



Historic England

This section seeks to answer your most Frequently Asked Questions about the Heritage Harbour concept. Can't find the information you were looking for? Get in touch with the National Historic Ships UK (NHS-UK) team at info@nationalhistoricships.org.uk or the Maritime Heritage Trust at info@maritimeheritage.org.uk.

Heritage Harbour FAQs

1. What is a Heritage Harbour?

A Heritage Harbour is a place of historic maritime significance that retains original features, buildings and facilities important for supporting historic vessels and maritime skills, which help connect the public to the UK's maritime past.

The initiative recognises the value of historic and traditional ports and harbours across the UK drawing on similar European models such as Museum Harbours in the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany.

Heritage Harbours present opportunities to provide or restore suitable berthing and accompanying facilities such as small shipbuilding and repair yards, slips and dry docks. The available facilities are likely to encourage mixed use developments such as light industry, retail, catering and commercial offices as well as activities linked to maritime heritage.

2. What are the benefits of a Heritage Harbour?

The Heritage Harbour initiative aims to revitalise historic ports and harbours across the UK and recognise their significance to our maritime heritage. It will help safeguard the traditional skills and infrastructure needed to support historic boats and ships and encourage wider public engagement, as well as increased cultural activity and tourism through heritage-led regeneration to host events, open days, activities and trails.

Heritage Harbours can also serve as a focal point for education, skills training, volunteering and wellbeing.

3. Who will be involved?

Heritage Harbours is a joint initiative developed by NHS-UK through its Shipshape Network, and the Maritime Heritage Trust, in conjunction with Historic England. Local steering groups, forums or volunteer-run initiatives lead on grass root activities and engagement with:

- Local authorities
- Local developers
- Local MPs

- Historic vessel owners
- Facility providers such as wharf owners, slipways and repair yards suitable for historic vessels
- Local maritime businesses
- Training providers
- Harbour masters
- Other local community

4. Who should I talk to about setting up a Heritage Harbour group?

To find out more about the Heritage Harbour initiative and discuss whether your local area might benefit from this initiative, contact either the Maritime Heritage Trust at: info@maritimeheritage.org.uk and/or NHS-UK at: info@nationalhistoricships.org.uk. We will provide further guidance and may be able to help you progress your Heritage Harbour ideas.

5. Is there an application process?

No. 'Heritage Harbours' is not a form of legal designation and there is no application process to complete. Rather the term underlines the historic importance and potential of harbours identified by this label and is likely to work best where maritime heritage activities and assets survive. Grass roots activity is led by local groups and the Maritime Heritage Trust. This is recognised by NHS-UK through the zones in its Shipshape Network framework.

Find out about existing Heritage Harbour activity in our [South West](#) and [South East](#) Shipshape Network zones.

6. Will becoming a Heritage Harbour automatically protect the maritime facilities, features and buildings in my local area?

No – there is no formal statutory protection provided specifically by this initiative. However, the Heritage Harbour concept can raise the profile of these heritage features which may attract support and help safeguard them in the longer term. Consider local listing [Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage | Historic England](#) and check whether your harbour falls within a conservation zone [What Is a Conservation Area? | Historic England](#). Contact NHS-UK or the Maritime Heritage Trust if a planning application is pending and you wish to engage our support.

7. How do I develop a local Heritage Harbour group?

If you're interested in setting up a Heritage Harbour steering group to recognise the potential of your local harbour or port, consider taking some of the following initial steps:

- Research the heritage significance of your local harbour or port including associations with trade, events, people and vessels as well as surviving and/or listed infrastructure and make this publicly available
- Identify traditional skills in the local area necessary for the upkeep of historic vessels and heritage infrastructure
- Catalogue historic features with photographs of their current character and condition
- Identify key facilities and infrastructure that needs to be maintained or enhanced

- Arrange a concept meeting with key stakeholders/local groups with an interest
- Develop a vision statement
- Speak at local community or Council meetings
- Identify potential risks to local heritage assets
- Identify historic vessels in your local area
- Establish regular stakeholder meetings
- Set up a website or Facebook group
- Develop a strategic plan to help safeguard the heritage

8. What sort of legal structure can a Heritage Harbour group take?

Once you have established your Heritage Harbour group, you may wish to put in place a formal structure to support your outcomes and increase your ability to fund activities and resources. This could take the form of a friends group, an unincorporated association, a Charitable trust or a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

Examples of current Heritage Harbour group structures include:

- [The Friends of Exeter Ship Canal](#) – a friends group dedicated to protection of heritage and use of the canal and basin as an integral part of the city’s life and economy for the enjoyment of everyone.
- [Maldon and Heybridge Heritage Harbour Association](#) – established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in 2020 to preserve the working and historic maritime heritage of Maldon and Heybridge.

9. How do I publicise my local Heritage Harbour activities?

You may wish to make a public announcement to promote your Heritage Harbour activities. Please share press releases with the Maritime Heritage Trust and NHS-UK prior to publication so that we can help you maximise your outreach and provide a quote or comment where necessary.

NHS-UK will feature information about your Heritage Harbour activities through a dedicated Shipshape Network project page on our website and work with you to update the page with your latest news and events. The Maritime Heritage Trust has a web page featuring Heritage Harbours at: [The Maritime Heritage Trust - HERITAGE HARBOURS](#), as well as a Facebook group which is a good way to connect with others.

10. Should I set up a website?

It is not necessary to set up your own separate website unless you wish to as NHS-UK can publicise your news and events via your Shipshape Network page and through our social media. Please email us at: info@nationalhistoricships.org.uk to discuss setting up or developing your web space on the Shipshape Network.

If you wish to build a dedicated website, Facebook group or other online space to promote your local Heritage Harbour, please keep us informed so that we can link to it and continue to share your news.

11. Is there an official logo or plaque to mark our area as a Heritage Harbour?

There is currently no official logo or plaque for Heritage Harbours, however each area which is recognised on the Shipshape Network is eligible to display the Network logo on promotional material and at events. Individual Harbours may choose to create a logo or plaque appropriate to their area.

12. Our Heritage Harbour group is now up and running – what should we do next?

Once your Heritage Harbour group is set up, you may like to think about creating a route map, undertaking a feasibility study or carrying out an options appraisal to determine the next steps. This will help you identify priority areas to focus on and the most important outcomes for your local area.

This work can be carried out by volunteers or, if funding is available, an external consultant can be commissioned to run the exercise. This individual will be able to undertake further research, interview key personnel, develop case studies based on successes elsewhere and set down a strategy, to include a fundraising approach.

13. I would like to engage with similar people working to develop Heritage Harbours in other areas of the UK – can you help me?

Yes, we can introduce you or put you in touch with other like-minded individuals working around the UK to develop and sustain the Heritage Harbour concept. If there is a particular topic you wish to discuss, let us know and we can suggest who best to approach. We are also happy to facilitate an online meet or forum to share ideas via our online platforms.

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