

We're investing to protect the maritime heritage



Sunrise at Tollesbury Saltings. The red ship is the historic Light Ship, Trinity, now retired. Credit: Dan Brand.

The UK's historic ships have saved lives at sea, sustained coastal fishing communities and connected people and places. Now our funding is helping secure their future.

Thirty percent of the UK's National Historic Fleet is identified as at risk and, along with them, the traditional crafts such as boatbuilding and sail-making that keep them afloat.

We've awarded National Historic Ships UK £140,040 development funding – with the potential for a future £1.2m delivery grant – to strengthen the sector. The project will identify the vessels most in need and help build vital skills through targeted grants, guidance and specialist training.

In our Heritage 2033 strategy we recognised that maritime heritage is an area in need. This targeted support responds to that need and will help preserve heritage and build sector capacity.

This UK-wide investment will help revive endangered skills, boost the capacity and resilience needed to safeguard these vessels and involve communities across the UK so that the stories they carry are preserved for future generations.

We're also investing in individual projects that are saving vessels, skills and seafaring stories, including:

The Manx Beauty, Fife

The Cellardyke Trust – which we recently awarded £1.2m – will rebuild this 1930s fishing vessel and teach traditional boatbuilding skills.

A temporary boatyard is being set up in the grounds of Waid Academy, offering school pupils and the local community hands-on experience and new pathways into employment. Once rebuilt, the Manx Beauty will return to Anstruther Harbour as a living heritage asset, celebrating the maritime heritage and skills that shaped the region.

The RNLI Thomas McCunn, Orkney

With our grant of £1.6m, The Longhope Lifeboat Museum Trust is conserving the UK's only remaining seaworthy slipway launched vintage lifeboat and its Grade B listed lifeboat station.

The museum honours generations of lifeboat crews who served the dangerous waters of the Pentland Firth and Scapa Flow, in historic lifeboats of courage.



Heritage Fund Trustee, Dr Heather Reid, with the lifeboat, Longhope.

Pioneer Sailing Trust, Essex

We awarded Pioneer Sailing Trust £2.3m in 2024 to broaden access to careers in boatbuilding and make sure traditional maritime skills are not lost.

Since
Septem



Pioneer Sailing Trust apprentices.

The Spurn Lightship, Hull

The Spurn Lightship – recently restored and reopened as part of our £18.5m investment in Hull Maritime – was built in 1927 to guide ships through the waters of the River Humber. Now, new interpretation and displays are helping tell the vessel's full story.



The recently reopened Spurn Lightship is free to visit. Credit: Tom Arran Photo.

SS Great Britain, Bristol

Launched in 1843, Isambard Kingdom Brunel's innovative iron-hulled steamship travelled to every inhabited continent and collected passengers from at least 51 countries. With [our £246,169 grant](#), Bristol Dockyards has brought the city's communities on board to research the ship's global stories and have their say on its future.

Our support for maritime heritage

Eilish McGuinness, Chief Executive of The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "Historic vessels are a remarkable part of the UK's heritage, representing industrial and coastal history and encapsulating the stories of communities and places. However, we know that the skills and organisations needed to care for them are under increasing pressure.

"Thanks to National Lottery players, this UK-wide investment will help revive endangered skills, boost the capacity and resilience needed to safeguard these vessels and involve communities across the UK so that the stories they carry are preserved for future generations."

Find out more about the work we've done to understand the needs of the maritime heritage sector. [Read the 2024 research we did with National Historic Ships UK.](#)



The Mary Rose was built in 1510-11 at the start of Henry VIII's reign and was one of his favourite ships until it sank in 1545. Credit: Hufton and Crow.



Museum's resilience

Welcoming people aboard the Hastings fishing fleet. Credit: Euan Baker.



Hastings' fishing heritage alive

Two Skylark IX volunteers honing their boatbuilding skills

Recovery and resilience: advice from a heritage project improving skills and wellbeing