

# The first call — detailed notes

Saturday 20 June 2026 · Microsoft Teams

These notes set out, in full, what was discussed on our first call. We are sharing them openly — in the interest of complete transparency — so that everyone, whether or not they could join, has the same picture as we move into forming the working committee. Names are kept out by design: the ideas matter more than who raised them.

## WHY WE'RE DOING THIS

Twenty-five years on from college, our alumni are spread across the world's shipping hubs and well beyond them — at sea and ashore, in companies large and small, and increasingly in ventures of their own. The bond between us has never been in question. What has been missing is structure: a common platform that turns that bond into something practical and repeatable.

If the bond is not in question, the timing is the point. Twenty-five years on, our people are no longer finding their feet — they are chief engineers and captains, technical heads, founders and senior leaders across companies and institutions, in maritime and well outside it. That reach is exactly what makes the network worth building now: the value we can create for one another is real and immediate, in a way it simply could not have been earlier.

The existing official network has converted only a small fraction of a large alumni base — a clear signal that goodwill, on its own, does not sustain a network. Cynosure is an attempt to close that gap, learning from the world's best alumni networks rather than reinventing anything. It was put forward as a proof of concept — nothing is finalised, the name included — and the purpose of the call was simple: to test whether enough of us share the vision, and to find the first people willing to build it.

## WHAT WE PROPOSE — THE MODEL

One principle sits underneath everything: membership has to pay the member back. From there, the proposed structure has a few clear parts. Each was put on the table to start a conversation, not to close one — the working committee will refine all of it.

- ◆ **Run like an organisation** — clear roles, responsibilities and measures of success, an executive structure and real accountability — some positions paid, some partially paid, some volunteer
- ◆ **Independent, at arm's length** — complementary to the institute and to the existing bodies, never in competition; an umbrella that brings today's silos onto one platform

The value the network returns to its members sits across a set of pillars:

- ◆ **Trusted opportunities** — verified jobs at sea and ashore, and a dedicated cell to ease the move to shore
- ◆ **A verified member directory** — one place to see who is where and doing what, so the first introduction is easy
- ◆ **Group benefits** — using the scale of the network to secure what no individual easily can — group insurance among them
- ◆ **Mentoring, recognition and scholarships**
- ◆ **A standing welfare safety net** — practical support for members and their families when it is needed most
- ◆ **An Entrepreneurs' Circle** — with a properly governed fund alongside, to back our own founders
- ◆ **Women in maritime** — a deliberate focus, not an afterthought

Two further parts hold it together:

- ◆ **A volunteer ladder** — members rise from leading small teams to board-level roles through a mix of rotation, election and earned progression; effort is recognised, so contribution stays accountable rather than a side hustle
- ◆ **Funded transparently** — three clear pathways — donations and grants, sponsorships, and the fund — with full transparency on how money is raised and used treated as the non-negotiable
- ◆ **Governed by the many, not the few** — invited seniors and well-wishers serve as advisors only, with no decision-making power; the board decides by vote

The honest horizon is two to three years to reach a stable, self-sustaining model. Nothing here requires a legal structure on day one — the first job is people, not paperwork. This is a build, not a launch.

## WORKING WITH THE INSTITUTE AND THE EXISTING BODIES

A recurring question was how Cynosure sits alongside the institute and the alumni groups that already exist — the official college network and the long-standing community abroad. The answer is deliberate independence with an open hand. Cynosure is not a replacement for, or a rival to, any of them; it is an umbrella designed to bring groups that currently work in silos onto one platform, so that an effort in one city draws support from everywhere rather than competing for the same attention.

The institute and the existing bodies are welcomed as advisors — their standing and goodwill matter — but in an advisory capacity, not a controlling one. The network operates at arm's length on purpose: close enough to draw on the institution's name and history, far enough to ask hard questions, move quickly, and stay accountable to members first. Equally, the network does not seek to involve itself in the institute's internal affairs. The relationship is one of mutual support, not influence in either

direction.

## **TRUST, ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY**

The most honest part of the conversation was about trust. Several made the same point in different ways: goodwill has been plentiful, but a previous paid effort left many feeling they got little back, and that experience cannot be repeated. The diagnosis offered was structural rather than personal — what was missing was accountability and a support structure: clear ownership, defined roles, and people whose job it is to respond when a member reaches out.

Cynosure's answer is to build those things in from the start. Roles carry accountability. Progress is published openly — regular updates, so movement is visible to members and non-members alike — rather than decisions happening behind closed doors. Money, when it eventually flows, is handled transparently, with how it is raised and used treated as the non-negotiable. And because contribution is recognised rather than assumed, the work is less likely to fade into a well-meaning side hustle. Trust, as more than one person put it, is earned in the difficult moments — when someone is between jobs, starting a venture, or facing a setback — and that is exactly where the network intends to show up.

## **COMMUNITY, EVENTS AND BELONGING**

A network lives or dies on whether people actually meet. Alongside the structured online calls, the plan is for regular, smaller gatherings in the cities where alumni cluster — the Gulf, India, Singapore and the other hubs where our people have landed — building, over time, towards a larger annual gathering. The logic raised on the call was simple: many small, genuine meetings create the bonds and the trust that a single big event never can, and those bonds are what eventually make the bigger moments worth attending.

The aim is to feel less like a directory and more like a family — where people share ideas, learn from one another, and help each other as a matter of course. And the definition of who belongs is deliberately generous: anyone who shares the bond of the institution, including those from the shorter programmes and every batch, is part of this. Counted that way, the community we can draw on runs well into the thousands.

## **TELLING OUR OWN STORY**

One quieter point drew strong agreement: our successes are not visible enough. The people who have built companies, risen to the top of their fields, or quietly helped dozens of others are not widely known — even among us, and certainly not to the younger batches who most need someone to look up to. Part of the work, then, is simply telling our own story: making the network and the people in it visible, so that membership carries weight and those coming up can see exactly what is possible.

## HOW WE'LL WORK TOGETHER

On process, one ask was made clearly and agreed: keep debate and decision-making to the structured calls, and use the group chat for what it does well — notifications, not arguments. The intention is a steady cadence: regular calls, a smaller committee meeting more often, and progress shared in between, so momentum is visible and nobody has to wonder what is happening.

## QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR — AND HOW WE ANSWERED

Questions were taken both from those submitted ahead of the call and live from the room. The main ones, and the answers given:

### ◆ **How does this help younger seafarers — junior officers and engineers?**

Membership is free for those still sailing. They gain a direct line to alumni who have already moved ashore, a dedicated cell to guide and track the move when the time comes, and mentoring from people only a few steps ahead. The aim is to make the first, hardest introduction easy.

### ◆ **What do I actually get out of it?**

It is designed to be mutual, not charitable. Beyond goodwill: verified opportunities, introductions that genuinely convert, group benefits, counsel when moving ashore, and real support in hard times. The more you put in, the more it returns — that is the whole point of the structure.

### ◆ **Why will people trust this when a previous effort underdelivered?**

Because trust is built, not assumed — through defined roles and accountability, progress published in the open, transparency on money, and starting small so results speak before promises do. Because contribution is recognised, the work is less likely to quietly fade.

### ◆ **Won't this conflict with the institute or the existing alumni bodies?**

No. It is deliberately independent and complementary — an umbrella to bring today's separate groups onto one platform, with the institute and existing bodies invited as advisors, never as competitors.

### ◆ **How do we keep this from being run top-down by the two who proposed it?**

That is exactly why the first ask is a working committee, not a launch. Decisions sit with a board that votes; the proposers are stepping up to start it, not to own it. The ideas, and the leadership, are meant to come from the members.

### ◆ **How will we know it is working in six to twelve months?**

By visible, measurable signs: a functioning committee, published objectives and progress, real introductions and placements, members helped through transitions or hardship, and steady growth from a small, committed core.

### ◆ **What about emergencies and welfare — can we help a member or their family quickly?**

A standing welfare safety net is a core pillar, not an afterthought. The structure is being built so that, when something goes wrong, there is somewhere to turn quickly.

## WHAT WE DECIDED

- ◆ **Form the first working committee** — a core of five to seven people willing to commit around ten to twelve hours a month; the first volunteers stepped forward on the call
- ◆ **Structure follows traction** — no legal set-up yet — build the committee and the momentum first
- ◆ **Publish progress openly** — regular updates, so movement is visible to members and non-members alike
- ◆ **Share these notes with everyone** — so no one is left out of the picture
- ◆ **Reconvene on a fixed date** — the next call is set for 11 July

### ◆ **NEXT CALL**

**Saturday 11 July 2026 · 11:00 Dubai (GST)**

Microsoft Teams — where we confirm the working committee and set the first objectives.

## HOW TO TAKE PART

If you would like to help shape this, the step is simple: reach out to either of the proposers before 11 July and put your hand up. The committee is being formed now, and the people who step in at this stage are the ones who will shape what it becomes. If you can give it ten to twelve hours a month and want to build something that lasts, this is the moment.

*Everything here is shared in the interest of full transparency. Read it, think about where you would add value, and join us on 11 July.*

Proposed by Yasovardhan Chinni (YC) & Ravi Kiran (RK) · independent of, and complementary to, the institute