

**ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIR FOR 2022**

The year 2022 is almost at an end and it has once again proved to be yet another challenging year with businesses having to deal with the UK’s departure from the European Union coupled with the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and closely followed by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The year has also been a year of political upheaval with three prime ministers and four chancellors and numerous cabinet reshuffles which added to the uncertainty caused by world events. The year 2022 also saw the death of probably the one constant in all our lives, her majesty Queen Elizabeth II - it certainly was an “annus horribilis”

The effect of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February has been felt across the globe with a significant drop in economic activity, huge increases in energy and fuel prices, resulting in an unprecedented increase in the cost of living, increased interest rates and double-digit inflation which affect our businesses as well as our everyday lives. The UK Treasury is forecasting that things will get worse before they get better as the UK and world economies fall into recession.

Whilst no business will escape the effects of these national and global events, UK business will, as it has always done, show great resilience in managing the current crisis and weathering the storm.

The northeast, and in particular Teesside, is well versed in weathering storms and dealing with economic downturns and in some ways has become hardened in dealing with such adversity - rise the “Infant Hercules”. Because of this, I strongly believe that the northeast economy has the resilience to weather the looming economic downturn and could over the next few years actually see its economy grow therefore bucking the national trend.

The reason for my optimism is because of the positivity there is around the northeast and the Tees Valley - because despite the uncertainty out there, investors still find the northeast an attractive place to invest. The confidence shown by investors to invest in our area leads me to focus on the more positive aspects of investor confidence, and it is this confidence to invest in our area that I prefer to concentrate more on and the more positive aspects around the river. Positives such as SeAH Wind’s decision to build one of largest monopile factories in the world, the building of a new 1 km quay at South Bank, Anglo American’s Woodsmith Polyhalite Mine, Able Seaton leading the way in the offshore wind revolution and PD Ports continuing investment in Teesport and other river projects. All of these projects and many more that I haven’t mentioned will put Teesside at the heart of the “Green Revolution” providing secure employment for generations to come and providing our younger generation with the opportunities they deserve. Added to this, the Teesside Freeport is now up and running and has seen a sharp increase in enquiries as the benefits of using such a facility become more apparent.

The THPUA membership is spread across a wide variety of businesses in and around the Tees Valley. Member companies employ thousands of people who collectively move in excess of 30 million tonnes of products through the River Tees and Hartlepool.

After switching to Zoom meetings back in May 2020 due to Covid, it was agreed by a majority of members to introduce face to face quarterly meetings to improve networking. The offer of an online Zoom option for members will remain for all meetings where online access is available, this is important as many of us continue to work remotely.

Our North and South Tees Missions and Stella Maris continue to provide seafarers with valuable support and in recognition of the hard work and commitment shown by those delivering this unstinting service we, as an organisation, will continue to support them in any way we can. I am pleased that all of the local seafarers’ welfare organisations now have honorary status within the THPUA which provides them with an opportunity to attend meetings, enabling them to update us all on the great work they carry out.

I am pleased to advise that the quarterly meetings with the THPUA, ICS and the Statutory Harbour Authority have been resumed, which has seen a marked improvement in relations during the course of 2022.

With regard to sports and social events, the cricket and golf were both back again this year and both were a great success. Our cricket team had a resounding victory over PD Ports. Thanks must go to the organisers and sponsors without whom such events would not take place.

We held our 24th annual dinner last month, the first to be held at the Kirkleatham Walled Garden and the first combined dinner with the Northeast Branch of the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers. It was amazing to see 264 members and guests at the event and thanks must go out to the dinner committee Richard, Stephen and Brian for all their hard work in organising such a successful event which raised a total of £7,608 for charity.

Your secretary Charlie Nettle and treasurer Christian Melvin have once again done an outstanding job this year and I am delighted that they will remain in post until at least the end of 2023. I would also like to thank my Vice Chair Matt Ord who has been a breath of fresh air to our association with both his knowledge and enthusiasm.

During my first year of office, I was keen to see membership grow and for us all to work collaboratively in confronting the challenges faced over the past year. The introduction of member presentations at our monthly meetings has enabled us to better understand what the wider membership does and their contribution to the wider river community. Membership has grown again this year and now stands at 63 member companies.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to wish you, your families and friends a happy and joyous Christmas and a prosperous new year.

Your Chair



Garry O’Malley