

Maritime Training Portfolio: Learning, Teaching & Research - Board Briefing Paper

Executive Summary

This paper responds directly to the request from LT&R agenda planning for an update on the current baseline of maritime training provision and the associated actions required to expand and strengthen the maritime training portfolio.

A consolidated overview of UHI North, West and Hebrides' (UHI NWH) maritime training portfolio is provided, presenting both the current course provision (2026 baseline) and the expanded future portfolio anticipated following MCA approval and increased instructor capacity.

Current provision is strong but uneven across centres due to instructor availability, location specific approval requirements, and variable market demand. The future portfolio will offer a consistent, multicentre maritime training network with significantly expanded capability across MCA STCW, RYA, and Seafish approved programmes. A comparative table summarises the shift from the current baseline to the expanded future state.

1. Baseline vs Expanded Portfolio Overview

Comparative Table: Current vs Future Course Provision (subject to completion of market analysis and business case)

Course Category	Current Provision (Baseline 2026)	Current Student Numbers	Future Provision (Post-Approvals)
MCA STCW – EFA, PSSR, PST	Delivered only in Mallaig & Stornoway; (Ullapool & Benbecula pending MCA approval)	84	Delivered consistently across all 4 centres with full MCA peripatetic approval
MCA Stability Courses	Not yet MCA-approved	0	Fully MCA-approved and delivered in multiple locations

Course Category	Current Provision (Baseline 2026)	Current Student Numbers	Future Provision (Post-Approvals)
MCA Small Ships Navigation & Radar	Proposal submitted; not yet running	0	Delivered as part of the core maritime portfolio
MCA Engine	Not yet MCA-approved	0	Fully MCA-approved and delivered in multiple locations
RYA VHF SRC	Delivered in all centres, dependent on instructor availability (majority online)	104	Consistent delivery with expanded F/F via instructor pool across all centres
RYA Powerboat Level 2	Delivered in Mallaig & Ullapool	12	Delivered in all coastal centres with full instructor coverage
RYA Radar	Instructor capacity constraints	0	Expanded delivery across more centres supported by growth and instructor capacity
RYA Theory (Day Skipper & Yachtmaster)	Delivered only in Mallaig & Stornoway	0	Expanded delivery to additional centres
RYA Professional Practices & Responsibilities	Instructor capacity constraints	0	Expanded delivery across more centres supported by growth and instructor capacity
Seafish Firefighting	Strong provision in Stornoway & Benbecula only	70	Expanded delivery across more centres supported

Course Category	Current Provision (Baseline 2026)	Current Student Numbers	Future Provision (Post-Approvals)
			by growth and instructor capacity

2. Current Baseline Provision (As of 2026)

UHI NWH's maritime portfolio includes MCA STCW elements, selective RYA courses, and a strong Seafish-approved programme, but provision varies by location. Instructor availability and limited MCA approvals remain key constraints.

2.1 MCA STCW – Current Provision

- Elementary First Aid - EFA, Personal Safety & Social Responsibilities - PSSR, Personal Survival Techniques - PST delivered in Mallaig and Stornoway.
- Stability courses not yet MCA-approved.
- Peripatetic delivery in Ullapool and Benbecula limited by approval requirements.

2.2 RYA – Current Provision

- VHF SRC, Powerboat Level 2, and theory courses delivered selectively.
- Advanced/Intermediate Powerboat offered only when demand permits.
- Online courses available but under-promoted.

2.3 Seafish – Current Provision

- Strong presence in Stornoway & Benbecula including:
 - Intro to Commercial Fishing
 - Navigation Watchkeeping
 - Stability courses
 - Basic Sea Survival and Basic Firefighting
- Expansion limited by instructor recruitment.
- Other than the 1 day Firefighting course - Seafish courses are not commercially viable in their current form

3. Expanded Portfolio (Post-Approvals)

With successful funding on approval of business cases, including completion of market analysis based on realistic projected course delegate numbers, MCA approvals and staffing expansion in place, the maritime portfolio will significantly expand across all categories.

3.1 MCA STCW – Future Offer

- All core STCW courses available across all four centres.
- Stability courses approved and operational.
- Small Ships Navigation & Radar becomes a new core training line.

3.2 RYA – Future Offer

- VHF SRC available consistently with stronger instructor coverage.
- Enhanced RYA Radar and Cruising Scheme theory delivery.
- Broader Powerboat delivery at all water-accessible sites.

3.3 Seafish – Future Offer

- Reduce Seafish delivery due to financial viability or negotiate new rates
- Seafish 1 day firefighting - expanded delivery beyond Stornoway & Benbecula for only

4. Actions

- For all proposed new courses - completion of market analysis and business case based on realistic projected course delegate numbers
- MCA multi-site approvals for Benbecula & Ullapool, including documentation alignment with Mallaig, equipment purchase & logistics, and scheduled inspection dates.
- Commercial course costing review, including competitor benchmarking and updated pricing model for ELT approval.
- Website and Eventbrite updates to ensure consistent information, improved navigation, and alignment with refreshed course offer.
- Staffing and capacity planning to support multi-centre delivery
- Strengthened employer relationships (Northland Power, Bakkafröst, MOWI) to align provision with industry needs.

- Course development pipeline including Stability, SSNR, RYA Radar, PSA and exploration of Engine qualifications.
- Funding and wider development activity including UTF submission, North Highland expansion opportunities, and Mallaig campus development.

5. Conclusion

The expanded maritime training portfolio positions UHI NWH to deliver a comprehensive, consistent, and commercially competitive offering across the region. With new MCA-approved courses and increased instructor capability, the organisation will enhance its market presence, improve learner access, and strengthen partnerships across the maritime sector.