



THE IRISH MARITIME FORUM
Increasing Awareness of Ireland's Maritime
Dimension

19MAY16

An Taoiseach and Minister for Defence
Department of the Taoiseach
Government Buildings
Upper Merrion Street
Dublin 2

Dear Taoiseach,

The Irish Maritime Forum (TIMARFOR) wishes to offer its congratulations to you on your re-election as Taoiseach and wishes you and your new government a successful and long term in office in order that the hard won economic recovery is maintained and strengthened for the benefit of our country and people.

TIMARFOR is an independent and non-political collegiate group of over thirty maritime professionals who have a wide range of experience in the maritime domain. TIMARFOR members hold, or have held, positions at the highest level in national and international maritime organisations. The vision of TIMARFOR is to increase awareness of the importance of Ireland's Maritime Dimension in the national interest.

To this end TIMARFOR has made submissions to the Departments of Defence and Foreign Affairs during the consultation process prior to the publication of policy documents. More recently we have made a submission to the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government on Marine Spatial Planning as the department prepares to transpose Directive 2014/89/EU into Irish law. In April we held a seminar in the National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI) on the maritime aspects of the 1916 Rising. The conference attracted a full house, many of the attendees seeing this wonderful facility for the first time. The response of the attendees to the magnificent maritime cluster that is Haulbowline Naval Base, the NMCI and its associated Research Centres was gratifying. Many of the members of TIMARFOR are retired naval officers and we commented on how so much has changed for the better in our Navy and in Irish maritime affairs over the past few decades. We are hopefully moving from being a land centric nation living on an island to becoming a maritime nation.

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One area which has failed to maintain the impetus associated with the maritime cluster is the status of the Navy within it. When the NMCI was established in 2004 as a joint initiative between the Navy and Cork Institute of Technology, the Commandant of the Naval College (in the rank of Commander) became the Associate Head of NMCI, holding joint authority with the Head of College appointed by CIT. As such he was the Naval representative dealing with CIT.

The scope and responsibility of this appointment has expanded considerably since 2004. The Commandant of the Naval College (CNC) is required to take a proactive role in the strategic management and future direction of NMCI. Further developments have added to CNC's responsibilities:

- The College's commercial pillar in 2008;
- The Navy's partnership in IMERC (UCC/CIT) in 2008;
- Membership of the Academic Council, CIT in 2011;
- The opening of the Halpin Research Centre in 2013;
- The increasing number of foreign naval officers who come to our navy for training e.g. Canada and New Zealand.
- Most recently the completion of the Beaufort Laboratory and the Coastal and Marine Research Centre.

CNC is required to display strategic leadership dealing with the senior management of UCC, CIT and the research community listed above, as well as CEOs of various national and international industrial enterprises who use the services of IMERC, the Halpin Centre, the Beaufort Laboratory and the Coastal and Marine Research Centre. CNC works closely with heads of other EU Naval Academies who mostly rank at Naval Captain or higher. The Naval College working with NMCI now offers accreditation under the National Framework of Qualifications at Level 6 to Level 10 (PhD) and was the first school in the Defence Forces to do so.

At least three Army Colonels (Naval Captain equivalent) serve as Commandants of various Schools/Colleges in the Defence Forces Training Centre in the Curragh. We believe that the Naval College is more diverse in its range/level of courses and number of students than any of the Schools/Colleges in the Curragh. Furthermore, in addition to filling its naval mandate the appointment of CNC functions at the same level as the Cork Institute of Technology element of the NMCI i.e. Principal Officer. It appears to us that the appointment of CNC is ranked below its status.

Holders of the CNC appointment, in order to allow them to qualify for higher rank must rotate through a range of appointments afloat and ashore. Thus, an officer might only spend two years as CNC thereby creating a lack of continuity and putting the Navy at a disadvantage. To leave a Commander there for a longer period runs the risk of putting him/her at a disadvantage in a competition for promotion. An operations officer in the rank of Captain can serve in only one other ap-

pointment and therefore can remain in the CNC appointment for a considerably longer period than a Commander.

TIMARFOR is strongly of the opinion that the rank of CNC should be Naval Captain for all the reasons stated above and urges that serious consideration be given to such an upgrade.

Finally may we thank you for your continuing interest in and support for Irish maritime affairs.

On behalf of The Irish Maritime Forum,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JA Robinson". The letters are cursive and fluidly connected.

Captain James Robinson DSM FNI
Irish Navy (Retired)

CC Mr Paul Kehoe TD
Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach and Defence