

Graham Stuart MP
Department for International Trade
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

7 July 2021

Dear Minister,

We the undersigned write to express our serious concern at plans to discontinue the Tradeshow Access Programme.

For the maritime sector, the scheme has been invaluable in supporting SMEs to get to the key trade shows across the world and to win business. Since 2015, the two maritime Trade Challenge Partners (British Marine and the Society of Maritime Industries) processed around 400 grants for the major industry events in Europe, Asia, and North America.

Maritime UK believes that the government's decision to cancel the TAP is a retrograde and short-sighted step for British exporters, especially SMEs. We think this change comes at the worst possible time for British exporters, who are attempting to recover from the pandemic and rise to the challenge of Global Britain. It also appears incoherent with the forthcoming refresh to the National Shipbuilding Strategy.

Currently, there is no detail on what if any scheme will replace TAP. Even if there is an eventual successor programme, there is no support for SMEs preparing to attend trade shows this Autumn – including the Monaco Yacht Show and METS Trade Show. Whilst the sums involved may only be in the region of £1,500 per business, for an SME, this can often make all the difference. That is particularly true as businesses attempt to recover from the pandemic. We estimate that for Monaco this year, there are 10 companies, and for METS 30, that would all be eligible for TAP.

Together, the maritime sector and your department have taken positive steps forward in the context of the joint five-year plan for maritime exports and investment. That support for maritime has been across government with the Freeports programme, National Shipbuilding Strategy and Ten-Point Plan. We cannot see how this decision does anything than undermine recent progress and the ambitions we all share to boost exports, increase productivity and level up our coastal economies.

Whilst the TAP programme was not perfect, it provided targeted support for companies that most needed it.

We support the letter recently sent to you by Export Partners UK and we are committed to working with the Department for International Trade and HM Treasury to demonstrate the vital importance of an industry-led tradeshow and trade mission scheme to help UK exporters to recover from Covid19 and make a success of Brexit. As the fundamental enabler of international trade, that is a responsibility that the maritime sector takes seriously.

The role of maritime Trade Challenge Partners is also critical to this mission. Industry bodies bring much needed manpower and knowledge to DIT and HMG at a critical time, at a fraction of the cost to the taxpayer of the government's current or future arrangements.

In this regard, we have the following questions:

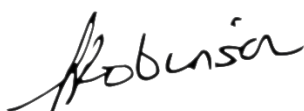
- **What grant mechanism will replace the TAP scheme to support SMEs to export?**
- **Presuming there will be a successor scheme, what support is available to companies preparing to exhibit at international shows this Autumn, and are now learning that support has been removed?**
- **Will the new Maritime Capability Campaign Office within DIT provide similar or better grants to support SMEs export following TAP's cancellation?**

Maritime UK is committed to working constructively with government to grow the maritime sector and would welcome the opportunity to discuss these questions with you via conference call at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Kenny OBE
Chair, Maritime UK



Lesley Robinson OBE
Chief Executive, British Marine



Tom Chant
CEO, Society of Maritime Industries



CC: Robert Courts MP, Department for Transport
Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP, Ministry of Defence
Amanda Solloway MP, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy