

**News Release**  
**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Portsmouth Harbour Marine releases skills survey data – 75% of respondents worried about ageing workforce**

Portsmouth Harbour Marine (PHM) has released the data it collected in its 2020 skills survey in the Portsmouth Harbour area.

Sixty-four marine trade companies completed the survey which set out to understand the employment needs of marine companies in the Portsmouth, Fareham and Gosport area. Informed by the data, Portsmouth Harbour Marine intends to build a strategy to bridge gaps between employers and education providers.

The survey found that while 61% of respondents feel their current workforce meets their future business needs, 75% of respondents are concerned about an ageing workforce. Businesses may be confident that they can fill the skills gap in the near future but are worried about the long term.

With the caveat that this survey took place prior to Covid-19, opportunities were seen to exist in the area for employees with skills relating to 'new and used boat sales' and 'chandlery'. 100% of the businesses in those sectors agreed that they were lacking employees with soft skills for the future. Furthermore the three most common technical skills that businesses reported they needed to meet future business were, 'composite skills', 'IT skills' and 'engineering skills', clearly showing a direct path to encourage young adults towards.

PHM has long recognised the need to promote maritime careers to a wider young audience and as such will be actively widening its school's programme to promote maritime careers. This will complement providing young people with on the water experiences, which it already does via Gosport Marine Festival.

Portsmouth Harbour is well known as a developing centre for engineering excellence, with high-level sports teams including Team Ineos UK and Alex Thomson Racing leading the field in pushing boundaries. "Therefore," says Mark Bowden chief executive of PHM, "it's important that we get it right in helping guide the local education provision to enable a dynamic workforce to grasp the opportunities that the marine trade offers. Covid-19 has, obviously, reshaped the landscape, but at PHM we will continue to push ahead with the next tranche of plans to enable the future of Portsmouth Harbour to be as ready as possible for the recovery."

Part of PHM's long term strategy will be to encourage businesses to create work experience schemes. This is because, while 43% of respondents felt the current education system does not adequately prepare young people for the world of work, 48% of businesses do not offer work experience to students and many do not consider taking part in careers events.



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PHM believes that by running work experience seminars for marine businesses, explaining the purpose and practicalities, the work-experience pathway can be used as a starting point to develop a future workforce.

Similar seminars will take place to encourage businesses to embrace apprenticeship schemes. The survey discovered that more than half the respondents were not planning to recruit an apprentice in the next 12 months and that there could be more understanding about apprentice schemes, and especially the degree apprentice schemes.

“The challenge now is to find a way to develop a useful, relevant seminar programme which works to help marine businesses within the constraints of Covid-19,” says Mark Bowden. “We are currently putting plans into place to address this, and to help enable the skills survey’s outcomes to actively shape the marine future for this vibrant, sea-faring area.”

The full data from the skills survey is available on PHM’s website (<https://portsmouthharbourmarine.org.uk>).

## **ENDS**

### **Notes for Editors**

High resolution images available at: <https://maa.agency/gallery/portsmouth-harbour-marine-undertakes-skills-survey-2/>

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For further information visit <https://portsmouthharbourmarine.org.uk>

Portsmouth Harbour Marine promotes and supports the development of Portsmouth Harbour, its facilities, marine businesses and their networks, to stimulate economic growth, marine employment and inward investment for the sector. In addition, it works with charities and other providers of local on-water activities to promote water-based activities to schools, groups and individuals as a means to improve health, develop life skills and increase marine career awareness. More: <https://portsmouthharbourmarine.org.uk>