



Annual Report 2025-26

**SUPPORTING THE SEAFARING COMMUNITY
FOR 187 YEARS**

The Shipwrecked Mariners' Society *in numbers*



The Shipwrecked Mariners' Society was founded in

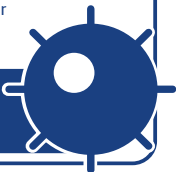
1839

as a result of the tragic loss of a fleet of fishing boats out of Clovelly on the north Devon coast the year before and has been providing financial support to mariners ever since

In 2025/26, the Society received
public donations
of £214,000

including over **£5,500** from 28 of our ex-WW1 large mines, converted to Charity collection boxes

The Society has around **50 collection mines** in operation on the coastlines for supporters and passers-by to donate to the Charity



The Society has had **SIX** patrons over its history



the first being Queen Victoria and the current being HRH The Princess Royal

The Society has had
18 presidents over the years

In 1839, its first president was Admiral The Rt. Hon. Sir George Cockburn GCB, who was a key figure in the 1814 occupation of Washington during the war with the United States.



Legacy donations in 2025/26 totalled
£586,000



From 1851 the Society operated **8 lifeboats**, but it was subsequently agreed that one organisation should concentrate on saving lives at sea, while the other would focus on 'saving' lives ashore. In 1854, the Society transferred its lifeboats to the...



Lifeboats

In 2020, the Society saw the **highest ever amount of submissions** to the photography competition, with

The Society runs an annual photography competition and **thirteen** competitions have been launched so far, with over

10,000
entries received to date



2,042

entries

Annually, the Society secures around
500 pieces

of coverage across national, regional, radio, trade, online and offline coverage



The Society operates through a national volunteer network of over

100
Honorary Agents





The Society's Purpose

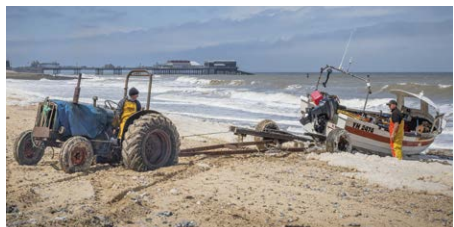
The Shipwrecked Mariners' Society provides financial help to merchant seafarers, fishermen and their dependants who are in need. We pay an immediate grant to the widow of a serving seafarer who dies, whether death occurs at sea or ashore. Regular grants are paid to former seafarers, their widows and partners, whose circumstances justify on-going support. Special grants are made to meet particular needs in crisis situations. We also make funeral grants. Practical assistance is given to seafarers of any nationality shipwrecked on the coast of the British Isles.



Contents

Page Number

• Where We Are	4
• Chair's Report	5-6
• Chief Executive's Report	6-7
• The Support We Provide	8
• The Impact that it has	9
• Regional Grant Expenditure	10
• Financial Review	11-12
Summary Income & Expenditure Account, Summary Balance Sheet	13
• Awards for Skill and Gallantry	
The Edward And Maisie Lewis Award	14
The Lady Swaythling Trophy	15
Crew Commendations	16-20





Our Patron HRH The Princess Royal



Founded in 1839 the Society was granted Royal Patronage with Queen Victoria becoming our first Patron; this has continued to the present day and we are delighted HRH The Princess Royal is our current Patron.

Shipwrecked Fishermen and Mariners' Royal Benevolent Society

(Shipwrecked Mariners' Society) Instituted 1839, incorporated 1850 and registered under the Charities Act 1960. Registered charity no.212034

Patron

Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal

President

Admiral Sir George Zambellas GCB DSC ADC DL FRAeS

Vice-Presidents

The Rt Hon Lord Brabazon of Tara PC DL, Mr Anthony West DL, Mr William D Everard CBE

Ex-officio Vice-Presidents

H E The Lt-Governor of the Isle of Man	The Lord Provost of Dundee
H E The Lt-Governor of Jersey	The Lord Mayor of Kingston upon Hull
H E The Lt-Governor of Guernsey	The Lord Mayor of Newcastle upon Tyne
The Right Hon The Lord Mayor of London	The Lord Mayor of Plymouth
The Right Hon The Lord Provost of Edinburgh	The Lord Mayor of Portsmouth
The Right Hon The Lord Provost of Glasgow	The Prime Warden of the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers
The Right Hon The Lord Mayor of Belfast	The Master of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners
The Right Hon The Lord Mayor of Cardiff	
The Lord Provost of Aberdeen	
The Lord Mayor of Birmingham	The Deputy Master of Trinity House

Council (Trustees)

Chair: Commander Andrea Crook RN*

Deputy Chair: Commodore Mike Mansergh CBE DL RN*

Treasurer: Mr William Plant FCA*

**Executive Committee Members*

Capt Roger Barker MNM FNI*	Mr David Foster MBE	Mr Michael Seymour
Mr Richard Brooks FICS FNI	Mrs Alison Harris*	Mr Tim West
Miss Ruth Charles	Mr Rob Jardine-Brown	Cdre Toby Williamson MVO RN*
Mr Michael Colyer FCA FPFS FCIS VR	Capt Nigel Palmer OBE MNM	
Mr Tony Delahunty OBE	Mrs Elizabeth Price	

Bankers: CAF Bank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling ME19 4JQ

- The Royal Bank of Scotland plc, 36 St Andrews Square. Edinburgh EH2 2YB

Solicitors: George Ide LLP, 52 North Street, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1NQ

- Blake Morgan, New Kings Court, Tollgate, Chandler's Ford, Eastleigh SO53 3LG

Investment Advisers: Sarasin & Partners LLP, Juxon House 100 St. Paul's Churchyard, London EC4M 8BU

Auditors: Lewis Brownlee (Chichester) Ltd, Chartered Accountants, Appledram Barns, Birdham Road, Chichester, West Sussex PO20 7EQ

Chief Executive: Captain Justin Osmond Royal Navy





Where We Are



The Shipwrecked Mariners' Society helps people from all over the British Isles from its main headquarters in Chichester, West Sussex, and through a national volunteer network of over 100 Honorary Agents. It should be noted that many of the Honorary Agents shown on this map provide caseworking support across wide geographical areas of the UK (rather than simply at the location shown). We also receive significant support from SSAFA caseworkers, who provide caseworking services across all regions of the UK. The Society also has an Honorary Agent and a few beneficiaries in Malta.

Chair's Report

On behalf of my fellow Trustees, and in this our 187th year, I am delighted to provide an update on the Society's work after what has been another demanding year. In line with our primary purpose, we have continued to provide significant levels of support to uphold the welfare of seafarers and their families, although I am pleased to note that the government's decision to reinstate the Winter Fuel Payment did result in a significant reduction in the need for specific grants to those struggling to heat their homes. More generally, numbers of applications for our regular grant have fallen back towards longer term norms, having been approximately 30% higher during the COVID and peak Cost-of-Living crisis years. These numbers have a pronounced impact on our longer-term finances, and the return to more normal levels of demand will, hopefully, enable us to continue increasing the value of our regular grant for those who struggle to make ends meet.



In terms of headline figures, over the course of the last year, we have:

- **Made regular grant payments to 1,214 people at a cost of over £1.1 million.**
- **Handled 532 new applications for assistance.**
- **Taken on 94 new regular beneficiaries.**
- **Made one-off or crisis grants to 470 people, at a cost of £274,000.**

Our total expenditure was nearly £2.3 million, of which 88% was spent on charitable activities. With incoming resources of approx. £1.6M, we had an operating deficit before investment gains of £738,000, which is in line with our longer-term financial strategy. In essence our strategy reflects the fact that we continue to expect future numbers of seafarers (and seafaring families) to reduce by 50% between 2020 and 2050. As such, we plan to halve the real term value of our investments over the same period, thereby matching our spending power with the size of the beneficiary population and ensuring our ability to support anyone who is in need and meets our criteria, both now and in the future.

Donations from our amazing supporters, including into our large collecting mines and in response to our appeals, totalled £214,000 which highlights the remarkable generosity of our supporters over this difficult period. It is also right that we acknowledge our reliance on our major grant funders, Trinity House and The Seafarers Charity. We are most grateful for their continuing support without which we would be unable to maintain the level of assistance we provide to our beneficiaries.

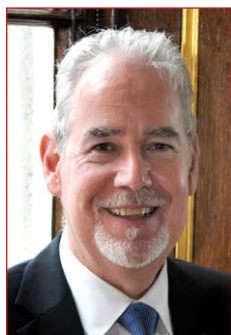
In conducting our work, it is also important to acknowledge that we cannot work alone; as usual we have drawn on our extremely close relationships with our very close partners, including The Fishermen's Mission, Seafarers' Hospital Society, Sailor's Children's Society, Sailors Advice and Information Line, Tyne Mariners Benevolent Institution, Hull Trinity House and SSAFA, to ensure a coherent response to the ongoing crisis.

Chair's Report - Continued

Looking forward, our primary focus over the coming year remains our enduring task of helping fishermen and mariners in financial need. Within this we are looking carefully at ways to better support working mariners, particularly those on benefits, as we recognise the enormous financial pressure they often face in making ends meet.

In conducting this work, I would particularly like to thank my fellow Trustees for their commitment to the work of the Charity, whilst formally welcoming 2 new Trustees to Council, firstly Richard Brooks who brings extensive maritime experience from a range of roles, including as a Director of Williams Shipping, as a key figure in the Workboat Association, and as an active reservist with the Royal Navy. We are also pleased to welcome David Foster, who has extensive experience as a harbour master, including for the Port of London Authority, but with wider experience of multiple ports throughout the UK. We very much look forward to utilising their expertise to raise awareness of our work and contribute to our future plans to ensure continued support for mariners in need. I would also like to thank the Central Office staff in Chichester without whose skills, dedication and enthusiasm the Charity would not run so brilliantly.

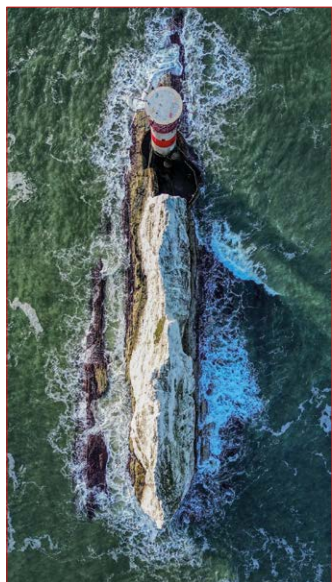
Andrea Crook



Chief Executive's Report

As the Chairman has already mentioned, it's been another busy year for the Society, as part of which I am pleased to report that we have continued to provide desperately needed support to those struggling to make ends meet, be they working mariners struggling as a result of misfortune, health or employment related issues, or retired mariners who feel the daily pressure of trying to get by on a very limited pension. In the latter case I am particularly pleased to report that we have increased the value of our regular grant for the 4th time in 5 years, representing a 27% increase since March 2022. Whilst £988 a year is a modest sum, it makes a major difference to those struggling to get by on a basic state pension or pension credit.

Turning to more internal matters, it has been another very successful year for our trading activity, which remains a key pillar of our fundraising efforts. I am pleased to report that the number of people buying our cards has remained stable, despite slightly lower sales volumes, which reflects a general reduction in the number of Christmas cards being sent, in particular driven by the ever-increasing cost of postage. However, those buying our cards continue to demonstrate outstanding generosity with over £132,000 received during the year. This income, alongside an average of £300,000 each year received in legacies from card buyers, clearly demonstrates the value of our trading activity in generating funds for the Society's work. In addition, we received further public donations of nearly £86,000, which includes donations into our large collecting mines. Special thanks are due to those Honorary Agents who look after them so well despite the ravages of time, sea, air and, occasionally, vandalism.



Our annual photographic competition, now in its fourteenth year, is designed to celebrate our enduring relationship with the sea. The competition attracted over 600 entries and the winning image, "The Needles lighthouse" was taken by Jimmy Colley. My thanks to our expert panel of judges: Sophie Batterbury, the former Head of Pictures at the "i" newspaper, Ray Wells, the former Picture Editor of the Sunday Times and our new judge, Karin Andreasson, News Picture Editor at The Guardian.

Our Honorary Agents, of whom there are 105, are central to what we do, whether it is casework, fundraising or simply acting as a representative and spreading the word about us. Our heartfelt thanks go to all those who serve in this way, but I would also like to add my personal thanks to the vast array of organisations who we work with on a day-to-day basis, including those providing caseworking support; Fishermen's Mission and SSAFA, those providing debt and benefits advice; Sailor's Advice and Information Line and other local Citizen's Advice Bureaus, and those providing grants; Seafarers Hospital Society, Sailor's Children's Society, Royal Merchant Navy Education Foundation, Hull Trinity House and Tyne Mariners Benevolent Institution. We could not do what we do without such an amazing network of likeminded organisations. However, we also know from recent studies conducted by the Maritime Charities Group, that awareness of the support available to mariners remains a key challenge for us all. As such, we will continue to focus on this issue, including via close co-operation with the Merchant Navy Welfare Board and their Seafarer Support website. This is designed as an umbrella resource for the entire maritime welfare sector and seeks to signpost people to any, or all, of the support available to them. In essence I would much prefer that an individual in need was aware of the Seafarer Support website (or phoneline), rather than any of our individual organisations, as this will inevitably mean they can find their way to the support they need, whilst also being able to share a common point of contact with friends and colleagues in the maritime sector. I believe such an approach can tangibly reduce the potential hurdles for those in need of support, whilst ensuring we focus on the issue of awareness through the eyes of those in need, rather than as a challenge peculiar to individual organisations. So thank you for all that you currently do, and I look forward to continuing our collective work for many years to come.

Looking further ahead, there is much to be done in the coming year, including internal work to ensure that our core support evolves to best meet the needs of the communities we seek to serve. I know the Society Trustees remain firmly committed to maximising the level of support we provide and we will remain firmly focussed on this task. And finally, none of this would be possible without the efforts of my fellow staff members in Head Office, Alison, Sam, Sami, Stephen and Sylvia, and I would like to thank them for their unwavering support to seafarers and their families.

Justin Osmond



The Support We Provide

The Society fulfils its charitable objectives primarily through a variety of grants: Regular; Special or one-off; Immediate; Death Benefit (to former Life members), Funeral and Shipwreck.

The **REGULAR GRANT** is important for the following reasons:

- It is a significant proportionate increase in a beneficiary's income, aids budgeting and helps recipients avoid arrears or going into debt.
- It establishes an on-going relationship between ourselves through the local Honorary Agent with the beneficiary which is more than just financial and which can be particularly important to those who live alone.
- Annual events in key ports enable our Honorary Agents to see beneficiaries face-to-face at least once a year and to discuss financial and other matters.
- The associated three-yearly reviews provide an opportunity to find out if additional assistance is required.
- It is the recipient's decision as to how the grant is spent.

The **SPECIAL or ONE-OFF/CRISIS GRANT** enables the recipient among other things to:

- Purchase and replace defective white goods and other items such as beds and carpets.
- Remain mobile within the home, for example, through the installation of a stairlift.
- Make adaptations to deal with infirmities and disabilities, for example, to replace a bath with a walk-in shower, or provide a riser / recliner chair, thereby enabling them to remain independent at home.
- Get out of their homes without assistance or with reduced assistance through improved mobility, for example, by providing an electrically powered vehicle.
- Cover the cost of private occupational therapist (OT) reports connected with the above.
- Pay for essential household repairs, for example, to tackle damp problems, replace doors and windows thereby helping them to remain in their own homes.
- Pay for heating, pay off priority debts (eg. utility bills and Council Tax).
- Buy clothes and shoes. • Take a rare holiday.





The Impact that it has

Below are some examples of the support we have provided over the course of the year, as well as some of the thank-you messages we have received following grant awards.



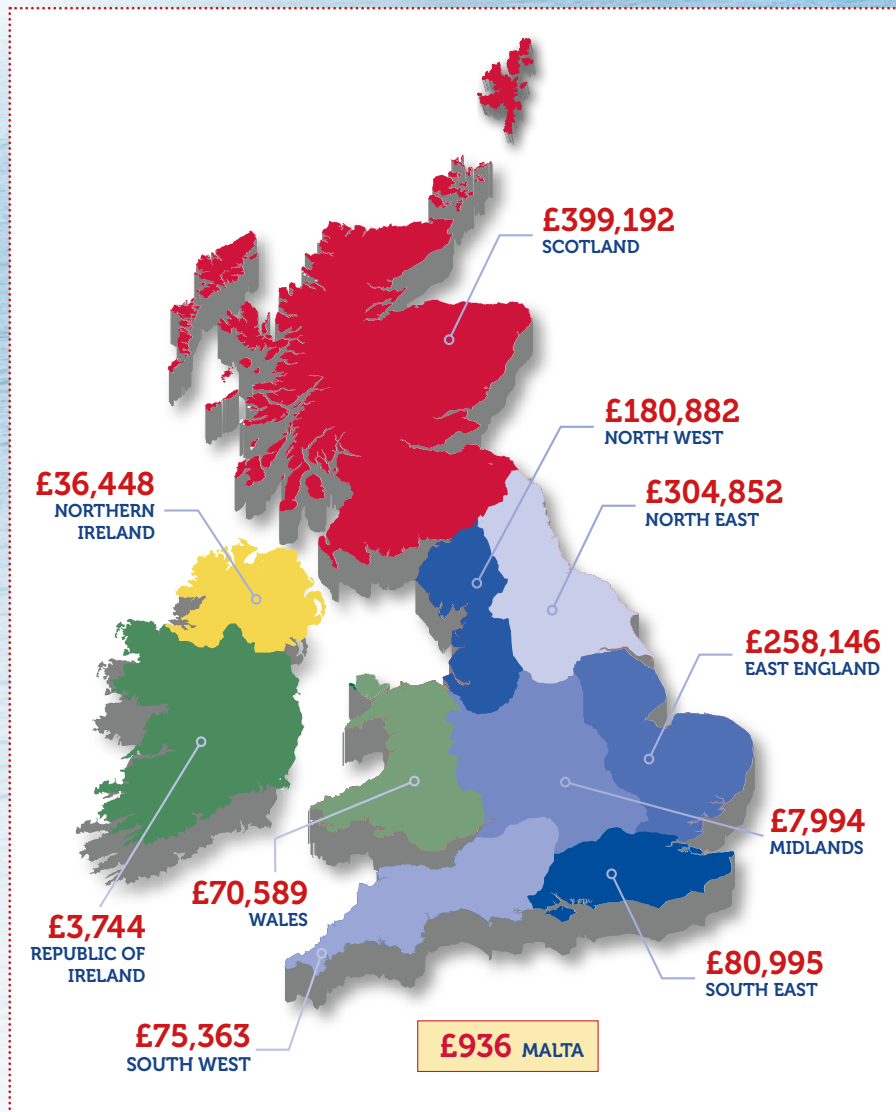
- Mr S, in his early 50's with nearly 40 years sea service, had to stop work following an aggressive cancer diagnosis. Whilst receiving a lengthy programme of treatment, he and his family fell into significant debt, but **we were able to work with other charities to stabilise his situation and clear his debts. This reduced the significant mental pressure he was under meaning he could focus on his treatment and hopefully returning to sea in the months ahead.**
- Mr R, in his late 30s with nearly 20 years sea service, had recently been awarded custody of his 2 children. The adjustment to life as single parent was, understandably, proving challenging but **the Society was able to work with SAIL to ensure he was receiving all relevant benefits, whilst also providing a one-off grant to stabilise his situation.** He was also referred to 2 partner charities who provide regular support for children.
- "Thank you so much for your recent grant. **I have been very unwell for a few months now and fallen behind in water bills and catalogue, so the grant will take some off the stress away.** Whilst I try not to worry it's difficult, but I just wanted to thank you for your continued support. I really appreciate it".
- Mrs C, a widow in her late 80's, was **struggling to retain her family home which had fallen into disrepair.** It eventually became clear that renovations would be prohibitively expensive, leaving her no option but to move. We were able to work with the local HA **to find a suitable property and provided a setting up home grant to ensure she had everything she needed in her new home.**
- Mr L in his late 70s with over 30 years sea service, was **forced to leave the Merchant Navy following a serious accident which left him with lifelong health issues.** Now retired and struggling to make ends meet, he was **virtually housebound** and in need of financial support. **We were able to provide an EPV to help him get out of the house, whilst also taking him on as a regular beneficiary which significantly improved his financial resilience.**
- "Oh my, how on earth do I find the words to thank you once again for your enduring kindness and support. **When the letter was opened and given to me I could hardly believe what I was reading. The increase of the November payment was so unexpected and so very, very kind.** As it always seems to, the grant has come at a time when it's needed the most. I never have and never will take the grant for granted, but it's certainly taken a lot off our minds so thank you, thank you, thank you".
- I am writing to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the letter I received yesterday, informing me of the decision to award me a grant, **I can't tell you how much this means to me. I have been really struggling since I am no longer able to return to sea and the grant will be a massive help.** I would like to thank you all.
- "Just wanted to thank you so much for the grant I received from you last week. **Not only has it enabled me to can buy some desperately needed items, but more generally the fact that I've felt so supported has given me a real bounce in my step.** Thank you so much for all that you do".





Regional Grant Expenditure

£1,419,141 TOTAL GRANT EXPENDITURE FY 25/26



Financial Review

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting & Reporting by Charities (SORP) 2019 (FRS 102).



Principal Sources Of Income

Overview: Total Income (including investment income) for 2025/26 was £1.55 million with expenditure of £2.29 million, giving an operating deficit of £738,000. This compares to a deficit of £602,000 in the previous year. In the long term the Trustees budget for an operating deficit but plan for this to be partially offset by income from investments and gains on investment assets. Overall net income (after investment gains) was £690,000 compared to a net expenditure of £19,000 last year. It should however be noted that Trustees expect this figure to be subject to large variations due to the nature of its investment holdings.

Investments: Investments generate returns that are key to supporting our beneficiaries. This year the value of our investments has increased by approx. £304,000 to £28.9 million. A total return (TR) policy is operated which requires the investment managers to fund our budgeted yearly operating deficit from a combination of income and capital: we drew down a total of 4.1% of our investments (income and capital) during 2025/26. This aligns with our actuarial model and represents a sustainable level of expenditure to meet beneficiary needs both now and in the future. Investment performance is reviewed bi-annually by the Investment Committee, which provides additional oversight alongside the separate bi-annual reviews undertaken by Council. The Society's Investment strategy remains unchanged and involves maintaining a moderate level of short-term investments (cash or near-cash) alongside a long-term investment fund with a greater focus on equities. The cash portfolio exists to enable the Society to continue its operations following a major stock market crash, noting the nature of equity-based investing means these will inevitably occur and should be considered routine. The value of the cash holding is set at a level to ensure uninterrupted operations following a (worst case) 30% fall in stock market value. Such funds would enable the Society to maintain expenditure levels for (up to) 5 years without having to sell depreciated holdings, and whilst the market recovers to its original level. Trustees believe this will provide a better long-term return on its investments, whilst also enabling the Society to continue its operation during inevitable periods of stock market turbulence.

Legacies: Receipts this year were £586,000, which is almost identical to the amount received last year (£587,000) and well above the long-term average of £30,000. Of note, Trustees fully expect significant year-on year variation in such receipts and use the long-term average to aid financial planning. However, irrespective of the sum received we remain enormously grateful to those who chose to support us in this way; such gifts are put to good use helping the next generation of seafarers and their dependants. Legacies are a vital but inherently unpredictable source of income.

Donations / Fundraising: Public donations from appeals (see Trading below), direct to Central Office and through our Agencies, which includes our collecting mines, amounted to £214,000, which remains in line with our long-term expectations. We are most appreciative of the generosity of those who support us in this way.



Grants: We have a very close relationship with two key charities, namely Trinity House London and The Seafarers' Charity, both of whom have a long history of generous support for our work. The annual grants we receive from them are essential to our work and we maintain a close dialogue with both organisations.

Trading: This has been another good year for our trading activity, which remains focussed on selling Christmas, Birthday, and correspondence cards (via mail order) through our supplier, Impress Publishing. Additional sales come via our seasonal shop at Central Office. Whilst turnover at £59,000 was slightly down on last year, reflecting the general reduction in Christmas card sales across the UK, the number of supporters buying our cards remained at the same level (albeit the number of cards they bought was reduced). Of note our trading model does not seek to make significant profit from card sales, as we are incredibly fortunate that those who buy our cards tend to support us (throughout the year) with generous donations. This is reflected in the £132,000 worth of appeal related donations which we received over the last year. This once again demonstrates the value of our trading activity in generating funds for the Society's work, whilst also providing numerous opportunities to advertise our work to the wider public. Our card buyers are our greatest group of supporters and have remained as loyal and generous as ever. Some of these supporters have been buying our cards for over 50 years, which is an amazing testimony to their steadfast support of our work.

Expenditure

Costs of Raising Funds: These relate largely to the cost of the annual Appeal and wider publicity throughout the year which is aimed at both potential donors and those who might refer potential beneficiaries to us for assistance.

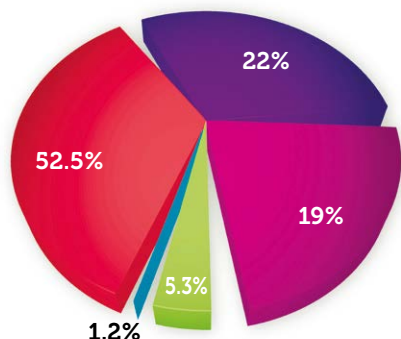
Charitable Activities: Charitable Activities amounted to £2.0 million, which was 88% of all expenditure. Of this figure £1.42 million (62% of all expenditure) was on grants to individuals. The Society works extremely hard to minimise fundraising and support costs, thereby maximising the proportion of funds spent on charitable activities and delivering the maximum level of financial support directly to our beneficiaries.

Reserves Policy And Designated Funds

The Trustees aim to maintain sufficient funds as investments in order to generate the income required to carry out the purpose of the Charity both now and in the longer term. Without this the Society would be unable to respond to need to the extent that it does or would have to increase its fundraising activities and associated expenditure, and in so doing be largely competing with other charities in the maritime sector. The Society conducts an annual review of its long-term finances using an actuarial model based on a range of future scenarios. In essence this enables Trustees to determine whether we will have sufficient financial resources to meet projected future demands, based on estimated returns from our investments alongside our annual fundraising activity. The results of this year's review confirmed that the Society's finances remain robust.



Summary Income & Expenditure Account



Incoming Resources

	2026	2025
Donations	214,056	208,366
Legacies	585,754	587,273
Grants	242,029	237,568
Other	13,378	810
Trading Income	59,360	61,810
Total	1,114,577	1,095,827

Resources Expended

	2026	2025
Raising Funds	275,512	271,370

Charitable Activity

Grants	1,419,141	1,409,691
Other Costs	597,291	549,834

Total Resources Expended

2,291,944	2,230,895
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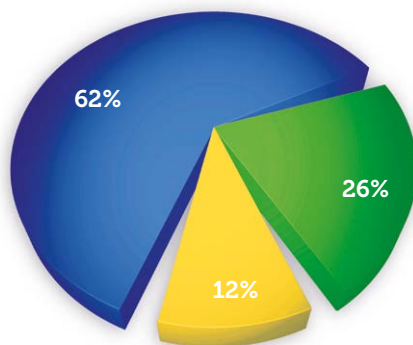
Operating Deficit (1,177,367) (1,135,068)

Net Income/(Expenditure)

Including Investment

Returns

689,618	(19,023)
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Summary Balance Sheet

Fixed Assets

Tangible Fixed Assets

Investments

Investment Property

Net Current Assets

Net Assets

	2026	2025
Tangible Fixed Assets	4,235	7,553
Investments	28,944,296	28,640,592
Investment Property	1,110,000	1,110,000
Net Current Assets	1,117,220	727,988
Net Assets	31,175,751	30,486,133





Awards for Skill and Gallantry

The Edward And Maisie Lewis Award

For an Outstanding Air/Sea Rescue

A long-range rescue, in extreme weather conditions, demonstrated the highest standards of skill, professionalism and crew co-operation.

On 7th September 2025, the Prestwick based Search and Rescue helicopter Rescue 199 was tasked to assist a yacht, callsign CV11, located approximately 170 nautical miles west of Prestwick in the North Atlantic.

On board was a crew member who had sustained a serious head injury and required urgent evacuation for immediate medical care. The conditions at the scene were extremely challenging, with a swell of four to five metres and winds reaching 45 to 55 knots.



Given the range and severity of the conditions, the crew carefully planned the operation, requesting backup support from Barra Lifeboat and Coastguard fixed wing aircraft, ensuring that every possible safeguard was in place before committing to the rescue.

On arrival, the crew were confronted with a heavily pitching yacht under motor power, its tall mast swinging dramatically and its deck strewn with rigging and hazards. The scale of motion and restricted visual references placed the operation at the very limits of what could safely be attempted.

Winch Operator Alan Robertson displayed exceptional composure, calmly conning the aircraft into position despite the pilot having minimal visual reference. His precision enabled the successful deployment of the highline and subsequently the safe insertion of Winch Paramedic Mark Warters onto the unstable deck.

Working with urgency and professionalism, Mark rapidly assessed and prepared the injured casualty for recovery. The subsequent winch, conducted from a more forward position on the vessel to minimise snagging hazards, demanded absolute accuracy and flawless coordination in the face of violent motion and limited reference points.

Throughout the operation, Captain Jamie Ross and Co Pilot Harry Howell demonstrated exemplary airmanship and judgement. Navigation, fuel management and multi agency coordination were maintained with calm efficiency, enabling the crew to complete the rescue safely at the limits of range and endurance.

The casualty was successfully recovered and transported to hospital, where he received the treatment required. The success of the mission, in such severe conditions and at extreme distance, was the direct result of the crew's professionalism, teamwork and unwavering composure under pressure.

As such, the crew of Rescue 199 are fully deserving of the Edward and Maisie Lewis Award for their outstanding actions.



The Lady Swaythling Trophy

For Outstanding Seamanship

Quick thinking and outstanding judgement combined with swift and decisive action helped avoid a potentially catastrophic collision at sea.

In the early hours of 19 November 2025, HMS PRINCE OF WALES was operating in the Tyrrhenian Sea during the final stages of a demanding seven month deployment as part of the UK Carrier Strike Group. Lieutenant David Hardiman was Officer of the Watch, responsible for the safety of a 65,000-tonne aircraft carrier and more than 1,600 personnel embarked.



Conditions were benign, with good visibility and slight seas, but the operational context remained complex. The ship was preparing to embark Italian F35 fighter aircraft and was operating as part of a formation of military vessels not transmitting on its Automatic Identification System. Maintaining situational awareness in such an environment required constant vigilance and sound judgement.

At approximately 0230, Lieutenant Hardiman detected a contact on radar at a distance of 15 nautical miles. Initially presenting no immediate threat, the vessel, later identified as the passenger ferry GNV SIRIO, was assessed to pass at a safe distance. However, as the vessels approached, the ferry made a sudden and unexpected alteration of course towards HMS PRINCE OF WALES, closing rapidly at high speed.

Recognising immediately that the situation had become dangerous, Lieutenant Hardiman acted decisively. He maintained close monitoring of the contact, ordered the ship to turn to starboard to increase separation, and called the Navigator to the bridge. As the risk escalated further, he ordered astern power in an attempt to reduce speed and prepared the ship for the possibility of imminent collision.

At its closest point, the ferry crossed ahead of the carrier at a distance of approximately 400 yards. The encounter lasted only minutes, but in that time Lieutenant Hardiman's calm assessment and prompt actions ensured that a catastrophic collision was avoided.

The potential consequences were severe. An impact on the bow of HMS PRINCE OF WALES could have resulted in significant loss of life on both vessels as well as major damage to a strategically critical asset. The wider operational and reputational implications would also have been considerable.

Despite the fatigue associated with prolonged high tempo operations and his relatively limited experience, Lieutenant Hardiman demonstrated exceptional composure, judgement and professionalism. His actions directly safeguarded the ship, her crew and the success of the wider mission.

As such, Lieutenant David Hardiman is fully deserving of the Lady Swaythling Trophy for his outstanding actions.



Crew Commendations

For meritorious actions in rescuing others

Outstanding teamwork, professionalism and coordination ensured a highly effective response in the aftermath of a helicopter ditching.

On the night of 4 September 2024, Lieutenant Commander Oliver Trowman, Lieutenant George Day and Colour Sergeant Richard Lane were the crew of Merlin HC Mk4 helicopter ZJ994, callsign Commando 98, operating from 846 Naval Air Squadron.



During night deck landing training with HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH south of Lyme Regis, they were operating in extremely challenging conditions, with very low light levels and minimal visual contrast between the sea and sky leading to significantly degraded visual references.

Shortly after completing a landing, a second aircraft issued a MAYDAY, reporting the failure of two of its three engines. Recognising instantly that the deck needed to be cleared for any potential recovery, the crew of Commando 98 immediately launched their aircraft. Two minutes later, the stricken aircraft declared that it was ditching, and the crew witnessed it impact the sea.

Overcoming the immediate shock, the crew acted with exceptional composure and focus. In near-total darkness, they located the partially submerged aircraft and identified two survivors in the water. Without a rescue hoist, they maintained vital overwatch while directing and coordinating the rescue response with HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH and other rescue assets.

Working across multiple agencies and despite being hampered by poor communication links, they played a critical role in establishing a clear operational picture. Their precise coordination enabled the ship's sea boat to be guided to the correct position, resulting in the recovery of two survivors within 25 minutes of the ditching.

Fully aware of the risks posed by cold-water immersion and fuel contamination, they continued to manage the situation with calm professionalism, coordinating further search efforts for the missing crew member and supporting incoming aircraft despite limited endurance.

Throughout the incident, the crew demonstrated exemplary teamwork, clear communication and disciplined coordination under extreme pressure, directly contributing to the saving of life.

As such, the crew of Commando 98 are fully deserving of this Crew Commendation for their outstanding actions.



Crew Commendations - Continued

Outstanding teamwork and professionalism ensured the survival of a casualty following a life-threatening accident.

At 0500 on the 10th of January 2025, the UK flagged fishing vessel FRANK BONEFAAS was conducting pelagic fishing operations in the Bay of Biscay. During the deployment of the net, and while manoeuvring to avoid another vessel, one of the main load bearing



warps became snagged on an obstruction.

A crew member, unaware of the snagging, approached to release a spring-loaded hook attached to the warp. However, as the hook was released the warp suddenly freed under significant tension, recoiling violently and resulting in the traumatic amputation of the crew member's left arm above the elbow.

Although the incident was not directly witnessed, the alarm was immediately raised through the crew's communication headsets. The Bridge team rapidly grasped the severity of the situation and took decisive action, recovering the gear without delay and altering course to bring the vessel within range of search and rescue helicopter support.

On deck, the trawl team moved the casualty clear of further danger and acted with speed and clarity. A tourniquet was applied with exceptional effectiveness to control catastrophic blood loss. Pain relief was administered and the casualty was continuously reassured over the ensuing four hours as they awaited evacuation.

Demonstrating both presence of mind and medical awareness, the crew preserved the amputated limb on ice to maximise the prospects of surgical reattachment. Their actions were later commended by the attending SAR paramedic, who confirmed that the casualty had received an excellent level of care and that no further intervention was required prior to transfer.

Throughout the incident, the Bridge and deck teams worked in complete coordination, maintaining composure in cold and dark conditions. Following the evacuation, the vessel's leadership ensured a thorough and sensitive post incident response, supporting the welfare of the crew and maintaining clear communication at all levels.

This incident demanded immediate judgement, practical skill and unwavering teamwork in the face of severe and unexpected trauma. The speed, professionalism and effectiveness of the crew's response were instrumental in preserving life under challenging circumstances, in particular noting that the incident took place during the first fishing trip of the year.

As such, the crew of FV FRANK BONEFAAS are fully deserving of a Crew Commendation for their outstanding actions.

Crew Commendations - Continued

The rescue of a lone kayaker in challenging conditions near the Mull of Galloway demonstrated outstanding airmanship and crew co-operation.



At 1236 hours on 9 August 2025, the crew of the AW189 search and rescue helicopter Rescue 199 was tasked by UK Rescue, at the request of Belfast Coastguard, to respond to a mayday call from a lone kayaker approximately 60 nautical miles southwest of Prestwick, in the vicinity of the Mull of Galloway.

The kayaker had fallen into the water and was unable to get back on board. Although the weather was generally fine, the sea state was described as rough to very rough, with a significant swell and strong undercurrents which presented immediate danger.

On arrival in the search area, there was initially no sign of the casualty. With only limited information available from the distress call, the crew conducted a visual and thermal search of the shoreline and surrounding waters. After careful repositioning, the upturned kayak was sighted, with the casualty barely able to hold on to it.

The aircraft was rapidly manoeuvred into position and the winch paramedic was deployed. On reaching the casualty, it became clear that he was exhausted, entangled in equipment, and unable to remain afloat. As contact was made, the casualty appeared to give up and slumped forward in the water.

Despite the heavy swell and the additional complexity of entanglement, the winch paramedic skilfully freed and secured the casualty. During the lift, it became apparent that the extreme cold had left the casualty in a critical condition, resulting in a high risk of slipping from the strops and cardiac arrest. In response, the winch operator and winch paramedic expertly controlled the ascent to ensure a safe recovery back into the aircraft.

Once on board, the crew immediately focused on the severity of the casualty's condition, swiftly making the decision to divert directly to hospital. During the flight, the casualty showed further signs of imminent cardiac arrest, with the 3 paramedics working as a well-honed team to apply advanced life-saving interventions and stabilise his condition.

Following handover at hospital, it was later confirmed that the casualty had recovered well from the incident, with the crew's actions instrumental in preventing an almost certain loss of life.

Throughout the operation, the crew of Rescue 199 demonstrated exceptional teamwork, professional skill and composure under pressure in highly demanding conditions. As such, they are fully deserving of a Crew Commendation for their outstanding actions.

Crew Commendations - Continued

Outstanding teamwork, professionalism and leadership led to the successful recovery of an exhausted swimmer off the coast of North Morocco.

On the evening of 3rd February 2026, the MV Isle of Islay was on passage off the northern coast of Morocco when a body was spotted in the water. Acting immediately on this information, the Master and senior officers moved quickly to assess the situation and initiate a search.

The vessel was turned onto a reciprocal course and additional lookouts were posted, while key personnel across the ship were alerted. Within minutes, a person was sighted in the water desperately signalling for assistance, confirming the seriousness and urgency of the situation.

The crew responded with speed and precision. The Fast Rescue Boat team prepared for launch, while the bridge team maintained full control of the vessel, ensuring safe manoeuvrability in rough conditions. At the same time, emergency stations were manned in accordance with established man overboard procedures.

The response across other departments was no less seamless; engineering staff ensured immediate availability of propulsion, deck teams readied recovery equipment, and the passenger services and first aid teams prepared for the casualty's arrival by gathering medical supplies, stretcher equipment and thermal protection.

Despite the challenges of deteriorating light and rough seas, the coordinated efforts of the entire crew enabled the casualty to be swiftly located by the rescue boat and recovered onto the main vessel.

Overall, the incident demonstrated exceptional situational awareness, strong leadership and expert teamwork under pressure, all of which serve as clear evidence of professional excellence at sea. As such, the crew of MV Isle of Islay are fully deserving of a Crew Commendation for their outstanding actions.



Crew Commendations - Continued

Swift and responsive actions, combined with excellent teamwork, resulted in two people being saved from the water after their vessel suddenly capsized.

At 2111 on the evening of Wednesday 25 February 2026, the Wightlink passenger vessel WIGHT SKY had just departed Yarmouth Harbour and was bound for Lymington. Conditions were relatively calm, with light westerly winds and good visibility.

Despite the very dark conditions, a small, powered racing boat, with two individuals onboard but no lights, was sighted transiting along the port side of the ferry. As the ferry altered course to avoid the unlit craft, the Zapcat suddenly turned across the vessel's wake and capsized, catapulting both occupants into the water.

Recognising the immediate danger, WIGHT SKY's crew acted without hesitation. The vessel turned promptly to render assistance while communication was established with Solent Coastguard, who they informed of their intention to deploy the ship's rescue boat.

Within minutes, the rescue boat was launched and on scene. Demonstrating professionalism and efficiency, the 2 casualties were recovered swiftly and safely, thereby minimizing their exposure to the cold night conditions.

Following the recovery, the casualties were transferred to the RNLI lifeboat which had arrived on scene, whilst WIGHT SKY continued to provide assistance, including helping to locate the adrift craft.

This incident, which occurred on a dark winter's night, highlighted the excellent cooperation between the ferry crew, Coastguard, and RNLI units and clearly demonstrated the importance of vigilance, decisive action, and effective teamwork. The prompt response and well-rehearsed procedures followed by the crew of WIGHT SKY undoubtedly contributed to saving the lives of the two individuals in the water.

As such, the crew of WIGHT SKY are fully deserving of a Crew Commendation for their outstanding actions.





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If you are making, or renewing your Will please remember the needs of our seafarers and their widows in financial distress. Your gift could make a real difference to them for years to come. You may wish to consider either:

- **A residuary legacy** - which means you leave the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society all or part of your estate once other gifts to family and friends have been distributed or
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Shipwrecked Mariners' Society
is supported financially by:



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