The Seamless Sea:
joining-up marine and maritime cultural heritage for the public

A Guide for Practitioners

HFF Steering Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage

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This document summarises some of the characteristics of marine and maritime cultural heritage and suggests practical steps that can be taken by practitioners as individuals or within institutions. It is based on discussion at a Policy Forum organised by the Honor Frost Foundation Steering Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage on 19 October 2016.

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1. Marine and maritime cultural heritage creates social, economic and environmental benefits. The benefits of marine and maritime cultural heritage are recognised – at least in principle – in law, policy and planning.

- Have confidence in the value of marine and maritime cultural heritage and the degree of public interest it attracts.
- Develop a vision for the contribution made by marine and maritime cultural heritage to society, economy and environment – both at the present and in future – that can be used in coastal place-making

2. People's relationship with the sea includes marine and maritime cultural heritage, but it also encompasses coastal and marine habitats and a wide range of social, creative and emotional connections.

- Recognise how heritage, nature and society interweave; and the potential this represents to develop new perspectives and initiatives that can help (re-) connect people to their marine environment.
- Engage with wider narratives about the character of people's relationship with the sea in the humanities and natural sciences that go beyond marine and maritime cultural heritage.

3. Seas and coasts are highly dynamic: connectivity and change are inherent in marine and coastal processes but also in the ways in which people have responded to and influenced those processes through time.

- Use marine and maritime cultural heritage to understand how coastal and marine places have acquired their distinctive characters, and to anticipate how that character might change in future.

- Value the marine and maritime connections between places as a fundamental characteristic of the cultural heritage of those places rather than as an incidental addition.

4. Institutional frameworks at the coast are complex; boundaries and responsibilities may not reflect the character or needs of marine and maritime cultural heritage.
- Work collaboratively and through partnerships.
- Look for new forms of cross-cutting organisation.

5. Marine and maritime cultural heritage can alleviate pressures facing coastal communities.
- Make express connections between regeneration and marine and maritime cultural heritage.
- Use marine and maritime cultural heritage to address specific social, economic and environmental issues.

6. Data is needed on the specific social, economic and environmental benefits of marine and maritime cultural heritage.
- Collate and publish data on the benefits of marine and maritime cultural heritage.
- Encourage third-party data initiatives to address marine and maritime cultural heritage directly.

7. People expect an enjoyable experience of marine and maritime cultural heritage irrespective of the depth of their knowledge or the degree of their engagement.
- Create concise and accessible content that combines the familiar with the intriguing.
- Enable people to delight in discovery – one of the great strengths of marine and maritime heritage – with multiple layers and challenges that can be explored as circumstance and inclination allow.

8. Responsiveness to public interest requires research, to better understand the processes through which marine and maritime cultural heritage contributes to society, economy and environment.
- Examine how you achieve social, economic and environmental impacts through marine and maritime cultural heritage.
- Encourage and participate in collaborative research on the social, economic and environmental impacts of marine and maritime cultural heritage.

9. Marine and coastal developers carry out extensive and detailed investigations of marine and maritime cultural heritage, which have broad value beyond the requirements of the specific development.

- Encourage developers to present the results of archaeological investigations to the public in the course of consent procedures and construction activities, not just after the development has been completed.
- Enable the results of development-led work to inform broader chronological, regional, and thematic assessments and interpretations to build better understanding that will benefit all.

10. There are many good examples of marine and maritime cultural heritage projects that have delivered social, economic and environmental benefits.

- Draw on previous existing examples of good practice in developing new initiatives intended to achieve positive social, economic and environmental benefits.
- Actively share previous and current best practice through networks of practitioners.

11. The interpretations that accompany material components of marine and maritime cultural heritage – on every scale from individual artefact to entire landscape – are central to the importance of the material itself.

- Accompany the measures used to safeguard the physical remains of the past with corresponding measures to communicate the stories from which their significance arises.
- Seek to connect people to physical material – be it artefact or landscape – through narratives of everyday lives as well as elites and exceptional events.

12. Access to marine and maritime cultural heritage can be limited by factors such as income, educational background, age, ethnicity, gender, disability or health.

- Take specific actions to increase access to marine and maritime cultural heritage across the whole of society.
- Recognise that historical interpretations of marine and maritime cultural heritage are incomplete if they do not account for diversity in the past.

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