COMPANY RESPONSE TO HRAS REPORT

22 June 2022

Meridian Adventures Limited ("Meridian Adventures" or the "Company") welcomes the opportunity to comment on the report from Human Rights at Sea ("HRAS") dated [22] June 2022 (the "HRAS Report").

Meridian Adventures as an organisation, does not condone bullying, victimization, racism, physical and/or mental abuse in any form in the workplace.

Meridian Adventures, as part of its operations, has developed and managed a training programme in Turkey and (until recently) Indonesia which seeks to provide the highest quality training for persons intending to embark on a career in the super-yacht industry. Whilst it has provided opportunities for employment within the Meridian Adventures fleet, the goal has also been to create a “give back” programme where committed young people from all backgrounds are given an opportunity to develop new skills and gain qualifications to help provide them with a future career.

The training programme aims to deliver educational and practical work experience across a wide spectrum of skills and qualifications relevant to the super-yacht industry, including impeccable service delivery, operating the interior of a yacht to a detailed and exacting standard, understanding galley operations, handling all deck operations, expertly managing a full sailing rig on a high end sailing vessel, executing engineering routine maintenance tasks with confidence and skill, understanding intimately and expertly all operational drills, safety drills, and maintenance activity plans associated with maintaining a marine asset and having a sound knowledge of the certification and documentation associated with a yacht. The training programme also seeks to embed key principles such as the importance of teamwork, a work ethic, self-discipline, honesty and trust which are essential attributes
of a successful career in the super-yacht industry. The goal is to create competent crew to a level that far surpasses their peers in the super-yachting industry.

It was therefore with great concern and regret that Meridian Adventures received the first draft of the HRAS Report in December 2021. Allegations of this grave nature, irrespective of whether all the details have been investigated fully, are taken very seriously by Meridian Adventures.

After receiving a copy of the draft HRAS Report and the allegations detailed in it, Meridian Adventures took steps internally to investigate and address matters raised in the HRAS Report. Meridian Adventures also instructed a leading barrister (Diya Sen Gupta QC from Blackstone Chambers in London) to undertake an investigation into the allegations. Meridian Adventures’ aim was to understand the underlying facts, remedy any issues and make appropriate changes to help prevent any future failings.

Meridian Adventures has engaged cooperatively and proactively with HRAS in investigating and responding to the allegations. Meridian Adventures is grateful for the professional way HRAS and its consultancy arm, Human Rights at Sea International (“HRASi”), have worked with Meridian Adventures with the common aim of understanding what has occurred and formulating the necessary remedial action.

In particular, Meridian Adventures agreed with HRASi that HRASi would conduct a week-long site visit to its facilities in Turkey in late May 2022 during which all aspects of the training programme were reviewed by HRASi and Meridian Adventures, and extensive mediation activities were carried out with cadets, the senior leadership team and other personnel. HRASi issued a report to Meridian Adventures dated 8 June 2022 (the “HRASi Report”) which contains a number of guiding principles and comments aimed at supporting a reset of the Meridian Adventures’ company business with the aim of transforming it into a world class training programme. A copy of the HRASi Report is attached as a Schedule to this Company Response.
As a result of these actions and reports, Meridian Adventures has taken and intends to take further steps to significantly improve and enhance its training processes and practices. For example:

1) Charters have been developed by cadets and the Company’s senior leadership team which set out the culture, core values and standards to be adhered to by all crew (i.e., cadets, the senior leadership team and other personnel). Compliance with those principles will be monitored by the Company. HRASi will assist the Company in performing that monitoring task for an initial period of one year which may be extended by agreement between the Company and HRASi.

2) The training programme will be converted into an apprenticeship with apprentices being paid commensurate to their level of experience (and in any event never less than a premium to the minimum monthly wage recently adopted in May 2022 by a subcommittee of the Joint Maritime Commission of the International Labour Organization); the number of new apprentices will be reduced to four per annum and the period of training will be extended to three years, to ensure a greater focus on the training of each apprentice, with more time to learn and absorb both theory and practice. International accreditations will be sought for apprentices for each year of the training programme.

3) The Company’s recruitment process will be revamped to better ensure that candidates of the right fit are selected for the apprenticeship. Candidates will be provided with full information on the qualifications and general training an apprentice is expected to receive as well as the culture, core values and standards that the Company and apprentices will strive to achieve during the apprenticeship.

In particular, a new, unique and affordable e-learning teaching course which is and will be part of each cadet’s and apprentice’s training programme, will be licensed to participating yachting centres around the world and will be used as part of the Meridian Adventures apprenticeship recruitment process, whilst also providing other students with further qualifications and know-how to equip them for a career in the yacht industry. HRASI, having seen the current version of the e-learning programme during their site visit to Turkey, have applauded the quality of the teaching aid which is replicated on mobile phones enabling the latest version of information (and video guides) to be accessible at all times, especially on board the yachts. The e-learning programme consists of extensive modules covering every key area of activity and learning relevant to the super-yachting industry and will be further expanded in the coming months to deal with maritime and international law, human and labour rights, and other human element module training.

4) The Company’s employment documentation, Standard Operating Procedures ("SOPs") and other policies will be reviewed, simplified and updated by external counsel and Meridian Adventures. In particular:
a) the “penalty” clause in existing contracts which required cadets to refund costs incurred by the Company in training a cadet who subsequently left prior to completion has been abolished; and  

b) measures will be implemented to monitor leave and hours for all staff and the correct recording of hours by crew. Personnel will be required to take their correct leave entitlement and rest time.

5) A new complaints procedure will be implemented which will be readily accessible to cadets/apprentices, with regular testing of the procedure. In addition, an anonymous hotline for serious complaints will be introduced.

6) Additional welfare and safeguarding steps will be implemented for cadets or apprentices including:

a) encouraging a culture which seeks to improve understanding and communications between team members;

b) the appointment of an independent DPA (Designated Person Ashore), which goes beyond what is legally required for the Company’s operations;

c) the appointment of an internal employee tasked specifically with providing advice to cadets and apprentices in a discreet and confidential manner and monitoring their wellbeing generally; that employee will receive training in incident report writing, mentoring and follow-up of welfare related matters of concern, and for any serious concerns or allegations will have direct access to the highest level of management; and

d) stewardesses, who currently perform unofficial welfare functions, receiving training with a recognised international qualification for that role which will be included in their job specification and contract of employment.

7) Senior crew members will be asked to undertake continuing professional development (CPD) training from time to time. Mentoring by external professional trainers for human element training and other hard and soft leaderships skills will be offered to members of the Company’s senior leadership team.

Meridian Adventures does not agree with all the allegations that have been made against it and its staff or all of the findings which are set out in the HRAS Report. Meridian Adventures specifically reserves all its and its staff’s rights and remedies including any further steps it or they may take to respond to specific allegations in the report and/or to exercise all rights and remedies available to it or them.

Meridian Adventures nevertheless acknowledges that there have been failings of the existing training programme. Most importantly, the focus of Meridian Adventures has been and will continue to be to fix any and all such failings. Meridian Adventures acknowledges the courage of those past and present
cadets who came forward to raise their concerns to HRAS. Meridian Adventures has unreservedly apologised publicly to its cadets for failings of the existing training programme. Meridian Adventures intends to continue to discuss appropriate remediation steps with HRASi.

Meridian Adventures also wishes to try and give existing cadets who want to complete the training programme and gain qualifications that might help them with their future careers (being all of the cadets currently undergoing training), the opportunity to do so, rather than simply shutting down the training programme.

Meridian Adventures believes that steps already taken and additional steps that will be taken by Meridian Adventures in consultation with HRASi will form the basis for changes to the Meridian Adventures training programme to help ensure that it is a world class training programme, as it was always intended to be.

Signed:

For and on behalf of

Meridian Adventure Limited
SCHEDULE

8 June 2022

MERIDIAN ADVENTURE LIMITED FIELD VISIT 23-30 MAY 2022

Redacted for Public Dissemination

Attending:

2. [Redacted] (PM): Consultant, RYA Yachtmaster Instructor and Ocean Examiner (55,000 NM of sailing and 180 Yachtmaster exams) (23-27 May 22).

Location & Dates:

Sigacik, Turkey, 23-30 May 2022.

References:

B. Annex A: HRASI: Suggested next steps with Meridian Adventures Ltd – to be agreed.
Important Notes

1. HRASi differentiates between cadets (under training), crew (employed both being trained and trained) and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) which are the senior roles within Meridian Adventures Ltd who are empowered to make management and executive decisions in support of day-to-day activities.

2. HRASi refers to a “clean slate” approach. This refers to persons being given a second chance from the point of the Company’s re-set on 27 May 22 except for any matters that may subsequently be identified as either constituting criminal behaviour(s) or gross misconduct as determined by Meridian Counsel which will require immediate investigation by competent persons and authorities.

3. HRASi refers to “clear lower deck”. This refers to the bringing together of all persons within the Company either as a whole or in designated groups either on land or at sea onboard vessels, with some exceptions for any reasonable and authorised absence (i.e., medical appointment, safety issue or role, or a main point of business contact). The intent is to assure clarity and continuity of messaging on the issue(s) being discussed and avoid misinterpretation that could unnecessarily lead to internal friction and disunity.

4. HRASi refers to the ‘Skipper’ meaning the captain of the vessel.
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ANNEX B: CADET CHARTER: 27 MAY 2022

ANNEX C: SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM CHARTER: 27 MAY 2022

ANNEX D: APOLOGY: 27 MAY 2022

Abbreviations

AOB    Any other business
CPD    Continuing Professional Development
CRM    Crew Resource Management
CV     Critical Vulnerability
DPA    Designated Person Ashore
HRAS   Human Rights at Sea
HRASI  Human Rights at Sea International Ltd
IYA    International Yachting Training
MLC    Maritime Labour Convention 2006
RYA    Royal Yachting Association

[Redacted]
Executive Summary

The Human Rights at Sea International field visit to the Meridian Adventures Ltd (Meridian or the Company) training location in Sigacik, Turkey, 23-30 May 2022 provisionally highlighted 13 observations and 30 associated recommendations following the intervention and mediation process which culminated in voluntarily agreed cadet and senior leadership team values-led charters being developed, exchanged and agreed as part of a company re-set across the culture, values, and standards being followed by all persons. This was further agreed to be a first step in transforming Meridian from a ‘1.0’ to a ‘2.0’ model of selection, recruitment, training, and delivery of cadets into the yacht / superyacht industry.

Aim

To further investigate, review and address all issues raised by the initial Human Rights at Sea (HRAS) investigation report (Ref A) into the conduct of cadet training under the current cadetship scheme run by Meridian to determine the feasibility, or otherwise, of continuing the Meridian sail training programme (the cadetship) or any future iteration of the cadetship.

Objectives
1. Assure the safeguarding of cadets (and crew), as necessary.
2. Address matters raised in the agreed proposal of 11 May 2022 and Contract for Services dated 16 May 2022, as applicable.
3. Meet, observe, socialise and talk (mediate) with cadet, crew and/or Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
4. Review and finalise initial HRAS report (the Report) for publishing (date to be confirmed).
5. Assist Meridian Group Counsel and any designated employed staff of the Meridian company with the Company response for joint publishing (date to be confirmed).
6. Assure an agreed remediation package for identified victims / complainants.
7. Counsel next steps for a Meridian transformation process (1.0 to 2.0) including, but not limited to, joint mediation exercises, a values-based employee Charter(s), outline strategy, roadmap, timings and applicable HRASi follow-on actions.
8. Issue a follow-up HRASi report from the findings (23-29 May).

SECTION I: Field Visit and Report Background

Pre-arrival: Matters for consideration

1. Introduction to Meridian Group Counsel [Redacted (GC)]. (DH / GC)
2. Introduction to Meridian cadets and crew. (DH / PM)
3. Cadet and crew (SLT) interactive discussions. (DH / PM)
4. Culture, ethos and core values and standards review. (DH / PM)
5. Recruitment process (cadet): start to finish - fit for purpose? (DH)
6. Training process: stages / standards / remedial actions / conduct. (DH / PM)
7. At-sea training observations. (PM lead)
8. SLT competency, future training and mentorship. (DH)
9. Continuing Professional Development. (DH / PM)
10. Costs to close vs costs to remediate. (DH)
11. Impact of closure on local community / crew / families / cadets. (DH)
Pre-arrival concerns

The confirmation, or otherwise, of:

1. Initial HRAS Report findings.
2. Weak culture, ethos and core values resulting in a loss of SLT direction and guidance.
3. Leadership concerns: archaic, misguided and/or unfit for purpose (societal changes / increased worker voice / expectation of young persons to be listened to and heard / ‘old school’ training methodologies / lack of management accountability).
4. Young Skippers reflecting a culture of impunity and not being held to account.
5. A culture of ‘Lord of the Flies’ amongst cadet and/or crew?
6. An embedded culture of fear amongst cadets towards crew / SLT?
7. The need for increased diversity and inclusion with awareness, training and day-to-day living.
8. Planning, conduct and safe conduct of training serials on land and at sea.
9. Personal security and wellbeing of cadets and the SLT.
10. A normalisation of training abuse and a lack of accountability of SLT?
11. A normalisation of management breach of standards and impunity through SLT inaction and/or fear of action?
12. A failure of internal safeguards including loss of cadet and staff confidence in system and reporting due to SLT behaviours and actual / perceived impunity?
13. Independent oversight or review (TBC) – a lack of external accountability?
14. Professional oversight (TBC): Royal Yachting Association (RYA) / International Yacht Training (IYT) – a lack of external accountability?
15. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and associated policies being fit for purpose?
16. Contracts of Employment fit for purpose?
17. The need for harmonised SOPs between cadets and SLT?
18. Any other business (AOB).

Introduction

The following observations and associated recommendations are made from the perspective of Human Rights at Sea International (HRASi) Ltd based upon professional civil society, rights-
based charitable, and legal experience in promoting the protection of human and labour rights, business and human rights, and promoting access to effective corporate remedy and remediation as set against established international legal instruments and policy standards.

This HRASi Field Report (the Field Report) is primarily focused on achieving justice for victims / complainants and reforming Meridian SLT training behaviours towards current and future Meridian cadets and crew. Additionally, it is ensuring due consideration and delivery of a comprehensive remediation package, as applicable, for former victims / complainants with the associated recommendations requiring to be acknowledged and enacted by Meridian.

The Field Report will aim to support an expedited internal Meridian company business reset and an accompanying transformation pathway from what HRASi has termed ‘Meridian 1.0’ to ‘Meridian 2.0’ in a structured and timely manner specifically noting initial HRAS Report’s concerns and objectives.

The Field Report will review human element awareness and training, business and human rights remediation following the 2011 UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (the Guiding Principles), the Meridian company culture, values, and standards - set against the outcomes of the mediation activities voluntarily undertaken between 27-29 May lead by HRASi.

Context: Cadet Sail Training Programme
The Meridian cadet sailing training programme based in Turkey is aimed at providing the highest quality trained crew for top quality vessels in a high-end sailing and training environment run primarily to provide qualified crew for owners of those vessels as part of an ongoing business concern. It further provides opportunities for crew employment to the wider international super-yachting industry.

This programme may in future be scaled and expanded internationally, and potentially be held out as an example of high-quality crew training, with the provision of skilled internal crew knowledge transfer and crew management standards positioned as the future “platinum standard” benchmark in the international yacht / superyacht community.

**Context: HRASi Engagement & Mediation**

On an agreed basis of instruction, HRASi conducted an independent engagement with Meridian Group Counsel and Meridian crew and cadets based at the Hiddenbay Teos training facilities and Sigacik marina locations during the period of the HRASi Report. HRASi staff spent observation time within the training environment both on land and at sea.

HRASi staff offered and subsequently engaged in mediation activities over a three-day period in an agreed ‘honest broker’ role as between cadets and the SLT culminating in producing respective values-led charters for future behaviours and accountability being drafted, agreed, and mutually exchanged on Sunday 29 May 2022. This included the exchange of verbal positioning statements based around respective charters for the intent to amend previous negative behaviours, combined with an unreserved apology to cadets, crew and SLT by the founder [Redacted]. See Annexes B, C and D.
The following observations, comments and recommendations are based upon the HRASi field-based engagement and associated findings up to the 29 May 2022. They are not exhaustive and may be added to and/or amended by future reviews.
SECTION II: Observations, Comments, Recommendations


Meridian SLT, crew, and cadets have voluntarily and respectively agreed verbally and in writing (29 May 2022) to reset their culture, values, and standards through the introduction of values-led Charters. These will work internally towards achieving positive, safe, and accountable conduct for day-to-day training operations at Meridian facilities in Turkey and elsewhere, as applicable.

Comment 1

The degree of success and external confirmation of the effective application of the respective cadet and SLT Charters will be measured through and by ongoing HRASi engagement with Meridian Group Counsel, selected and identified external persons, and HRASi staff over a period to be agreed in writing with Counsel. This will require consistent monitoring within the scope of HRASi resources as agreed, and financially resourced by Meridian. The measure of success to resolve abusive training behaviours will not be from the initial remediation steps, but medium to long-term corporate cultural change exhibiting consistently high values-led behaviours.

Comment 2
No cadet, crew nor SLT person should have any excuse not to know and understand the agreed core values and standards expected of them while at work. This acts as a deterrent effect and ensures that any corrective action(s) for misdemeanours can be cited, recorded, and underpinned by positive knowledge of the company’s expectations at work. In short, ignorance of agreed culture, values and standards is no defence moving forward.

Recommendations

1. **Re-set actions.** The Meridian ‘reset’ will necessitate a reset (‘clean slate’ approach) of all existing cadet warnings and known SLT role failures from 29 May 22 onwards, except for any matters that may subsequently be identified as either constituting criminal behaviour(s) or gross misconduct as determined by Meridian Counsel, which will require immediate investigation by competent persons and authorities.

2. **Rights training.** HRASi staff will continue to engage with Meridian Counsel and the SLT to advise on all necessary human, labour and social rights remediation matters to achieve an effective rights-based training structure and pathway for cadets, crew and the SLT.

3. **Spot-checks.** HRASi staff will attend (unannounced to Meridian’s crew, having agreed date(s) with Meridian Group Counsel) Meridian training facilities 3-4 months from the date of this Field Report to follow-up and review the emerging company training remediation pathway being followed (circa August / September 2022). HRASi staff will attend Meridian training facilities and locations unannounced to Meridian’s crew, having agreed date(s) with Meridian Group Counsel over the subsequent 12-month period following the initial follow-up visit on a minimum of two further occasions, subject to any request(s) for extension.

4. **Scope of checks.** Reviews of Meridian training activities for cadets, crew and SLT will be both on land and at sea. This should include a 2–3-day transit with ability to change over between yachts and/crews.
5. **External SME Liaison.** HRASi engagement should include direct liaison with instructed internal (DPA) external subject matter experts (SMEs) to ensure consistency of interventions and training. The risk of isolated approaches increases the risk of internal misunderstandings, miscalculations, and internal conflict over differing approaches.

6. **SOP Amendment.** SOPs are to be amended to reflect respective Charters and be reviewed for currency. The SOP is a live document that is iterative with an annual deep-dive review scheduled to assure consistency of application, incorporation of updates and shared knowledge of changes with all cadets, crew and SLT.

7. **Public reporting.** HRASi will issue a follow-up public report(s) on findings and delivery of effective remediation by Meridian SLT.

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**Observation #2: Current Culture, Values and Standards**

The corporate culture including values and standards is currently set by the founder, and is purposefully positioned high with the aim of achieving excellence in all training activities. Those activities are to be continuously improved upon for cadets and crew to become “the best” in the yachting / Superyacht industry circles to fill a perceived gap of high-quality qualified crew.

**Comment 1**

There is nothing wrong with the aspiration or strategic intent to achieve excellence, but within small teams of young and maturing cadets under training, those cadets must have their expectations constantly managed and the training style considered to take into account an individual cadet’s background, limitations (emotional, mental and physical (medical)) as well as the extent of their current life experience (to be reflected in the corporate approach to the
recruitment and selection process). Cadets who are expected to achieve excellence must receive **inspirational leadership at all times**, understand shared and individual accountability and be enabled to live realistic and shared core values that are regularly articulated and re-enforced. In short, to achieve excellence cadets must see excellence in their leadership. Cadets must be comprehensively onboarded with the conditions, effects and strains of the service industry lifestyle, the yacht and Superyacht industry, the expected training values and standards, the need for a disciplined lifestyle; and they must understand the inherent need for such standards not just for Meridian’s business and wider reputation reasons, but for assuring both personal and team safety at all times.

**Comment 2**

The terminology of “Incredible, Amazing, Unbelievable” is omnipresent and seeks to reflect the guest experience. The core values and standards agreed to and expected of cadets and crew must be considered to underpin the overt business values that are focused on a professional service industry lifestyle at sea and should be incorporated into key spaces so that the cadet belief system is endorsed.

**Recommendations**

1. **Visibility of message.** Cadet core values and standards, as per their Charter, must be prominently exhibited in their accommodation, be accessible on their app as a reminder reference, be embedded in any future e-training modules and be discussed as part of day-to-day training led by example. The same should apply for the SLT Charter and any future combined Charter that may be developed.

2. **Cadet accommodation.** Visibility of culture, values and standards should be represented not just in app checklists and paper references in transparent folders but should be integrated into cadet led art and / or professionally sketched statements on
walls in a style which reflects and appeals to the cadet’s generation. (Learning should be visual and fun, where able). Cadet accommodation is sterile and not homely within the bounds of the training environment being developed following cadet selection and recruitment.

3. Enforcement. Values-led Charters must be enforced across the entire organisation without exception, with an initial preference for self-regulation underpinned by regular SLT reinforced values of truth, integrity and moral courage demonstrated through SLT leadership. (Failure to self-regulate may well be an indication of other underlying internal issues that need to be identified and addressed within the cadet’s environment).

4. Deterrent Effect. Justice must be done and be seen to be done. If there is a need for minor disciplinary action, this should be dealt with in accordance with the policies and procedures of Meridian in effect from time to time, and done confidentially unless it involves similar egregious human rights matters as exampled by those raised by cadets to HRAS, in which case HRAS should be immediately alerted through whatever means has been agreed. Further, the DPA and flag administration should be put on notice for any disciplinary matters which involves physical or mental abuse.

Observation #3: Leadership Training and Development

Leadership training is necessary across all SLT roles to reinforce credibility and advance personal development in support to, and underpinning of, cadet training.

Comment 1

Leadership is learned through personal experience and continuing exposure to differing cultures, attitudes and a diversity of persons engaged with both personal and professional. Meridian’s drive for excellence should avoid stagnation in all roles and allow crew and SLT to become better persons professionally and personally thereby becoming inspirational leaders.
Comment 2

Leadership must not become out of touch with the range of cultures, cultural differences, generational differences, and the significant range of attitudes exhibited by young persons which may be foreign to mature crew. Further, not all young people want a fixed career over years; they want to and often expect to move on. Those who want to stay, will and which is a measure of corporate impact.

Recommendations

1. **CPD.** Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is required to assure a constant development and refining of SLT leadership qualities, activities, and actions by all persons and especially those designated with lead training roles. It should be embedded in the day-to-day planning of Meridian activities, as applicable, and balanced against owner requirements.

2. **Expertise.** CPD must be undertaken by experienced and competent persons with demonstrable qualifications. It should not necessarily be undertaken by those already in the system as new blood will bring new motivation and ideas. Nepotism must be avoided as familiarity can variously breed contempt, thereby avoiding internal self-regulation and the having of difficult conversations.

3. **Mentoring** by external professional trainers for, but not limited to:

   a. Human element training and awareness (soft skill).
   b. Emotional Intelligence training and awareness (soft skill).
   c. Cross-cultural, and cross-generational management and leadership (soft skill).
   d. Crew Resource Management (CRM).
   e. Human, labour, and social rights standards (legal and policy).
   f. CSR and ESG training and awareness.
   g. Written and oral advocacy training.
4. Coaching for key persons designated as future business enablers and current critical vulnerabilities (CVs) in the business model (i.e., founder, directors, senior management succession crew and specialist subject matter experts (SMEs) such as the Designated Person Ashore (DPA).

5. Interest lectures. Cadets and crew should be encouraged to design, deliver, and collaborate on ‘interest lectures’ to be shared in a ‘clear lower deck’ and which are designed to expose areas of interest by them individually, or as a collective in shared-interest areas. The result is a deeper team knowledge of the person(s), a heightened awareness of matters which can be discussed outside of work thereby building relationships and rapport and practising the art of advocacy and public speaking professionally as a required skill as cadets become employed crew and aspire to positions of leadership within the wider industry. Further, it assists with SLT understanding of cadet’s common language and provides wider human element insight.

Observation #4: Pay and Contracts of Employment

As cadets have been selected, recruited, and are training for professional roles within the industry, noting the investment being placed upon their development, and that the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006 is being followed, cadets should be provided with minimum wage levels and contracts of employment which mirror the MLC requirements.

Recommendations

1. Pay. Cadets are paid a minimum wage based on recent agreements achieved through negotiations by the Joint Working Group of the Joint Maritime Commission amounting to a baseline of USD$658\(^1\) (“The meeting agreed to raise the ILO minimum basic wage for an able seafarer to US$658 as of 1 January 2023. The rate will be increased to US$666 as of 1 January 2024 and to US$673 as of 1 January 2025.”) with a HRASi

recommendation that Meridian adopt a higher baseline of say USD$690 with incremental increases based on cadet qualifications and skills.

2. Contracts. Cadet contracts of employment should be reviewed by an external law firm and in the context of established international human and labour rights standards, including safeguarding and discipline to ensure a mutual understanding of expectations, and a deterrent effect for actions and activities which contravene the culture, values and standards promulgated.

Observation #5: Need for Common Language

Failure in effective communication significantly undermines professional delivery and harmonised approaches across all work roles despite the backup of manual checklists.

Comment

The ability to communicate effectively through verbal, physical and emotional ways and means despite differences in background, upbringing and national culture is a hallmark of high-performing teams.

Recommendations

1. Language Training. Ensure those persons with less developed language skills and understanding have professional language training.

2. Cross-culture training. Introduce cross-cultural communication training for awareness and understanding.
Observation #6: Cadet Selection and Recruitment

There is a requirement to urgently review and reinforce an improved selection and recruitment process for cadets (and trainee crew) in terms of any future training programme to better assure the raw quality of motivated young persons required to voluntarily enter into the Meridian disciplined culture underpinned by the established values and standards which therefore has the best chance of being mutually successful.

Comment

The effort put into the design, clarity and delivery of the selection and recruitment process for future cadets is fundamental to reducing the chance of misunderstandings and incidents that may result in welfare, training and safety incidents that require internal legal or external safeguarding involvement.

Recommendations

1. Internal Review. Conduct an internal review of the existing ways and means of selection and recruitment to identify improvements to be enacted in a timely manner, and before the next cadet intake attends the Meridian training facilities.

2. Cadet involvement. Seek current cadet engagement and involvement in a future selection and recruitment process to understand from their perspective “what good looks like?”. NB: The SLT retains executive decision-making authority, but cadet input may provide valuable insight around motivations and red flags to be aware of.
3. Pre-selection. Consider ways and means to pre-select candidates which involves face-to-face and hands-on engagement with a “try before you buy” approach. Accountability by SLT for selection of cadets who turn out to be unsuitable for whatever reason can be minimised if those selected want to be there, are motivated and inspired to be there, and understand fully the culture, values, and standards they are to be part of.
SECTION III: [Redacted] Meridian Observations, Comments and Recommendations 23 – 27 May 2022

Consultant Background

[Redacted] is a Royal Yachting Association/Maritime and Coastguard Agency, Yachtmaster Instructor and Ocean Examiner who has worked with, amongst others, Commodore, First Class Sailing, Pembrokeshire and Sunsail sailing schools. His special interest in training young people has involved working with the UK Joint Services Adventurous Sail Centre including sailing in the Arctic, Baltic, Caribbean, Mediterranean and Tasman Seas and with the Combined Cadet Force, Marine Society and Sea Cadets and Ocean Youth Trust (South). He is currently chief instructor for the Scouts’ Adventures Offshore, regularly competing in Tall Ships’ Races in the Baltic Sea.

Observations, Comments and Recommendations

The following points are a consequence of engagement and discussion with the HRASi field team and Meridian cadets, crew and the SLT. They represent agreed observations by HRASi.

Observation #7: Sailing Experience

Meridian is applauded for the quality of the emerging, bespoke classroom e-learning and teaching aid. The teaching aid can be replicated on mobile phones enabling the latest version of information to be accessible at all times, especially on board the yachts.
However, while the theory component of Meridian sail instruction is improving, the practical component has recently been seriously eroded. The loss of the Indonesian fleet and the opportunity to train cadets on an 800Nm ocean passage to Darwin, Australia was described as, “tragic” by a senior member of Meridian SLT. The ocean sailing experience included, amongst other things: fastidious preparation of vessel and crew, individual and vessel self-sufficiency, ocean weather forecasts and consequent navigation, following a course to steer with no landmarks, a long period out of sight of land, maintaining a continuous watch-keeping cycle, exercising the on-board chain of command including maintenance of morale and the opportunity to improve skills by competitive racing whilst on passage. Meridian SLT report that this is contributing to a loss of morale and pride amongst Meridian crew at all levels and may been affecting discipline.

Comment

Experience of wind and sea, predicting the elements and isolation are key components in forming excellent, world-capable yachtsmasters and crew. This cannot be experienced or developed in the classroom and can only be partially developed in a land-locked environment such as the Mediterranean Sea.

Recommendation

1. Alternative sailing experience options. Meridian should urgently seek alternative ocean passages to correct the experience deficit, to improve crew morale and to contribute to the excellence which is sought. Following delivery passages from Turkey, suitable ocean passages of 600Nm may be made from Gibraltar to the Canary Islands, Madeira, or A Coruña (North Spain) at suitable times of year. In the future, a more ambitious, though highly rewarding challenge might be the internationally recognised Atlantic Rally for Cruisers (ARC) comprising around 200 sailing vessels and involving 1,200 people. This would involve a delivery crew from Turkey to the Canaries, the Rally and return to Turkey. The timing of the return passage would need careful consideration because the rally is held in November.
Observation #8: Internationally Recognised External Qualifications

Many of the crew expressed the aspiration to acquire internationally recognised qualifications beyond those currently offered by Meridian.

Comment

Currently crew are required to do this in their leave time, spending their own money. Stewardesses, in particular, expressed a wish to achieve internationally recognised barista and wine qualifications to improve their professionalism and to serve their guests better.

Recommendation

1. Additional qualifications. It is recommended that Meridian explores possibilities of running these courses at Meridian or funding the courses to be taken externally in work time.

Observation #9: Safeguarding

The chain of command for a crew member is their Skipper followed by the Fleet Captain. There are times when cadets require an immediate and onboard source of advice. This is currently provided by the stewardesses in an unofficial role known to crews as ‘peacekeepers’.

Comment

This unofficial role involves many human resources and welfare functions such as first aid, organising trips and early intervention during differences of opinion.

Recommendations
1. **Formal safeguarding roles.** It is recommended that this role is formalised, that stewardesses receive training with a recognised international qualification for the role and that it is included in their job specification and contract of employment.

2. **Internal Focal Point.** In addition to peacekeepers, there should be a more senior and independent person who is qualified to act as a wandering individual who the peacekeepers may take advice from and the cadets trust to act in a discreet and confidential manner. That person requires training in incident report writing, mentoring and follow-up of welfare-related matters-of-concern.

**Observation #10: Work Hours**

The Meridian App enables visibility of yacht crew hours of work, verified by the Skipper to the Meridian office.

**Comment**

Although the Meridian App should ensure that suitable hours of rest are allocated, there have been occasions when Skippers have required crew to reduce their (correctly) recorded hours.

**Recommendation**

1. **Recording of hours.** It is recommended that robust oversight of leave and hours, separate from the chain of command is introduced for all levels of Meridian staff and that the correct recording of hours by crew is safeguarded. This should be confirmed by the DPA as well as being in line with international norms being MLC Regulation 2.3:

   5. The limits on hours of work or rest shall be as follows:

   (a) maximum hours of work shall not exceed:

   (i) 14 hours in any 24-hour period; and

   (ii) 72 hours in any seven-day period;

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or

(b) minimum hours of rest shall not be less than:

(i) ten hours in any 24-hour period; and

(ii) 77 hours in any seven-day period.

Observation #11: Leave, entitlement, and enforcement

It is essential that SLT, crew and cadets at all levels take their correct leave entitlement. The executive director of Meridian stated that in autumn 2021 he took “his first 5-day holiday since July 2019”, whilst noting that he was not able to take leave in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID pandemic. Failure to take leave sets an unhealthy precedent.

Comment

When the Director is not taking sufficient leave, it is entirely understandable that his deputies and Skippers will not be taking their allocated leave. Two Skippers currently have leave outstanding, at the beginning of the guest season.

Recommendation

1. Leave and its enforcement. It is recommended that robust internal oversight of leave allocation and uptake, and separate from the chain of command, is introduced for all levels of Meridian staff and that the correct recording of crew leave is safeguarded. This should be a role for the incoming DPA.

Observation #12: Leadership

Very few members of Meridian staff have completed personality questionnaires or personality training programmes to better understand their own characters including their
strengths and limitations, their areas for growth and where they need assistance. This is usually linked to external training and mentoring.

Comment

Personality training leads to a better understanding of others’ characters and can reduce conflict. Once this has been completed leadership training would give staff and Skippers greater confidence. It is particularly important for those working long hours with guests in the confines of a small vessel at sea.

Recommendation

1. Leadership and Personality training as CPD. It is recommended that a programme of understanding personality traits is undertaken (1) initially by Meridian management both office staff and Skippers and (2) cadets, all of whom expect to be Skippers in the guest service industry at sea in future. There are many variations of such programmes. We suggest Enneagram.

Observation #13: Water sports Book & International Recognition

The Maritime Coastguard Agency (MCA) and RYA Training Centre logos should not be used in the Meridian Water sports Handbook without those organisations authorisation as it may be perceived as being an endorsement of the wider Meridian activities.

Comment

The executive director of Meridian stated “those logos refer to our partnering organisations”. This explanation is not acceptable to MCA or RYA.

Recommendation
1. **International standards and recognition.** It is recommended that Meridian achieves RYA Training Centre status (preferred) or removes the logos from associated brochures to avoid misinterpretation.

ENDS.
ANNEX A: HRASi: SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS WITH MERIDIAN ADVENTURE LTD

SCOPE OF WORK (29 May 22 onwards)

1. HRASi Recommendations Report (the Report) finalised.

2. Company response reviewed with HRASi.

3. Company response signed off by Meridian lawyers.

4. Updating (company response inclusion) and redaction of the Report for identified employed crew.

5. Proofing and design of the Report - to be shared with Meridian.

6. Draft joint press statement - to be agreed.

7. Date for publishing - to be agreed.

8. Next steps / concurrent work streams - to be agreed

ONGOING WORK

1. Victim liaison and updates with complainants. Victim / complainant apologies and remediation. ID of victims wishing to be apologised to in-person or in the alternative, personal acceptance/agreement via HRASi of the Report, Meridian company response and public profiling.

2. Victim remedy development:
   a. HRAS to co-ordinate and outreach to those cadets affected.
b. Co-ordinate with persons and request evidence of spend - backed by supporting evidence, including but limited to threats of credit agency, legal enforcement against families.

   c. Meridian offer to pursue education / career / similar courses - RYA / IYA accredited sailing school in South Africa for one complainant.

**HRASi NEXT STEPS WORK - TO BE AGREED**

3. Three-year Meridian Transformation Plan (1.0 to 2.0) including:
   - Roadmap / plan
   - SOPs review and redraft
   - 21 Month Plan review
   - Culture review and advice
   - Safeguarding setup
   - CPD establishment - scope for crew and management
   - RYA accredited and recommended DPA - locate, broker and recommend
   - AOB

4. Twice yearly HRAS on-site reviews (unannounced x2 persons (Human rights plus Sailing SME) for a period of one year, subject to extension by agreement between HRASi and Meridian.
   - Interviews with crew and cadets
   - Review of training materials and ongoing e-training development
   - Transits in vessels observing sailing routines (2-3 days)
   - Teaching Human rights / Labour rights / legal introduction
   - Safeguarding and associated policy review and testing

5. Safeguarding hotline / email setup and staffed (immediate setup and would be integrated into SOPs)

6. Human Element Module development - HRAS ‘Accredited’:
   - Realities of human rights abuses at sea.
   - Introduction to human and labour rights.
   - Introduction to business and human rights.
   - Discipline, culture, and administrative actions (linked to SOPs).
   - Gender, diversity, and inclusion (linked to SOPs).
- Crew well-being (linked to SOPs).
- Safeguarding (linked to SOPs).

ENDS.
Our Charter

1. Accountability
2. Motivation
3. Self-Discipline
4. Respect
5. Trust/Honesty
6. Integrity
7. Understanding/Empathy
8. Unity

Introduction

This charter serves as a pledge from us to ensure that we all give everything we can to guarantee the success and growth of all the individuals present, as well as those to come, but also to help build towards a new and prosperous Meridian 2.0.

We have come forth here today to form a unity. We strive to page over to a new avenue and we have made our peace with the past and set new goals and structure for a brighter future.

In respect to what has just been said, I would like to, on behalf of all the cadets sincerely apologize for our behavior. Walking into the classroom last night and taking a hard, long look at these boards has helped us to reflect on ourselves and give us perspective. It has given us the opportunity to reevaluate our goals and core values. It has not been an easy road these last couple of days but it has been an important one, and I hope that this proves our loyalty and our commitment to help rebuild and grow as a unit together.
Together as cadets, we have formulated a list of 8 key values that we will are willing to stand by and live by, not only during our cadetship but take these values into all aspects of our lives.

The following key values will be discussed in detail in order to find a common ground between cadets and crew whereby complete trust, respect and loyalty are held in the highest regard no matter the circumstance.

**Accountability**

- Taking ownership of your own mistakes and weaknesses.
- Personal Accountability requires Mindfulness, Acceptance, Honesty and Courage
- Restoring responsibility and accountability is essential to the health of this cadetship as well as the loyalty to the owner, vessel and fellow crew.

It boils down to the following statement, ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY for your actions; BE ACCOUNTABLE for your results; TAKE OWNERSHIP of your mistakes.

**Motivation**

- Motivate one another educationally, physically and mentally.
- Setting goals for each other and giving credit/praise when set goals are achieved (Keeping the morale up).
- T.E.A.M (Together, Everyone, Achieves, More)
- Coming together is the beginning, keeping together is the progress. Working together is success.

**Self-Discipline**

- Self-discipline means to establish an authority over one’s own habits, routines and priorities and not being under their control
Taking initiative, doubling down and going the extra mile to set values and create a structure within our lives.

“Motivation gets you going but discipline keeps you growing”
RESPECT IS EARNED BY ACTION ALONE, not Self-Gratification.

Respect

- Respect is mutual
- Treat others the way you would like to be treated and be open minded to positive criticism.
- “Respect is one of the greatest expressions of love”.
- “Respect is for those who deserve it, not demand it.”

Trust / Honesty

- We need to Trust one another with given tasks and have faith in our abilities and own up to our faults and also to be open about how we feel about each other and strive not to lose the trust of our fellow crew members but rather build upon it.
- Without communication there’s no relationship. Without respect there is no love. Without trust there is no reason to continue.

Integrity

- “Integrity is the choice between what’s convenient and what is right.”
- Take pride in our work as well as others, for example when helping someone who is lacking in a certain area, once they have been successful, you should feel a sense of pride. Have the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles and abide by them to the letter.

Understanding / Perspective

- Knowing our crew mates’ strengths and weaknesses and being able to designate tasks in a manner that does not contradict these characteristics but instead helps to improve their skills.
- Also, we need to be empathetic and aware of external/internal issues that may be present within a person.
- Changing YOUR perspective changes YOUR experience, “Life is lived through perspective. What one believes are ups and downs. The other sees as growth”
Unity

- Being able to identify issues within the group/individual and helping collectively to resolve the issue in a mature and respectful manner.
- Standing up and working together towards a common goal.
- We are all different, but we should strive to be in a state of harmony.
- UNITY is strength... when there is teamwork and collaboration wonderful things can be achieved.
- “Teamwork is the ability to work together towards a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments towards organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results”.

ENDS.
ANNEX C: SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM CHARTER: 27 MAY 2022

Our Charter

1. Core Moral Values
2. Teamwork
3. Empathy
4. Passion
5. Responsibility
6. Servant Leadership
7. Accountability
8. Transparency
9. Perspective

Our vision is to provide consistent and impeccable service to our guests, which is grounded in the training we deliver in shaping excellent masters and commanders of yachts and ships.

Our Core Moral Values are fairness, respect, care and honesty, which are underpinned by committed teamwork, personal integrity, and a passion for what we do as servant-leaders who act responsibly with transparency.

Everything we do should build Trust, Loyalty, and Respect.
FAIRNESS. Treating all our team fairly.

RESPECT. We will treat others the way that we wish to be treated, with respect.

CARE. We care about those we work with and those we serve. We care about results, but not at the expense of people, nature or our environment.

HONESTY. We will act with integrity, the strongest attribute of which is honesty. We will be honest amongst ourselves and others to engender trust within the team.

TEAMWORK. We are one team, which embraces fleet and vessel captains, cadets, stewardesses and water sports team members. The collaborative effort of our team must be harnessed to achieve our common goals.

EMPATHY. We must seek to understand and share the feelings of others.

PASSION. We are committed to our vision and passionate about our work and are here to create remarkable experiences. We get things done and are proud of what we accomplish daily.

RESPONSIBILITY. We must own all actions we take and embrace all of our opportunities to contribute.
**SERVANT LEADERSHIP.** We must lead from the front, serving those around us, encouraging and fostering mutual trust and respect. We are committing to be generous givers, not self-serving takers. We give more than we take. We must always seek to help. We encourage a knowledge-sharing environment, in the interests of educating others. We aim constantly to set our team and our people up for success.

**ACCOUNTABILITY.** We must be accountable for our actions and decisions.

**TRANSPARENCY.** We must be transparent in our decisions and dealings. This helps establish and maintain trust by demonstrating that we have nothing to hide. We commit to better, clearer and open lines of communication.

**PERSPECTIVE.** Humor is a powerful team building attribute. We must laugh hard, loud, and often. As a result, we enjoy our work, and we have fun, without compromising on our set procedures and safety, which we take very seriously.

Each team member has a duty to monitor our charter and to flag any deviations to the entire leadership team.

ENDS.
“I regret that the situation within MA Sail deteriorated to the degree it did. However, I am very proud of everyone who tried to explain what had failed in the company's interests and its people.

With the help of all of you, I have come to understand that we have failed to make all our people feel heard, seen and included.

I conceived this Cadet Program and fought for it to come into existence in the interest of giving young deserving people a big head start in life. The goal was to give them all my and my team’s collective knowledge and experience and provide them with access to the best assets, tools, equipment and learning materials to become future industry leaders.

Therefore, I and my team take full responsibility and ownership of this failure.

We are very sorry things came to this point. We deeply regret this failure and apologize to everyone equally.

We are looking at this as an opportunity to rebuild and grow a new training academy programme. We have a bright future ahead of us, where we will strive to ensure that all MA SAIL Cadets and Crew are recognized worldwide as the best of the best.
We are using all the information at hand, including your well thought out and composed "charter mandate that we have received from you, the cadets",

and the "charter mandate that the permanent crew team leaders developed yesterday after their intensive meetings over the past days .

I assure you that my team and I will work tirelessly until we have repaired all our relationships and we have upgraded the MA SAIL program to version 2.0, which will be a world class program as it was always intended to be.

Since this program will be the foundation against which you will build your future careers over the next 30 years, we ask you to please seize the day and join me in this endeavour. The saying is that it takes a village, but in our case, maybe better it is more perfectly expressed as it takes a Fleet.

Sincerely, [Redacted]

ENDS.