

**Written evidence submitted by Maritime UK (MUK)  
Solent Limited (MAR0022)**

Maritime UK (MUK) Solent Limited has been established as an industry-led body to promote a thriving maritime sector within the Solent. We are the regional cluster organisation for the maritime sector and wider supply chain in the Solent.

The Solent Maritime Cluster is exceptional. It has a breadth of maritime excellence that is unsurpassed globally with world-leading capability across Ports and Shipping, Maritime Defence, Training, Academia and Research, Shipbuilding, Leisure Marine, Heritage and Tourism, Professional Services and Regulation. Quite Simply, the Solent has it all, and all this activity takes place in a relatively small geographic area, anchored around the two Port Cities of Southampton and Portsmouth, and the Isle of Wight.

The maritime sector contributes around 20% of the total economic output of the Solent economy and is, without question, the Solent's core sector - just as it has been throughout history. The Solent has always been at the forefront of change and innovation in maritime, and this continues today. We have businesses imagining and commercialising the maritime sector of tomorrow, fuelled by the talent pipeline trained at our Further and Higher Education Institutions.

To maintain this position, the [Solent Local Enterprise Partnership](#) has established Maritime UK Solent as an industry-led partnership to promote a thriving maritime sector within the Solent. Through our work we will provide leadership, champion, and support the growth of the sector - ensuring the Solent maintains its position as the world's premier maritime cluster.

The recently published Levelling Up White Paper identified the Solent as one of twenty economically significant clusters in the UK, with the Solent specialising in maritime. The White Paper also highlighted Maritime UK Solent, as one of 16 of the UK's potentially transformative private sector partnerships currently underway and committed to work through such partnerships to strengthen sectors.

The publication of Maritime 2050 was an important moment for the sector, establishing a strategic focus for a sector that is at the core of our island nation. The Solent is one of seven UK Maritime Clusters identified in [Maritime](#)

[2050](#), the UK's strategy for the Maritime sector. The strategy recognises that the UK has leading maritime clusters across the country, all of which create a regional dynamism and contribute to the national significance of the maritime sector to our economy and to our global success.

One of the headline recommendations was for government and industry to work together to maintain and enhance the attractiveness of the UK's regional maritime clusters and London as a global maritime professional services cluster.

Maritime 2050 is built on seven high level themes: the UK's competitive advantage, environment, infrastructure, people, security, technology and trade. These have been further divided into 36 sub-themes. The Strategy also articulates 10 core strategic ambitions, which are broadened to aspirational objectives, and five values.

Whilst the themes, ambitions, objectives, and values are undoubtedly appropriate, a strategy does need to be deliverable and benefits from focus. The collective volume of the themes, ambitions, objectives, and values does result in a somewhat confusing and ambitious agenda - and one that will always be challenging to deliver on.

Of course, delivery will require collective endeavour across government, sector representative bodies, private sector-led regional cluster organisations, academia and research organisations, educators, and - most importantly - industry. Government has an important role in enabling and de-risking and could work more proactively with private sector-led regional cluster organisations, which know the breadth of the maritime sectors in their respective localities and are best placed to convene relevant actors to deliver on the ambitions of Maritime 2050. At the national level, Maritime UK can play an important coordinating role, through its family of regional cluster organisations.

Such an approach would support the core priority of government to level up every region of the UK. The socio-economic geography of the UK shows that coastal communities are often left behind, disadvantaged, and in need of levelling-up. The recognition of the regional sectoral clusters of the UK in the White Paper provides an opportunity for a programme of levelling-up rooted in sectoral strengths and competitive advantages of local areas that already exist and have formed without public intervention. However, to enable these

sectoral strengths to be optimised and to catalyse innovation to ensure such cluster maintain their position and lead the charge to a net zero future there is a need for government to enable and de-risk.

Freeport policy, whilst not exclusively maritime, is a significant and welcomed policy and fiscal intervention where government intervention is already starting to address regional disparities and enables areas, such as the Solent that have lagged behind in productivity terms and are economically distinctive to the areas around it, to be more competitive in attracting internationally mobile investment. Freeports were not mentioned once in Maritime 2050, but now present the most significant opportunity and vehicle through which to progress many of the ambitions of Maritime 2050.

Maritime 2050 does not appear to have an established monitoring and evaluation framework, which, of course, makes it difficult or measure progress.

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