



## Managing Shipwrecks

Towards better integration of the interests and responsibilities that affect how we look after maritime heritage

Shipwrecks are often the first thing that comes to mind when people hear about maritime archaeology or underwater cultural heritage (UCH). Although they are important as underwater cultural heritage, shipwrecks are also a focus for many other interests. Faced with all these overlapping interests, the management of shipwrecks presents many complexities throughout the world.

In April 2018, the HFF Steering Committee on UCH published a report entitled *Managing Shipwrecks*<sup>1</sup> that explored specific aspects of the management of shipwrecks in the UK to help inform the HFF's objectives in advancing UCH in the eastern Mediterranean. The report recommended various practical measures that could lead to greater recognition of the value of wrecks to different sectors and enable more effective management overall.

The Steering Committee organised a Policy Forum in May 2018 to discuss the management of shipwrecks in the light of the new report and its recommendations, and to start shaping the future management of shipwrecks both in UK waters and further afield. Current problems and opportunities were thoroughly aired by the programme of presentations and discussions. As well as endorsing the recommendations set out in the report, the Policy Forum indicated a series of steps that the Steering Committee is incorporating into its forward programme through advocacy, encouraging research, promoting best practice and supporting public engagement.

Shipwrecks are a fascinating legacy of earlier times that now form an important component of our marine environment. Although shipwrecks can give rise to hazards, they are also capable of providing a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits. Both the general vision and the sector-specific visions set out here are achievable. Indeed, much progress has already been made in their direction. This document, supported by the report *Managing Shipwrecks* and the deliberation of the Policy Forum in May 2018, provides a practical focus for action.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://honorfrostfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Managing-Shipwrecks-April-2018-web.pdf>

## What does good management of shipwrecks look like?

### An overarching vision for managing shipwrecks

Shipwrecks are widely regarded as valuable assets. The multiple interests attached to shipwrecks – including heritage interest – are recognised, understood and (where possible) quantified. Where it is practical to do so, benefits attributable to shipwrecks are maintained and enhanced.

Intrusive actions directed at shipwrecks (to address navigational or environmental hazards, for example) cause minimal damage and are adequately mitigated. The deteriorating condition of many shipwrecks is acknowledged and addressed through their management to avoid exacerbation.

Information about planned surveys, research, investigations and other activities directed at shipwrecks is shared in advance so that opportunities for collaboration – including sharing results – are maximised.

A consistent approach is applied to shipwrecks to the full extent of UK jurisdiction, interests and influence. It is evident to public bodies, to the UK public, to the government of other countries and to the global community that the UK applies a common and consistent set of principles to the management of shipwrecks.

Government uses its own ownership interests in shipwrecks to support good management both directly and by example.

Shipwrecks that are significant to the UK – within UK jurisdiction, within the jurisdiction of other countries, or on the international seabed – are protected to the UK's satisfaction consistent with international law.

The UK engages positively with international measures and initiatives to improve the management of shipwrecks. Having ratified the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, the UK is an active participant in its institutions.

UK experience and expertise relating to shipwrecks is acknowledged and sought-after around the world. UK maritime heritage is recognised and supported by government as a focus of domestic and inward tourism, and as a source of export services.

Data about shipwrecks held by public authorities – including reports of new discoveries – is integrated and shared. There is a presumption in favour of public access to shipwreck data unless it would cause an unacceptable risk to human safety, the environment or to the condition of the wreck. Shipwreck data is linked to related material held in public archives. Members of the public explore shipwreck data and archives and contribute their own information.

UK experience supports and encourages best practice in managing shipwrecks in the eastern Mediterranean.

## Vision for each sector addressed in Managing Shipwrecks

### Commemoration

There is consistency in the recognition afforded to those who lost their lives at sea, in war and peace and whether military or civilian. The status of shipwrecks as memorials to those who died is widely appreciated, even if no human remains have been observed.

### Fishing

The function and value of shipwrecks in sustainable fisheries is better understood and quantified. Impacts of fishing on shipwrecks have been reduced through provision of shipwreck data and guidance on fishing methods. Protocols that encourage fishermen to report their discoveries are established and supported. The importance of fishing heritage – including the wrecks of fishing vessels – is underlined.

### Heritage

Maritime heritage is promoted as a distinctive characteristic and strength of the UK. The social and economic benefits of shipwreck heritage – both underwater and in the museum sector – are understood and quantified. Protection, research and public engagement in shipwreck heritage are strongly supported by heritage agencies and funding bodies. The UK university sector continues to build on its international standing in research and teaching relating to shipwrecks.

### International Interests

The UK's interest in ships with which it has a verifiable link is promulgated globally. The UK takes swift action when its interests in shipwrecks are put at risk. UK services and skills relating to shipwrecks are promoted internationally. UK shipwreck heritage encourages inward tourism.

### Nature Conservation

The contribution of shipwrecks to marine biodiversity and to the functioning of healthy ecosystems is understood. The diversity and importance of marine life associated with UK shipwrecks is actively shared with the public.

### Navigation Safety

Shipwreck data from navigational surveys is routinely made available to other public bodies with interests in shipwrecks. Powers to remove or disperse wrecks are always exercised with due regard to other interests in shipwrecks.

### Ownership

The interests of owners in shipwrecks are supported. Illegal activities, recovery and theft relating to shipwrecks are targeted through crime prevention, monitoring, intelligence and enforcement. Legal and administrative incentives that encourage opportunistic disturbance and recovery have been removed.

### Public and Environmental Risk

Wrecks that pose a significant public or environmental risk are identified and prioritised. Measures to reduce risk are applied. Disturbance is minimised wherever possible; activities to remove wrecks do not take place without appropriate advice being sought.

### Recreation

The value of shipwrecks as a focus for recreation both offshore (e.g. diving; sea angling) and onshore (e.g. visitors to the coast; museum visitors) is quantified and mobilised to enhance investigation and management. People can readily find out about shipwrecks through interests in local, community and family history.

### Sea-Use

The multiplicity of interests in shipwrecks is expressly recognised in marine plan policies and licensing. Shipwrecks benefit from common policing and enforcement practices across agencies. Shipwrecks benefit from their inclusion within marine protected areas.