool breakwaters, the huge structures that protect Tees and Hartlepool from the pretty extreme effects of the weather that we see now, are our responsibility.

Put together, we operate a huge amount of marine infrastructure to allow the River Tees to operate efficiently, safely and securely.

The consequences of a marine incident could be catastrophic. We must continuously ensure that operations are conducted within our safety management system with sufficient safeguards to mitigate the assessed risks.

At the heart of our business are our people. Investment in people is priority for us, with the aim of creating a stronger cohort and helping individuals to progress their careers and support their communities.

In return, our people offer their commitment and a huge amount of pride to PD Ports.

It's very clear to me there's a real sense of heritage among our people. There are a lot of family members employed within the business, mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, which is testament to the fact that people believe in the business and that the business will take care of them.

We are the keepers of the flame that burns at the heart of Teesside. Our work will continue, ready for the next generation.

I hope to return again to the pages of Bridge, to further expand on the importance of PD Ports' wider role as a leader of positive change and development, as Merchants of Light.

“Keeping trade flowing on the Tees, and safeguarding that trade, is extremely important”





With a General Election looming, the UK's approaches to achieving net zero and tackling a skills shortage in the workforce are becoming hot topics. Shadow Maritime Minister **Mike Kane** sets out his party's vision for the maritime sector and why coastal communities are key to growth.

Planning ahead

It's great to be asked to write this piece, which comes at an exciting time politically as we are facing the country going to the polls in a General Election. If my party, the Labour Party, are asked by the country to form the next Government, what could that mean for your industry?



April marked four years since I was asked by Sir Keir Starmer to take on the role as Shadow Maritime Minister.

At that time, we were in the throes of a global pandemic – it was then that the wider public were alerted to how vital this sector is, as an island nation we depend upon maritime to transport 95% of UK imports and exports.

Since being appointed I have faced multiple shipping ministers across the chamber, I don't believe that such frequent personnel changes within Government have been a good thing for your industry.

I have spent the time since becoming shadow minister for shipping becoming acquainted with the industry and learning more about it from you, the experts. I would like to thank you

Setting a future agenda for the UK maritime industry.

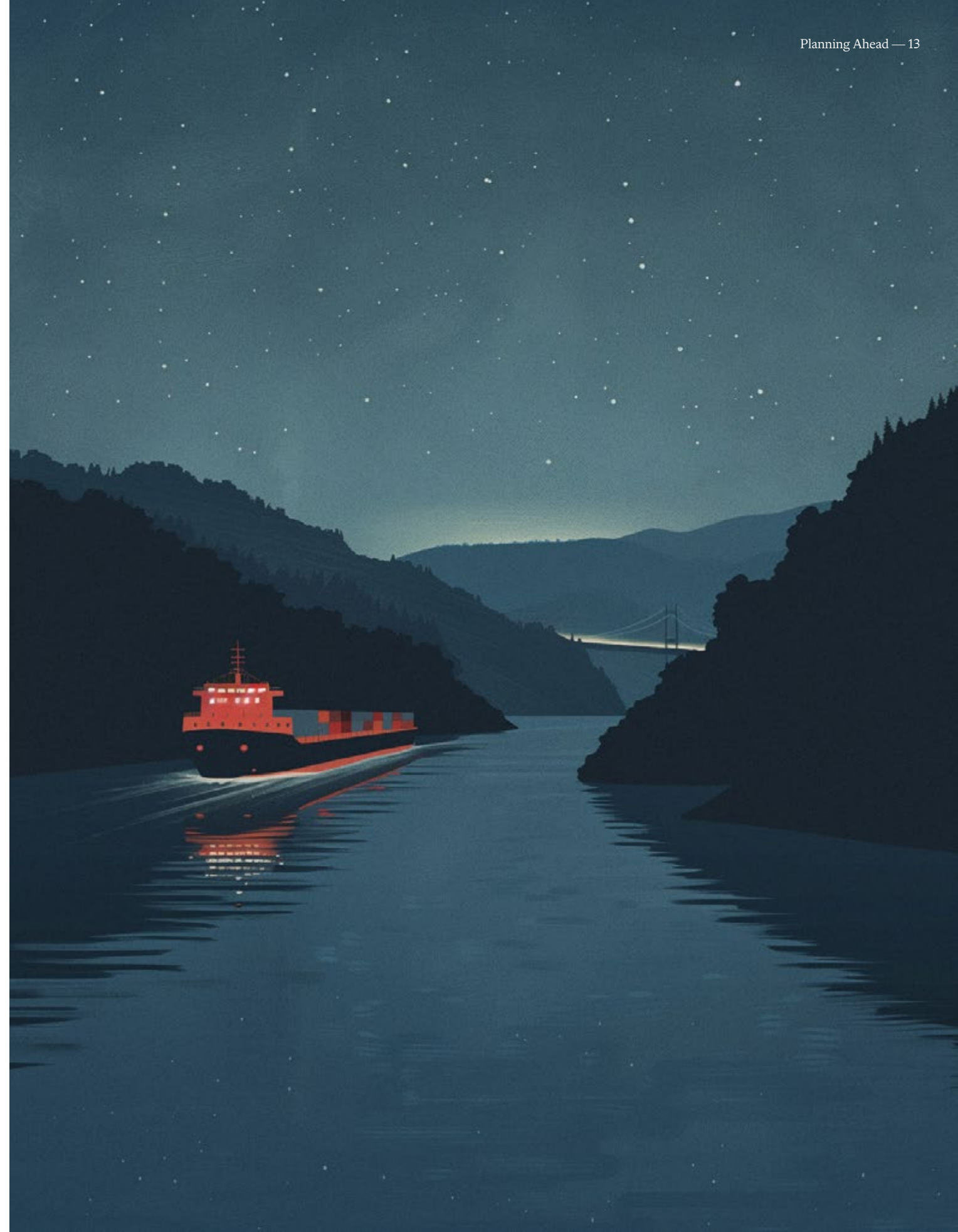
for your generosity and commitment to me and colleagues in the shadow transport team as we work with you on priorities which will deliver for you and for the country.

The port industry is huge, worth almost £50 billion a year to this country. It plays a critical role in keeping us fed, fuelled and safe. The Labour Party has always understood this and that is why I have pledged to continue my work with industry to ensure that opportunities within the sector are opportunities for long-forgotten coastal areas and deindustrialised communities.

Last month, Sir Keir was joined by Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves and Shadow Energy Secretary Ed Miliband on a visit to Teesport to announce Labour plans to deliver the most significant upgrade of Britain's ports in a generation, with £1.8 billion investment in Britain's port infrastructure.

This investment will further encourage billions of pounds of private sector investment into UK ports, harbours and energy industry at our coasts.

The pledge is part of Labour's Green Prosperity Plan, funded by a proper windfall tax on the oil and gas giants making record profits, ensuring we invest in British industries.



The Green Prosperity Plan will help support the creation of up to 650,000 good jobs in Britain's industrial heartlands, by encouraging billions of private investments into industries such as Britain's clean energy, steel, automotive, and construction industries.

Right now, if you live by the sea in England, your earnings will be on average almost £3,000 less than those living inland. You are also more likely to suffer ill-health.

This is why I was delighted with the manifesto pledge from the Labour party on work and skills. The failure to invest in work and skills has left the country ill-prepared for the challenges we face, such as a just transition to net zero.

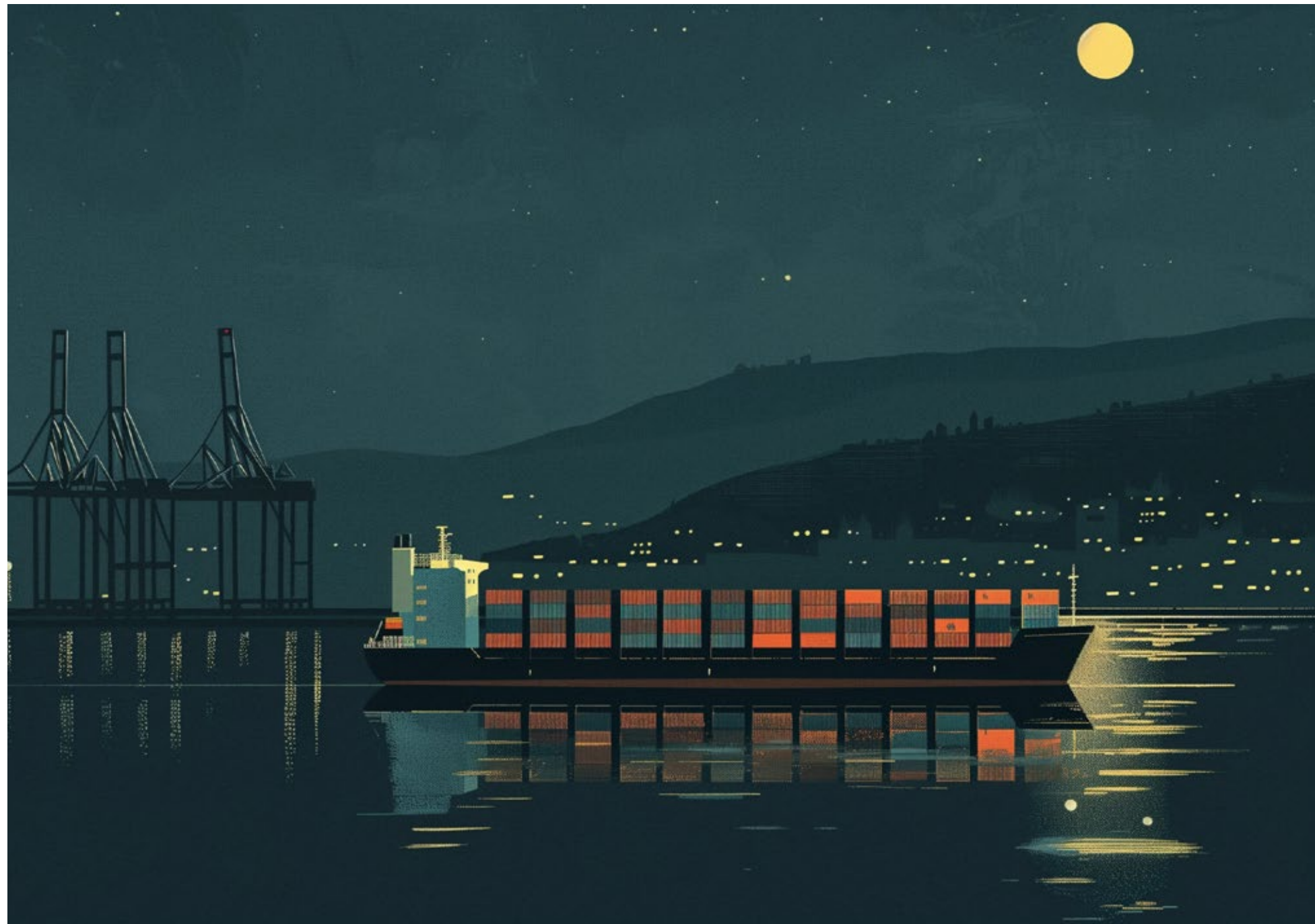
A new body, Skills England, will oversee the national effort to meet the skills needs of the coming decades across all regions, and ensure we can deliver our Climate Investment Pledge.

It makes sense to ensure there is a skilled workforce of all ages, fully trained to take on the skilled jobs of the future. Whether they are engineering, logistics, sea faring, in offshore wind or as a stevedore – the opportunities are great and these highly paid, highly skilled roles will offer true levelling up.

By better alignment of skills in coastal regions we can ensure a just transition for all.

Economic growth means very little if there is no resulting meaningful improvement to living standards, we must stop young people leaving the communities they were raised in due to lack of good jobs and good homes.

Labour's commitment of £2.5bn in the British Jobs Bonus will offer the nation, and your industry, multiple benefits. The country will be energy secure – cutting household bills for all, but also offering clean energy and becoming world leading in this field.



“It makes sense to ensure there is a skilled workforce of all ages, fully trained to take on the skilled jobs of the future”

I would imagine that one of the first bills out of the gate from an incoming Labour Government will be the creation of GB Energy, a publicly owned company which invests in green energy.

We are laser focused on delivering net zero – as are you – and this will come hand in hand with job and wealth creation, and a just transition.

I have made it a mainstay of my time in the role to meet regularly with the maritime industry – with businesses, workers, unions, academics and to learn from you, the experts in the field about what you would want to see from an incoming Labour administration. It has been clear to me that our values are aligned.

The British economy has been growing at the slowest rate for 200 years. The small amounts of growth it has seen have not benefited the whole country.

For too long we have lacked economic stability, and we have lacked an industrial strategy. There has not been enough public and private investment to kickstart growth. There has not been a willingness to reform outdated planning laws that restrict the building of vital new homes and infrastructure.

You tell me the industry needs a pipeline of talent. We believe Skills England, working in partnership with business, academia, local colleges and apprenticeship providers will do this.

You tell me you do not want to be ‘left behind’ – the Labour Party are committed to a just transition and will always work with industry, business and unions to ensure that the opportunities are realised here in the UK as we move to cleaner greener energy.

The British jobs bonus will provide capital grants to companies working in low-carbon industries, such as wind and solar energy. There are also opportunities in hydrogen and carbon capture and storage and in floating offshore wind. These three emerging technologies are vital for a jobs bonanza in the north.

Companies that want to provide clean energy in the UK will, under an existing scheme – which an incoming Labour government would not discontinue as it has worked well – need to demonstrate that these jobs would create high quality jobs, right here in the UK. This scheme will undoubtedly benefit port communities, with a potential 65,000 new jobs created in this way.

You tell me you are ready to rise to the challenge of fulfilling our obligations under the Paris agreement. We have no alternative than to do this and it is the right thing to do.

With the correct strong regulatory framework and a clear industrial strategy, we will take this industry into a cleaner and greener future. One which leaves nobody and no area behind.

The challenge is huge, the potential is enormous and the race is global – we will do this together.

This article follows a thought-leadership piece by then Maritime Minister Baroness Vere in Autumn 2023.

The port sector is vital to the UK economy, with more than 95% of the nation's imports and exports by volume passing over a quay. With more than 100 members across 350 facilities, the British Ports Association is a key network and lobbying voice for the industry in government. Here, **Mark Simmonds**, the association's director of policy and external affairs, explains the key challenges facing the sector.

Guiding ports through stormy times

We are our members' eyes and ears in Whitehall and a voice of industry to government.

The British Ports Association (BPA) is a trade association and network of ports, working to bring people together to share experiences and challenges.

We have a role in influencing and lobbying on behalf of the port sector and also ensure political developments and decisions that might affect ports are clearly relayed to our members.

We have a very broad and diverse membership across 350 ports, terminals and marine facilities across the UK, including PD Ports, AV Dawson and Able on the River Tees.

As part of our drive to represent our members' diverse and wide-ranging issues, we recently completed a mapping exercise to log everything we are dealing with on behalf of our members – it totalled 75 live issues including biodiversity net gain, air quality and connectivity.

It means we can prioritise where we are lobbying for our membership.

We have distilled the list down to cover five big issues.

Terrestrial planning

There are a number of planning issues and regulations being prepared by government that will make things harder for ports, such as the implementation of biodiversity net gain in tidal areas. The proposed requirement to deliver a mandatory biodiversity 'net gain' of 10 per cent in development of the inter-tidal zone using terrestrial planning rules, rather than marine planning, is disproportionate and does not align with projects and tools in development for marine habitats.

The port industry is supportive of the need for new biodiversity rules but if the regulations are enacted as proposed, it could stall port development in the future.

There is a big opportunity for the ports sector in the UK around offshore wind, which will necessitate the building and redevelopment of up to 11 ports around the UK. We need to make sure that the timescales and the costs of doing so are reasonable, because we will be competing with other ports elsewhere in Europe.

Marine planning is also an important issue for BPA and our members but terrestrial planning is the key issue.



Decarbonisation

We are very concerned about grid connectivity. Most ports can't access the power that they need to decarbonise their own or third-party operations at their facilities. There is also uncertainty at most ports about how much power they will need in future and the timelines between their decarbonisation ambitions and the necessary grid connections often don't work.

It can take up to 15 years to get a connection from the transmission network to a facility and that is not acceptable. The Government are saying the right things but we're keen to turn the corner on this issue as soon as possible.

We are expecting two big publications from the Government this year – the Clean Maritime Plan and the Net Zero Ports Call for Evidence. These documents will allow ports to see what the Department for Transport is thinking when it comes to their expectations for decarbonisation in the industry, things like providing shore power to vessels, where we know there are barriers.

Another area of interest is biofuels. We are increasingly seeing large numbers of ports moving to hydro-treated vegetable oil (HVO) in their landside operations and harbour vessels. There is also interest from the shipping industry in using biofuels as part of the transition to cleaner marine fuels. A key thing for us is that the way biofuels are taxed is very unhelpful – we want to see the Government encourage their use rather than penalise it.

Dredging

Dredging is critical to the effective operation of every port in the UK. But we have concerns about the way government departments, regulators and the public view the practice.

Dredging operations at UK ports are well-managed and highly regulated, meeting international standards. But recently we're seeing lots of ill thought through proposals and ideas from government that are very unhelpful.

Quite often there will be reviews by government that increase the regulatory burden on ports, without any clear environmental benefit to what is being suggested.

PD Ports conservancy manager Andrew Ridley is chair of a new BPA board looking at this issue. We are working to put together a campaign to help officials and the wider public better understand what is involved in dredging and why it is important.

“There are plenty of reasons to be optimistic in the port sector”

Offshore energy

Most of our members are optimistic and buoyant about the impact of offshore energy on UK ports and are keen to capture as many benefits as possible.

Traditionally, we haven't seen large-scale public investment in the port sector but, given the scale of what's out there, we will need help from the Government to make the offshore energy sector a success in the UK.

One thing we do want to see is longer pipelines and targets beyond 2050 from the Government.

With an election on the horizon we're keen to hear from Labour – we know they have very specific ideas around the idea of taking stakes in ports in return for public investment. We want to work with them on that and help them shape it.

We hope whoever forms the next government will see the long-term benefits of investing in this industry.

The energy transition will happen, but work needs to take place to ensure the benefits of it come to the UK. We want to see the social and economic impacts that could take place, as well as the immediate impacts on the push for decarbonisation.

The big ports could benefit from the large scale investments but smaller ports will have their part to play and could reap rewards in the supply chain and offshore support services.

Abandoned vessels

A key issue for all ports, but one that particularly impacts smaller ports and terminals, is abandoned vessels. We're working with harbour masters to come up with guidance around how to deal with abandoned vessels, which can be expensive to get rid of if they're in poor condition and can't be sold on. People buy a boat and then realise it's not in good condition so just leave it behind. It's an area where we're doing a lot of work to support members.

There are plenty of reasons to be optimistic in the port sector. Yes, there are challenges – we would like to see Brexit customs arrangements 'done' because short sea ports in particular have invested a lot in new infrastructure that is standing idle.

Global volatility, energy prices and inflation all remain a concern and are likely to for the foreseeable future. There is a lot of work to be done around the skills gap.

For the Tees, I feel there are lots of reasons to be cheerful. The freeport will hopefully bring new and additional business to the region.

There are already a number of thriving sites in operation, while offshore wind will be a big area of growth, which will bring lots of highly skilled jobs. The Tees has a lot of the infrastructure needed already to benefit from offshore wind.

Teesport is a thriving hub with lots of trades that are going in the right direction.





Academy group Tees Valley Education has won plaudits for its work to engage primary age pupils with the world of work, encouraging aspiration and helping them understand their career options from an early age. With the trust now taking part in a national programme that will embed careers-based learning into the curriculum, chief executive **Katrina Morley** explains why it is so vital to make children aware of their options from the start.

Starting them young – why early careers learning is vital to future success

The value of careers education and work experience for teenagers has been understood for many years but at Tees Valley Education we passionately believe that to see the true benefits we need to start even earlier, at primary age.

As a community we need to understand the industries and businesses that shape our economies and how we can leverage their influence to create careers-based learning programmes that bring opportunities for our young people, without them needing to leave their hometown.

In Teesside, the River Tees is the catalyst for the continuing evolution of industry in the region.

As chief executive of Tees Valley Education, I am responsible for a multi-academy trust of four primary schools and Discovery Special Academy, a new free school providing education to children and young people with special educational needs from two to 16-years-old.

Our schools are in some of the most disadvantaged areas in the UK, so I make no apology for being a passionate advocate for my pupils and taking every chance available to instil belief and aspiration in them from a young age.

I became chief executive of the trust in 2018, having spent 20 years as a teacher and leader, and with a previous career as a chemical engineer working for ICI and BASF behind me.

I know the importance of education in providing a foundation for future success.

As primary educators we were aware of the success of the High Tide Foundation, working with secondary pupils across Teesside to introduce them to careers and the industries available locally. We saw several years ago that there was an opportunity to make sure all young people in the region had a chance to excel and understand what is out there for them.

Now backed by research from The Careers & Enterprise Company, published in January 2023 by the Department for Education, at TVEd we firmly believe that there are significant benefits to career-related learning for younger children – including direct experience and exposure to the world of work.





“We want to raise the tide for all ships and offer opportunities for all children, their parents and families”

We’ve known for some time that partnerships between the worlds of work and education are important to allow both sides to adapt to shifting career paths and skills requirements, and to raise opportunities and aspirations for young people from all backgrounds.

We already have strong links with several maritime businesses in Teesside, including PD Ports and Casper Shipping – we’ve gone out of our way to forge working partnerships in the area because we believe early intervention is pivotal to the life chances of children coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.

It is an unusual strategy, not many primary schools have a careers-based programme like we do.

It’s also a long-term strategy – it’s ten years plus of work to see a child through school, with careers-based learning woven through it. But the careers coming up are more complex than before, with more complex choices attached, which require a wider range of skills.

Our efforts have caught the eye of a number of educators and experts around the country and last year we were approached by Ormiston Academy, based on the Isle of Wight, who are the lead on a government-backed Maritime Futures careers education programme aimed at secondary and further education level students.

They believe, as do we, that the programme should be rolled out to primary age pupils and approached us for help in creating a curriculum



and framework that can be used anywhere in the country. The initial programme is funded by the Department for Transport and based around the maritime sector, which obviously works for the Isle of Wight and Teesside, but can be adapted to suit the key industry of a particular region as it is rolled out more widely.

The idea of Maritime Futures is that local businesses and industries are woven through the curriculum – their name, learning resources, input from key personnel and so on will pop up throughout the year, for example if the children are learning about the river and the tides in geography or about the economy and international trade.

Primary schools can give context to real life through the curriculum – we promote and explore learning and opportunity from so many angles.

It’s a drip drip of information, skills and aspirations during the years that these children are with us and it also means that their families are learning about the wider maritime industries on the Tees.

We firmly believe that this programme and the businesses that are signing up to it are an example of visionary, transformative leadership.

The Tees Valley is now seeing industry, research and innovation at a transformative level not seen since the steel industry. Every business that goes into partnership with us recognises that it’s a medium to long-term investment because, after all, they are primary age children.

By building these partnerships earlier, we can see and understand earlier what is required for these roles and we can build the skills and ideas needed into the curriculum at key stage 2.

By about the age of seven children have a sense of place and opportunity in this world – we need to show them that they can stay local but think global when it comes to career opportunities.

At Tees Valley Education, we want to raise the tide for all ships and offer opportunities for all children, their parents and their families – we’re prepared to think outside the box, build partnerships and make the unusual choices to see that happen.

The horizon for all our children in primary school is wider than ever – they all deserve every opportunity we can give them to make the very best of their futures.



Conservation charity the Tees Rivers Trust has a mission to rejuvenate and restore the Tees, bringing back habitats and marine species lost to heavy industry of the 20th Century. Here trust chief executive **Ben Lamb** and project manager **Judy Power** explain more about their attempts to reintroduce seagrass and native oysters to the Tees estuary, and why managing the river means starting at the very top.

From source to sea – bringing life back to the River Tees

Without the River Tees, there is no Teesside. Its waters are the lifeblood of the region, the reason our forebears chose to settle along its banks, creating the homes, commerce and industry that sustain us today.

Human activity has not always been kind to the river – the Victorians changed its course to allow larger ships to traverse upstream; heavy industry in the mid-20th Century caused untold damage to the water and its marine life.

Although the river is now considered to be at its cleanest since the 1970s, it remains vulnerable to on-going pollution, climate change and the legacy impacts of earlier industry.

Leading efforts to protect and rejuvenate the river and its environs is the Tees Rivers Trust, a conservation charity that is the sole organisation to operate along the Tees' whole length, from Teesdale to Teesmouth, and its many tributaries.

With the aim of restoring lost habitats, educating those who live and work alongside its waters and protecting water quality, the Tees Rivers Trust has engaged in partnership working to achieve its aims.

The charity's patrons are Lord Barnard, a major landowner along the upper reaches of the Tees, and Frans Calje, chief executive of PD Ports, which has operational responsibility for 12 miles of the river from the Tees Barrage to the estuary.

"The river trust movement is a 'feet wet' organisation, we like to get in and start making a difference from the bottom up," explains Ben Lamb, chief executive officer of the trust since 2009.

"We encourage the management of the river using a whole, integrated catchment approach.

"There are many issues facing the River Tees, among them diffuse pollution from roads, misconnected drains and farmland; canalisation, drainage and straightening and the legacy of industrial pollution, from lead mining in Teesdale to the heavy industry at the mouth of the Tees."

“Everything that happens to the river, starting with the smallest stream, impacts its whole length”

Founded in 2008 by a group of seven trustees, the trust runs targeted projects along the length of the Tees and its tributaries, looking to influence specific problem areas.

These include working with farmers to deliver advice and manage diffuse pollution and an invasive species project, which trains local action groups how to spot and deal with issues, particularly giant hogweed.

A project in Upper Teesdale aims to make the old slag heaps from the area's historic lead mining industry more stable to prevent run off into streams. The team are also working to remove weirs, considered an ecological blocker for all fish species, along the whole of the Tees.

In the lower reaches of the river, inter-tidal habitat projects are underway to replace those lost to the pollution and activity of the 20th Century.

A key project aims to recreate seagrass meadows in the Tees, which, after early success thanks to seedcorn funding from Natural England, has already expanded to include the reintroduction of native oysters.

Based at a site within PD Ports' estate at Port of Hartlepool, the team are attempting to germinate seagrass seeds, which are difficult to collect and grow, in land-based nurseries, before being transferred to a suitable inter-tidal habitat.

Seagrass is described by Ben and Judy as 'a key ecosystem engineer'. Seagrass meadows were once widespread around the UK but an estimated 90% have been lost in the last 100 years due to poor water quality and loss of habitat.

Judy Power, the trust's project manager for coast and estuary, who is leading on the seagrass and oyster reintroduction efforts, said early results two years into the project are positive.

“The seagrass project is to establish our own nursery so we have our own source of seeds. Seagrass meadows are vulnerable to storms so by having the nursery on land, we will also have a back-up supply if we ever need to replace an area we've planted.

“Last year we planted our first seagrass plants and had the highest rates of germination and the first flowering plant in a terrestrial trial anywhere in the UK. We use local water and local sediment and achieved a 48% germination rate.”



Once established seagrass spreads quickly and locks in sediment, preventing it being washed away in a storm. Tentative research suggests it can lock in carbon, as well as being a good habitat for small fish and marine invertebrates, particularly seahorses.

Oysters are also a good indicator of the quality of the river.

“Bran Sands was once a key habitat for oysters,” says Judy. “A hundred years ago, people used to come down to pick them for their tea, they were so plentiful. They were lost due to development of the land for industrial use in the area.

“In 2021, we introduced 600 oyster cages to Hartlepool Marina. We check the cages once a month to measure the rate of growth and we've found all sorts of species we didn't know about in the marina. We're seeing signs of reproduction which is very exciting.”

The team has plans to expand both schemes, including an inshore oyster reef to restore oysters to the estuary, with a search for a suitable location underway.

Ben adds: “Native oysters take pollutants out of the water – one oyster can clean 200 litres of water a day, they really are efficient.

“These projects are about raising lost habitats and looking at what we can do to use nature to help the Tees recover itself.

“Water quality has improved a lot since the seventies – we are hoping the time is right to reintroduce these species and then, once they are established, they can largely be left alone to look after themselves. They don't need much energy or ongoing costs to maintain them in the way that a manmade structure would.”

Education is a key priority for the charity, with its RiverLAB programme offering hands on sessions for children of all ages, including curriculum linked sessions for year five pupils.

Ben explains: “Education really is the core part of our work. It is about helping children and adults to engage with the river habitat, allowing them to learn about the creatures that live in its waters and its importance to our region by getting into the water and having fun.”

Judy adds: “The Tees is not just about the salty end at the estuary – everything that happens to the river starting with the smallest stream in Teesdale, or in the Leven or Skerne, impacts its whole length.

“We need to empower our young people and help them feel that small things they do to protect and support the Tees can make a massive difference.”

With a successful career in shipping opening up opportunities he could hardly have dreamed of as a young man, **Kevin Shakesheff**, global president of the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers and chairman of Middlesbrough-headquartered Casper Shipping, has made it his mission to educate today's youngsters about the career paths available to them. Awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours for his efforts, here he explains why it is so important to support the next generation.

Giving back to the future

You can't fix the world, but we can give those that are willing an opportunity and an experience.

I've spent more than 50 years in the shipping industry, starting as a trainee port clerk and ending up as president of the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers (ICS), responsible for promoting the industry to all quarters of the globe.

The Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers is a chartered organisation granted royal status. To become a chartered shipbroker, a student must pass seven examinations covering all aspects of maritime operations – it's equivalent to a university degree and accepted worldwide.

We have 27 branches globally, mostly in the Commonwealth and former Commonwealth, made up of members whose main role is to provide education for students coming into the industry.

Through my work I try to inspire and support youngsters around the world. As president it is my role to promote the organisation wherever we have a branch, and to encourage more students to join us.

I left school in Newport, South Wales, at 17 and joined a small shipping agency – I wasn't terribly well qualified, but I passed my chartered shipbroker exams and that allowed me to really take off in my career.

The ICS was a huge support in progressing my own career and that's why I always wanted to give something back to the industry and to help young people understand the opportunities available to them in the maritime sector, both locally in Teesside and around the world.

Half of our membership is based in the UK but we're seeing huge growth in the Far East and the Middle East. The industry is growing exponentially in those regions and many take up the opportunity to gain a worldwide qualification with a UK stamp on it.

The shipping industry is changing massively. The UK – London particularly – remains an important maritime centre but equally places like Dubai and Singapore have seen a shift in their importance.

Shipbrokers can come from a range of backgrounds, such as port agents, port authorities, insurance organisations, maritime solicitors and ship sale and purchase agents.

The seven exams required cover a whole range of skills including accountancy, maritime law and the study of ships and shipping.

As former managing director of maritime services firm Casper Shipping, a global firm with its headquarters in Middlesbrough, I was always keenly aware that Teesside offered a wide range of skilled and quality jobs, but getting schools and young people to understand the industry and its opportunities was a challenge.

The key was to link education with industry, to offer work experience and show young people the scale of the jobs and training available to them.

I saw my opportunity to create something with David Robinson, the former chief executive officer of PD Ports, who I was good friends with outside of work.

I was able to persuade him that, as our respective companies were doing very well, we should be putting something back into the industry and to the Tees region.

High Tide Foundation, which we founded in 2012, was the result of that conversation.

An independent charity, it delivers work experience and career programmes to young people aged between 11 – 16, across the Tees Valley.

The foundation offers career workshops, tours of Teesport and partner business operations, and work experience placements. From the initial input by PD Ports and Casper Shipping it quickly escalated with demand from schools who wanted their students to know what was out there for them.

Thankfully, other port-linked businesses were happy to lend their resources to support the foundation by inviting students to come to visit their sites and meet staff, and from that we developed a series of courses and experiences for the students. It has been wonderfully successful.

Too many people in this area still believe that you can't stay here and get a job, unless you want to stack shelves in a supermarket.

Our aim was to show the diverse range of jobs out there, across the business sector, from truck drivers and engineers to people working in more office-based roles, such as sales or accounts.

There are so many quality jobs out there, you just need to know they exist. We took young people round plants and factories and showed them what was happening out in the world.

We even took a group to Rotterdam to show them that the jobs that are available locally in Teesside are also available on the continent and beyond – you can get a good job on Teesside and stay here and do well if that's where your heart lies but you can also travel the world with the skills and training you get here.

“We need to take our own success and pass it on”

I'm proud to say that as a result of my work with High Tide Foundation and my role with the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers I was awarded an MBE for services to young people in business and to the maritime industry in the 2024 New Year Honours, which I received at Windsor Castle in March.

Partnership working is key – industry thinks it knows what schools want and schools think they know what industry wants and, in truth, neither of them have a clue.

But together, we can ensure the next generation has the key skills needed for the future. We need to take our own success and pass it on.



Small but mighty

Rivers are at the heart of the communities where they flow, with ships of all sizes making their way through their waters laden with cargo. Key to the safe passage of those vessels are tugs, the unsung heroes of river operations. **Gavin Girling**, marine superintendent at towage company Svitzer's Middlesbrough wharf, explains more about the industry and their place at the heart of the Tees.

Where there are ships there will be tugs – we'll always have a place here on the river.

Look out across the lower reaches of the Tees on any given day and you'll see tugs working away to guide larger ships safely between their berths and the mouth of the river.

Tugs have been a mainstay on the Tees since Victorian times – Svitzer's operations here on the River Tees, in the form of its predecessor companies, can lay claim to being one of the oldest businesses in Middlesbrough, with the original Duncan Brothers founded in 1828.

Though technology has changed the way shipping industry operates, the ever-changing conditions on the water and the sheer size of vessels coming to Teesside from all parts of the globe mean that towage still has a vital role to play.

As marine superintendent for Svitzer, I have overall responsibility for safe vessel operations and regulatory compliance at the company, ensuring our presence on the Tees is efficient and environmentally responsible.

Svitzer, a Danish company, is a global leader in towage and salvage. Providing towage services on the Tees since 2001, having acquired the former Tees Towing Company, established by the Crosswaite family through its purchase of Cory Wijismuller, the company has invested in operations here in Teesside, making our Middlesbrough base the company's largest UK office.

Svitzer operates 75 tugs across 16 UK ports – the largest towage operator in the country – and all our central roles, such as HR, IT and finance, as well as our main crewing and operations functions, are based here in Teesside, with our staff predominantly made up of local people.

We have staff members and crew with links to towage on the river going back generations.

Whether a ship needs a tug in Southampton, Bristol or on the Tyne, it will be booked and dispatched by our team here.

Our towage operations on the Tees are relatively simple. If a ship requires our services – a decision based on Harbour Master's guidelines, such as the size of the ship, its manoeuvrability and the prevailing weather conditions – we'll have about two hours' notice before we move in to support the vessel.

Our four tugs operating on the Tees, as well as the Svitzer Leven waste barge, and three tugs on the Tyne, are manned by a rotating crew who work three to a tug, comprising a master, a deckhand and an engineer.

All of our crews are trained to the highest standards and our masters are required to hold Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) certification, an internationally recognised qualification.

For my own part I trained at South Tyneside College before going to sea as a deckhand, working my way up to ship's master over 30 years in the oil and gas offshore sector around the world.

Although I grew up in Ipswich I have long-standing links to the Tees and it was where I fell in love with life on the water.

My great-grandfather was a customs officer on the river, while my grandad started work in a shipyard at Haverton Hill before going to sea and becoming a pilot. He had always planned to take me out on the river with him but didn't get the chance before he died.

His friends knew that I was desperate to go out on a boat though, so they took me out and that was it, I was hooked.

When I decided, after 30 years, to come back ashore, I was offered the opportunity to come here to Svitzer in Middlesbrough and was delighted to come back to my roots.

As a Careers at Sea Ambassador, I work with schools and local Sea Cadets to explain to young people about the careers and opportunities maritime can offer, both on the river and beyond.

At Svitzer we're proud to do our bit for the next generation of seafarers through our apprenticeship programmes, with a number of Teessiders now working at ports across the UK and the wider world thanks to our training, which results in an officer of the watch certification, the first step to becoming a master.



Our programme with Fleetwood College in Lancashire is combined with live experience training at a variety of ports – there are different types of vessels and towage in each port and it's a great way to get a rounded education.

The maritime sector historically has been very male dominated, but I'm pleased to say things are starting to change. In recent years we have welcomed 18 women, including masters, to our crews across the UK and we'll continue to encourage women and girls to consider training and positions with us.

The business is changing quicker than it ever has but at its heart remains about tugs and towage, supporting the river.

“The business is changing quicker than ever but at its heart remains about tugs and towage”

Modern tugs now have touch screens and electronic communications and navigation but they still require a master sitting at the controls in charge of things. In some ways they're just like a car – it might have a few more gadgets and run more smoothly and quietly but the way the vehicle works is the same.

Our company secretary, David Noakes, has noted that people often think of towage and shipping as a heritage industry, but we still have a huge shipping industry in the UK – we are an island nation after all.

Nearly everything in the supermarket, all the chemicals and fuel that we rely on, has come through a port.

In future it may be that tugs are controlled by someone sitting in an office using a virtual reality headset. We're ready for whatever may come next and already use a VR simulator in Middlesbrough which can recreate different towage scenarios on different rivers and ports, in all weather conditions, to train our next generation of crews.

The shipping industry is also leading the way in decarbonisation and Svitzer is doing its part investigating alternative fuels such as HVO and methanol, as well as adding solar panels and wind turbines to our headquarters on the river.

Our business does face challenges – there is competition, rising costs and a global fight to undercut prices.

But rivers ebb and flow. And while there are ships, there will be tugs.





The Power of Women campaign aims to smash stereotypes and encourage young people to have aspiration and strive for a more equitable world. The organisation's chairwoman **Jane Armitage** tells Bridge more about PoW's work, her own route to career success and what makes the Tees Valley her adoptive home.

My Tees Valley

In my career I got some lucky breaks and people along the way helped me – my career success was not only down to hard work on my part. Not all young people are as fortunate as that and we need to help them.

The Power of Women (PoW) campaign was set up by the late Professor Jane Turner in response to a national report which named Middlesbrough as the worst place in the UK for a girl to grow up.

Jane was pro-vice chancellor at Teesside University and she was one of those people who, when she saw something she didn't like, she did something about it.

She saw a need for young girls to understand and learn more about the careers and opportunities available to them, by showing them real people – real women – living and working in the area local to them.

I had done some work with Jane Turner and was also lucky enough to be named Tees Businesswoman of the Year in 2021.

On that evening, I said that it was a great honour to receive the title but also a massive responsibility. By that, I meant a massive responsibility to pay it forward and give other people the chances I have had in life.

My involvement with Power of Women stemmed from there – I had a few more conversations with Jane Turner and when I

stepped down as managing partner at Jacksons Law Firm, I was quickly approached by PoW to work with them.

I consider it a huge privilege to be a part of Jane Turner's legacy, as she also passionately believed in paying it forward.

PoW is dependent on funding and support from the business community. The primary school ambassador programme aims to promote equality and aspiration to a small group of young people, who go through an extensive interview process with local business leaders, before they pass on their learning and enthusiasm to their peers.

There are currently 24 schools in the region taking part. The children learn business skills, networking and it is great at helping to grow confidence and aspiration.

We work with primary schools because we believe it is important to build aspiration really early on, before children believe the messages that tell them what they can and can't be in life.

Both boys and girls are involved – gender equality is not just for girls.



A warm welcome

I am originally from down south and went to Bristol University, where I met my husband, and we came up to Teesside for his job when our first child was six months old.

After a career break to raise our two children and also living in Chicago for three years, again for my husband's job, on my return to Teesside I decided it was time to think about my own career as a commercial property lawyer.

I was offered a short term position at Jacksons, part time, in 2004, which quickly became less and less part time. In time I became a partner and then managing partner of the firm.

Teesside and Jacksons were really good for my career. They gave me opportunities that I might not have had in other places.

From the moment we moved here, I found Teesside, and Teessiders, to be very friendly and welcoming – the people are so approachable.

It is a fantastic area to bring up a family and to live. My parents live in Devon so we visit regularly but this is our home.

You've got the sea, the moors – everything you need right on your doorstep.

A supportive community

It might be quite small, but Teesside has a really friendly business community that looks out for itself. There's also a strong and ever growing female business presence, supported by initiatives that highlight the great work women are doing.

Everybody I've met and worked with has always made me feel welcome and is very approachable.

Another bonus about Teesside – you can get to work quickly and home quickly, which if you come from the south, is not something to be underestimated!

A bright hope

The children and young people that I've met through my work with PoW give me such hope for the future.

They are bright and engaged and such fun to work with. It's so important to give them belief in their own abilities and to open their eyes to opportunities, giving them the confidence and tools they need to make their way in the world.

No young girl should ever believe she can't do something 'just' because she's a girl.

River Tees Roundup

Highlights of exciting developments taking place around the River Tees and across the Tees Valley.

Funding boost for Tees seal hospital

A new charity set up to help with the rescue and rehabilitation of seals around the Tees Estuary will open the region's first seal hospital after signing a lease on the former South Gare lifeboat station.

The deal between the Teesmouth Seal Conservation Trust (TSCT) and PD Ports will see the unused building repurposed to create the Teesmouth Seal Rescue and Coastal Conservation Centre, providing care and welfare work to sick, orphaned and injured seals.

The trust is working with partners including the British Divers Marine Life Rescue, Teesside Environmental Trust, Teesside University, Natural England and the Environment Agency to identify problems facing the Tees seal population.

David Newell, chairman of TSCT, said: "The main purpose of the building will be to provide rehabilitation for seals, often pups, that have been found in distress.

"We are enormously grateful for all the help that we have received so far and for this important collaboration with PD Ports. We are confident that public and industry support for our crucial work will continue to grow."



King's Award for Casper Shipping

Casper Shipping, global provider of port agency, customs and demurrage services with its headquarters in Middlesbrough, has achieved the King's Award for Enterprise in International Trade.

The accolade is personally approved by His Majesty and recognises businesses that have excelled in innovation, imports and exports, sustainable development and promoting opportunity through social mobility.

Founded in 1872, Casper Shipping has seen consistent growth and entered new markets thanks to its commitment to innovation in the shipping industry, setting new benchmarks for operational standards, digital tools and customer satisfaction.

Michael Shakesheff, managing director of the Casper Group, said: "The King's Award for Enterprise is a landmark moment for us all. As the business passes 152 years, it backs up our spirit of innovation that's been with us from the very start. It also reinforces our pledge as the UK's leading independent maritime services organisation.

"From customs to chartering, and logistics to marine, under the Casper Group banner we take pride in delivering comprehensive solutions across the UK, Europe and beyond. This award celebrates our team's dedication to going the extra mile for our clients worldwide."



New chairman for NEPIC

The North East of England Process Industry Cluster (NEPIC) has welcomed Dai Hayward as its new chair to lead the future of the cluster.

Mr Hayward was a founding board member during its inception in 2004, before re-joining in 2018.

As co-founder of Micropore Technologies, the world's leading authority on microparticle and nanomedicine engineering using scalable membrane-based technology, Mr Hayward is keen to progress the contribution of NEPIC to the North East economy.

He said: "I am keen to progress the opportunities available in our industry, including how we can continue to promote STEM across the region."



Recruitment and skills drive for Seah Wind

A recruitment drive to fill hundreds of skilled positions at the SeAH Wind monopile manufacturing facility on Teesworks has seen a huge response.

The green energy firm held a number of recruitment open days for established welders, platers and operatives and has also joined forces with Nordic Products and Services and Middlesbrough College to create two programmes under its SeAH Wind Academy programme.

This will see 30 people put through a 24-week training and development programme with the help of the Tees

Valley Combined Authority's Adult Education Budget. Both programmes will equip successful individuals with the required knowledge and skills to gain employment as welders with SeAH Wind.

Matthew Hart, HR manager at SeAH Wind, added: "2024 is going to be a really exciting year for SeAH Wind and the Teesside Region. We aim to commence production by Q1 of 2025 and our on-going recruitment drive will see us hiring staff during our installation and commissioning phase to allow us time to train people so that we can be operationally ready for production commencing in 2025."





LOCAL HERO

Bill Scott

From humble beginnings as an apprentice plater, Bill Scott worked hard to become one of Middlesbrough's leading businessmen, the poster boy for making the best of your opportunities, with a global client list and stellar reputation for quality. Here, he tells Bridge's Vicki Henderson about his on-going commitment to the next generation, the importance of mental health and why choosing a good bed is the key to happiness.

Completing the circle — why inspiration matters

“Inspiring the next generation is my favourite thing. Careers – understanding what a career is, not just a job – is really important.”

Inspiration is Bill Scott’s middle name. Well, it should be.

Successful businessman, charity supporter and passionate advocate for Middlesbrough, he’s a man who proudly uses his own achievements as a foundation to do good in the local area.

As co-founder and chief executive of Wilton Engineering Services – celebrating 30 years this year – his company has become a key player in the global offshore, subsea, marine and defence industries, with a reputation for quality, accuracy and innovation.

A firm believer in the power and importance of careers education and apprenticeships, his own story as a young apprentice-turned-company founder has served as his motivation to inspire and support each subsequent generation, and to keep going.

“I’m very passionate about Middlesbrough,” he says. “I was voted the most inspirational person in Middlesbrough a few years ago and have been in the top three every year since – I’m proud of that because inspiration is high on my agenda, particularly for youngsters, to be the best that they can be.

“I’m always keen to welcome schools down to Port Clarence for a tour of our site and always make sure there’s a mix of boys and girls. Girls

look at things differently and that’s really useful in engineering.”

Born in Portman Street in the heart of Middlesbrough, Dr Bill Scott, MBE – to give him his full title – grew up surrounded by the town’s industry and heritage.

Having left school at 16, Bill was offered an apprenticeship as a plater at a local engineering firm TF Group.

He says: “At school I preferred sport to anything else. I had academic ability, but I remember clearly that there were some people who were definitely going to college and university, but that I was wasn’t going to be one of them. I wanted to work at 16.

“The first day I waited an hour to see the manager. He said to me, I suppose you think you’re here to be nurtured and trained? No, you’re here to make me money.

“I was literally taken on the shop floor, shown a piece of machinery and was operating it within the hour.

“By the time I was 18, the managing director of the company had told me he wanted me to be the next managing director and started taking me out on jobs.





“There’s so much positivity in Teesside right now”

“I’ve always been a grafter- I worked 10 hours on my first day and the full weekend on my first week. That set the tone for me.”

Competitive to the core, Bill quickly started to make a name for himself in the sector and was headhunted at 22 by a company that had won a contract to build offshore accommodation blocks, before moving on to bigger projects and bigger firms.

But his ambition to work for himself had been kick-started during his time as an apprentice so, in 1994, he co-founded Wilton Engineering Services with partner Steve Glenn.

Wilton sits proudly on the banks of the Tees, in the shadow of the iconic Transporter Bridge, its 54-acre operation covering what was once the Swan Hunter shipyard.

Going from strength to strength, the company now also incorporates Universal Coatings and boasts an impressive rollcall of customers.

His commitment to apprenticeships remains, providing others with the opportunities that meant so much to him, with a purpose-built training centre at the heart of the facility and a 30-year relationship with Hartlepool College.

“Our first ever apprentice, Graham Brynn, still works with us as construction manager, he’s been responsible for some of the biggest projects we’ve ever done,” says Bill.

“For me, it’s been an absolute pleasure taking on apprentices every year for almost 30 years.

“We’ve had somewhere in the region of 120 apprentices – including estimators, quantity surveyors, planners, design engineers, platers. Right now, our youngest apprentice is 16, the oldest is 32.

“It’s so important to bring apprentices into a company, mixed with people who are qualified and experienced, to make sure the business can keep moving forward, keep growing.

“Some people might not find their place at school; they might just float through unnoticed – but in an apprenticeship those people can excel.”

Outside of Wilton, Bill has an array of interests, serving as Deputy Lieutenant for North Yorkshire, as a member of the Teesside Freeport board and as a personal patron and trustee of Teesside Charity.

A key area of focus is mental health, working with Teesside Charity and the suicide prevention charity The Headlight Project to create the Walk into the Light.

The charity walk begins at midnight with participants guided only by headtorches, until the sun rises.

“The moment when the sun comes up is quite a moment,” he says. “It’s a chance for people to stop and take stock. There’s been such a huge rise in people struggling with their mental health since the pandemic.

“It’s about saying, the sun may be behind a cloud today, but tomorrow it will rise again.”

The initiative is gaining pace with students from the five vocational colleges in Tees Valley, supported by Middlesbrough College’s Zoe Lewis, Principal/Chief Executive, making plans for their own Walk into the Light, with the aim of starting a conversation with young people about their mental health.

He remains a passionate supporter of Teesside, banging the drum for its people, its businesses and its potential.

“There’s so much positivity in Teesside right now,” he says. “The freeport, the jobs being created by Seah Wind at Teesworks. There’s carbon capture storage, blue and green hydrogen, offshore wind.

“It’s going to be a situation where young people can really develop their career and choose what they want to make of themselves.

“There’s lots of opportunity around and on the river – the river is the magnet for investors.

He continues to work with local schools, advocating for careers education and helping youngsters understand the highly skilled roles available on their doorstep.

“A visit to a place like Wilton is worth its weight in gold for both the kids and the teachers,” he says.

“They can come and see what engineering is all about and hopefully it will inspire them – this place is real and it’s here on their doorstep.

“We desperately need more companies to consider taking on young people and training them up. Young people are the lifeblood of the Tees Valley and it’s vitally important that we invest in them.

“I always say, find something that you enjoy doing and going to work will be a lifelong passion.

“Get a bloody good job and a bloody good bed, because you spend eight hours at one and eight hours in the other – the rest of the time you can do what you want!”

BRIDGE

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