



# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE THAMES SKILLS ACADEMY

DELIVERING HIGH QUALITY, COST-EFFECTIVE TRAINING  
TO THE MARITIME SECTOR

## **The Role of the Thames Skills Academy**

The Thames Skills Academy (TSA) is a Group Training Association (GTA) - a learning and skills partnership where employers subscribe to sector-specific, on and off-the-job training in order to provide efficient, expertly-delivered skills and outcomes that meet employers' specific needs across a particular section of industry.

Typically, a GTA is a company limited by guarantee whose constitution requires that any surpluses be reinvested. There is usually a group of subscribing employer member companies from which suitable representatives are drawn to represent the membership at Board level. The resulting sense of employer 'ownership' reflects their direct involvement in a vocational training and skills service offered to a wide range of companies and to the communities in which they sit.

The TSA was established in 2016 by a group of four Founding Members - The Port of London Authority (PLA), Tideway, Transport for London and the Company of Watermen and Lightermen. These organisations have a direct and long-term interest in maintaining safety on the tidal Thames; and indeed, raising the standard of skills and the competency of individuals working commercially in the Inland Waterways and port operations sectors within the Port of London and wider Thames Estuary

## **The Services we Provide**

The intention is that the TSA will initially broker and facilitate a comprehensive range of training options to meet the marine, non-marine skills and competency requirements of marine and marine-related operators on the Thames. It is envisaged that the TSA will start to deliver training directly in the near future, with the longer-term aim of being an approved training provider and delivering Government-funded programmes.

The TSA is actively supporting its members with their recruitment issues, through engaging with young people and promoting careers in the maritime sector; in particular the Inland Waterways. As a pro-active member of the Maritime Skills Alliance, we're also assisting and supporting employers through the development, maintenance and revision of marine competency requirements, qualifications and apprenticeship standards.

## **Our Customers**

We provide services primarily to and on behalf of our Employer Members. Through close liaison and consultation, we identify what each employer's individual training needs really are and address these through our offering of high quality, cost effective training.

The TSA acts as a broker in this respect, and takes a service fee to supplement non-legislative course provision and more importantly, the development of the much needed programmes required to address the skill shortages within the Inland Waterway, specifically the River Thames.

As you would expect, many of the training requirements marine employers need are not wholly sector (marine) specific (e.g. health & safety, generic 'soft skills' and customer service training). The TSA also offers these wider training services and advice to its members; and to any businesses outside its membership, but at an appropriate commercial rate.

## **Funding**

The TSA obtains revenue from several sources. During these first five years, our Founding Members will contribute a significant amount of financial and 'in kind' support to start the organisation off on a sound financial footing. Most this funding will come from Tideway, which provided an initial donation and thereafter further funding to cover the start-up costs and the majority of the ongoing manning costs through to 2020.

From 2017 onwards, the Tideway funding will be supplemented by an annual training levy included in the PLA Annual Port Dues (APD), to be paid by all vessel operators who pay APD. This will ensure that all Thames operators contribute to the improvement of the training regime and skills on the River, and have a share in the success of the TSA.

A small and proportionate membership fee is paid by businesses who wish to become Employer Members of the TSA and be actively involved in the design and delivery of relevant training. They will also, as a condition of membership, sign up to the TSA Charter and Code of Ethics that sets out the minimum expectations of participating companies, including the need to raise standards and improve safety practices on the River Thames.

Affiliate membership is open to organisations or individuals who are not required to pay APD but have an associated interest in marine/ports skills and training, and are willing to contribute financial and/or other support and to abide by the Charter. In addition, the TSA is actively seeking sponsorship from relevant organisations and institutions that have direct links to or an interest in supporting maritime skills and training on the Inland Waterways or in the wider maritime sector. This support could provide direct financial support to fund, for example, apprenticeships, bursaries and/or scholarships or direct financial support to training provision.

We also work closely with a wide range of organisations whose own aims, objectives and activities are similar to or align with and indirectly support our own. These 'supporting members' include organisations such as the London Nautical School, the Worshipful Company of Shipwrights and the Marine Society & Sea Cadets.

In addition, and especially with a view to the longer-term, the TSA is starting to develop a sound revenue stream from brokerage, consultancy, advice and support for a wide range of training and associated services for its members and third-party customers.