NATIONAL HISTORIC SHIPS UK



Dog Watch, by Kim Hogg.

Annual Review 2025-2026

Our Remit

National Historic Ships UK (NHS-UK) receives an annual grant from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) based on the following remit:

- to act as the primary source of independent and objective advice to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, other government departments, the Devolved Administrations and public bodies on matters which directly or indirectly involve or affect historic vessels and the environments in which they are found

- to act as a source of advice to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other grant-giving bodies across the UK on maritime conservation priorities, and applications they receive relating to funding historic ships, their environments, and associated projects

- to provide leadership and strategic vision across the UK historic ships communities and wider maritime sectors by acting as the official voice for historic vessels, pursuing proactive engagement with the sector, the UK government, the Devolved Administrations, public and private agencies, and communities at large.

Activities & Achievements

2026 marked an important milestone for NHS-UK as we celebrated 20 years since our formation by DCMS in 2006. We shared our top 20 projects from the last two decades on a dedicated webpage, issued anniversary certificates to all vessels on the National Registers and planned a commemorative event at Trinity House.



Transom, by George Fisk.

The National Registers

This year 45 craft were added to the National Registers which comprise: the National Register of Historic Vessels (NRHV); the National Historic Fleet (NHF); the National Archive of Historic Vessels (NAHV); the Overseas Watch List (OWL); and the UK Replica List.

The review of registered service vessels continued as a pilot project, with the assessment and scoring of 104 historic tugs, comprising 5% of all vessels on the National Registers. Eleven tugs were listed on the NHF following this, ten of which retained their original status and one which was considered sufficiently significant to merit this recognition for the first time.

Pilotage craft were reviewed next, with the assessment of 59 light ships, pilot vessels and tenders comprising just under 3% of all vessels on the National Registers. Seven pilotage craft were included on the NHF after this process, six of which retained their original status and one which was newly added based on its significance.

The annual 'At Risk' analysis of NHF vessels was completed by Field Officer Peter Green. Out of 194 vessels on the NHF, 9% were given a 'Red' designation indicating that they are deemed marginal or not viable, 19% an 'Amber' designation reflecting challenges highlighted, and 72% a 'Green' Designation which means they are considered secure. The figures overall remained at a similar level to previous years.



Time to Tack, by David Edmund-Jones.

Learning, Infrastructure & Skills

Three expressions of interest were received for the Historic Vessel Conservation course and a new case study was uploaded to support Unit 7, featuring a recorded deconstruction project at Lancaster Maritime Museum. Two training workshops were given to the Heritage Engineering Marine Technician apprentices at Pioneer Sailing Trust in Brightlingsea. The Traditional Seafarer Introductory Certificate continued to be delivered by the Blyth Tall Ship with the Coastal Exploration Company also signing up as a new provider. In October, our Shipshape Scotland Hub, the Scottish Fisheries Museum, hosted a successful networking event at the Scottish Maritime Museum.



Mending Time, by Kim Hogg.

UK Living Heritage Inventory

In 2024, the UK signed up to the 2004 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and, following this, announced the establishment of four separate Living Heritage inventories across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. NHS-UK worked to ensure that significant maritime skills and techniques were captured during this process, helping to co-ordinate interest in submissions for wooden boatbuilding, sail making, knot tying, rope making and traditional rigging. NHS-UK also authored an entry for traditional seamanship, focussing on the skills associated with lug, gaff, sprit and square rig sailing.



Weathered by the Sea, by Chrissie Westgate.

Leading Lights Project

An application was submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for Leading Lights, a 5-year project aiming to invest in historic vessels UK-wide, making the sector more resilient, connected and informed. The scheme incorporates a full Review of the National Registers building on the work of the current pilot, creates a 20-year strategy for NHS-UK and seeks to consolidate the Shipshape Network with a full-time co-ordinator post. Improved planning and risk assessment tools, practical maintenance training and a Virtual Volunteering scheme, along with increased professional support and a third-party grants programme are the key outputs designed to support vessel custodians. £140,040 development phase funding was secured, with match-funding from the Pilgrim Trust, enabling us to progress our ideas and work towards a second-round application of £1.2 million in 2027.



Catching a Nap, by George Fisk.



Tide Time, by Chris Cook.

Forums, Meetings & Events

Two Big Ship Forum sessions were held across the year, drawing particularly on international case studies. Members of the Lug Rig Forum met in person at Cotehele Quay in the Summer, whilst continuing to share news of events, training and skills at the bi-annual online sessions. The NHS-UK team undertook more than 50 vessel visits, participating in over 100 in-person or online meetings throughout the year. In addition, the Director continued to attend regular sessions of the Maritime Heritage Committee (Society for Nautical Research), the Mobile Heritage & Advocacy Group (The Heritage Alliance), the Maritime Heritage Network Committee (UK Maritime Heritage Forum), the *HMS Victory* Technical Committee (National Museum of the Royal Navy) and the Ships Committee (International Congress of Maritime Museums).



Sails, Smiles & Sunshine, by Amy Lawson.



Old Sea Salt, by Ann Belcher.



Glenachulish's Skipper, by Isabelle Law.



Last Minute Running Repairs, by Clive Blount.

Outreach & Engagement

The Photography Competition, with its theme of 'Craft and Crew' had a bumper year with 750 entries. The winners were announced in an annual Awards film showcasing sites around Bristol's Floating Harbour which attracted over 1,500 views. Our annual exhibition of the previous year's top photographs, in partnership with The Historic Dockyard Chatham, moved venues into the impressive 3 Slip, opening to the public in September. Across the year, we published 11 monthly newsletters, attended four Flagship presentation ceremonies and sold 75 limited edition Calendars.

Personnel

Staff & Volunteers:

- Hannah Cunliffe, Director and Chair of Council
- Paula Palmer, Resources Manager
- Victoria Wallworth, Policy, Projects and Course Manager (job share)
- Luis Vicente, Projects Officer & Policy, Projects & Course Manager (job share)
- Kathryn Jones, Administration & PR Co-ordinator
- Peter Green, Fieldworker
- Stuart Anderson, Registration Volunteer
- Phil Mikulski, Communications & Administration Volunteer

Council of Experts: (bi-annual meetings)

Existing members: Andrew Baines, Stephen Beresford, Wyn Davies, Linda Fitzpatrick, Paul Jeffery, Eric Kentley, John Megoran, David Newberry, Simon Stephens
Stepping down: Stuart Wilkinson, Helen Doe, Robin Masefield
New in post (January 2026): Mike Carter, Ian Clark, Ian Dunkley, Inigo Lapwood, Will Stirling

We would like to pay tribute to Robin Masefield and Sean Neeson (ex-Advisory Committee) who sadly passed away this year.



Keeping the *Butty* Moving, by Tom McDowall.

Award Winners 2025:

Marsh Volunteer Awards:

Individual (joint) – John Aitken, Tall Ship *Glenlee*
Individual (joint) – Richard Brown, Britannia Sailing Trust
Team – The Norfolk Wherry Trust, *Albion*
Shipshape Network – Shirley Cochrane, Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Society, *Sir Samuel Kelly*
Highly Commended, Ambler's Friends, *Ambler.*

Martyn Heighton Excellence in Conservation Award:

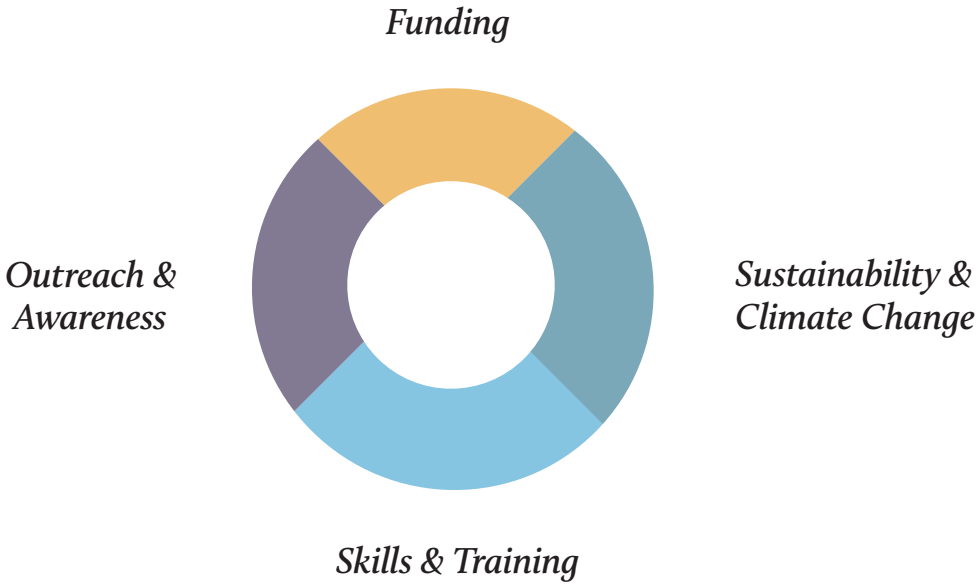
Winner: Raybel Charters CIC
Highly Commended: Mike Barnes, *Sparklet.*

Operational Flagships of the Year 2026:

Spritsail barge *Hydrogen*
Narrowboat *Redshank*
Racing yacht *Sea Scamp*
Galleon *The Golden Hinde*

Photography Competition Winners can be found inside the 2027 Calendar.

Strategic Priorities 2024– 2028



Measuring Progress | Milestones Reached in 2025 – 2026

FUNDING:

- Issued 12 grants totalling £9,100 through our Small Grants Scheme, ten of which were supported by Winter & Co (Marine) Ltd
- Secured a Development Phase grant of £140,040 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the Leading Lights project, with match-funding from the Pilgrim Trust

OUTREACH & AWARENESS:

- Held a photography exhibition in 3 Slip at the Historic Dockyard Chatham
- Premiered Awards film on YouTube in November achieving local and national news coverage
- Hosted a webinar on Heritage Crime in partnership with the Maritime Heritage Trust
- Commented on planning applications impacting historic vessels at South Quay, London and the T. Nielsen & Co shipyard in Gloucester
- Chaired a panel session at the debut Wooden Boat Stage, Southampton Boat Show
- Attended presentation ceremonies for all four Flagships of the Year
- Hosted bi-annual Big Ship and Lug Rig Forums
- Published a case study in *From Local to Global: The Power of Heritage in a Changing World*, an international report from the Heritage Alliance

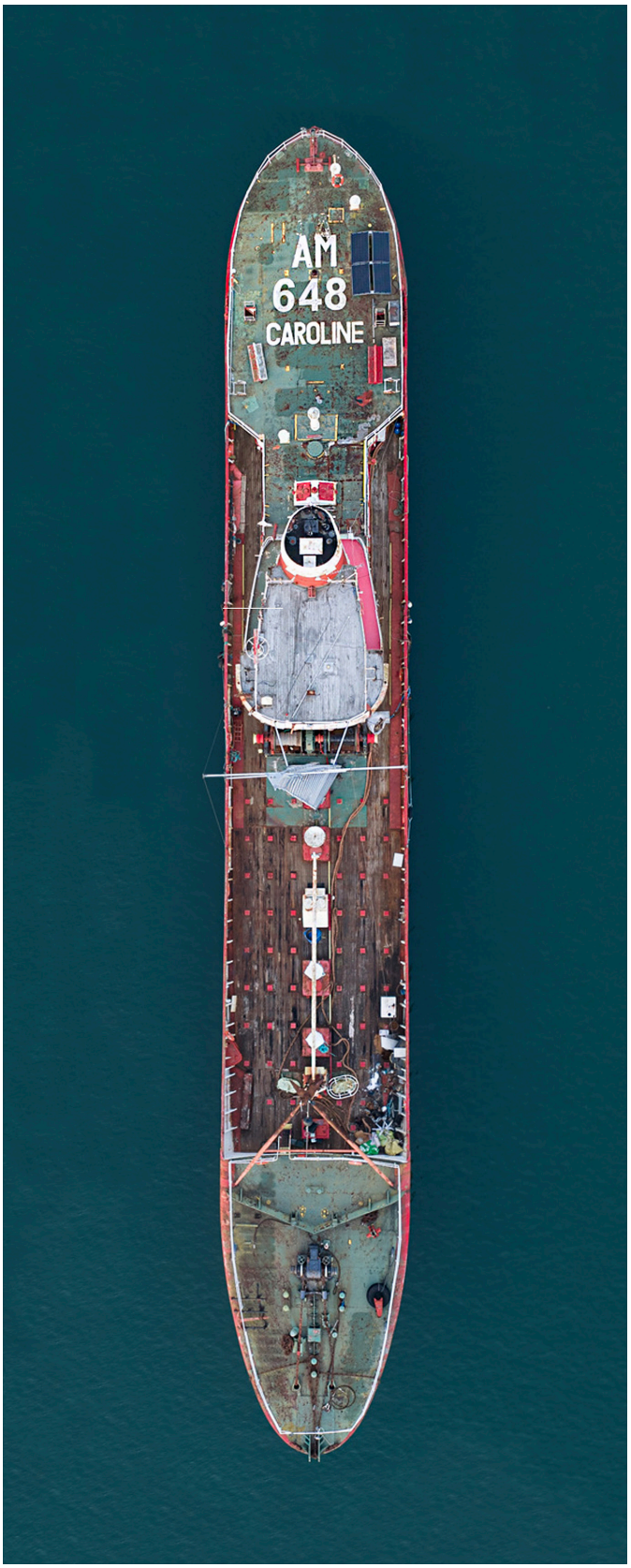
SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE CHANGE:

- Hosted a presentation on Digital Recording at the Big Ships Forum with the new Coastal & Inland Waters Heritage Science Facility, University of Southampton
- Shared a case study by E. Callaghan on the vulnerability of *HMS Trincomalee* to climate change

SKILLS & TRAINING:

- Held a Shipshape Network Hub event at the Scottish Maritime Museum
- Delivered two training workshops through the Heritage Engineering Marine Technician apprenticeship programme
- Signed up the Coastal Exploration Company as a new provider for the Traditional Seafarer Introductory Certificate

Financial Statement | 2025 – 2026



Alone in the blue, by Luke Martin.

Income and Expenditure	*2025 – 2026*
INCOME Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport GIA	260,137
Other Revenue	21,452
TOTAL	281,589
Service Delivery Costs	
Salaries	162,525
Pensions	14,201
NIC	20,205
TOTAL	196,931
Information, Communication & Technology	
Service Contract	8,555
Office Supplies	1,309
TOTAL	9,864
Communications & Marketing	
Printing	4,798
Subscriptions	2,383
PR/Event Hosting/Public Shows	17,031
TOTAL	24,212
NMM Service Level Agreement Charges	14,004
Professional Fees & Finance Sundry	
Awards and Prizes	3,037
Consultancy	5,155
Insurance	814
Grants claimed	8,749
TOTAL	17,755
Council & Team Outreach	
Travel	3,997
Accommodation	1,471
Subsistence	1,715
TOTAL	7,183
Total Expenditure	269,949
Income/Expenditure Out-turn	11,640

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Enjoying Life on the Cut, by Kev Maslin.

Twenty Years Supporting Maritime Heritage

Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport