Understanding the context and needs of the maritime heritage sector

28/08/2024

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Our new historic ships research is helping us understand the condition and challenges of vessels on the National Historic Fleet and how to effectively target our funding and strategic support.

Attachment	Size
PDF View Historic ships research as PDF(1.83 MB)	1.83 MB

We've worked in partnership with National Historic Ships UK to examine previous funding from the Heritage Fund and National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) and the ongoing maintenance, conservation and sustainability needs of the maritime sector, with a focus on the National Historic Fleet (NHF).

We recognise the challenging environment in which historic ships are operating, including difficulties accessing conservation facilities, scarcity and high cost of materials and traditional skills at risk of loss.

While demand for funding from historic ships is likely to remain high, it is difficult to predict the scale, at either individual vessel or sector-wide level.

Key findings

Drawing on interviews with those in the maritime heritage sector, alongside surveys and case studies, our research found that the most important considerations for the sector itself included:

- that the NHF is critically important and should be maintained and amended regularly
- that there is a need for timely and regular investment, including considering repeat funding
- there is a need to invest in organisations' vision and capacity, to understand how a vessel fits into their overall purpose
- that accepting loss and alternatives to full conservation must be considered where vessels cannot be saved
- there is a need to invest in the workforce and for new training offers that tie in with employment opportunities
- increased co-operation and knowledge sharing is needed
- there is a need to consider funding for ships within their context and make connections between vessels and their place

Recommendations

We'll use the recommendations from the report to inform our future grant-making and strategy development, including:

- considering how the Heritage Fund could support conservation and maintenance work that recognises the ongoing nature of the maritime heritage sector's needs

- exploring how sector-wide challenges might be addressed through our Heritage 2033 strategic initiatives, including skills and capacity development and how to link historic ships with our focus on place
- how NHMF can maintain oversight of priority vessels and consider grant applications accordingly

Next steps

We, along with NHMF, are committed to understanding and responding to challenges and opportunities within the heritage sector. This historic ships research ensures that we have the knowledge to inform our policy and strategy development around heritage in need. We'll also use it to update our internal best practice guidance, helping us provide the right support and advice to projects in development and delivery.

Download the PDF attached to this page to explore the full research report.

Our research and evaluation

We regularly conduct research to discover what is happening in the heritage sector, and we evaluate our work to better understand the change we are making. Read more of our insight.



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