



# National Historic Ships UK

FORWARD PLAN | 2024-2028

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AS A GOVERNMENT FUNDED ADVISORY BODY, NATIONAL HISTORIC SHIPS UK (NHS-UK) OPERATES TO A SPECIFIC REMIT AND OBJECTIVES SET DOWN AT THE TIME OF ITS ESTABLISHMENT IN 2006 IN AGREEMENT WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, MEDIA & SPORT (DCMS).

Arising from this are core aspects of our work which we will keep delivering across 2024-2028 as part of our overall strategic framework. We will continue to build NHS-UK into a strong and resilient leadership body working in partnership with others to achieve its goals. We will maintain

Below: Photo Competition 2022 - *Pilgrim*, by Paul Boomsma.



Above: Photo Competition 2023 - *Helming Bessie Ellen*, by Paul Boomsma.



a high calibre staff team and provide additional technical knowledge through our supporting Council of Experts. We will explore opportunities to expand our budget through grant aid and income generation.

We will host and support the National Historic Ships Registers and progress in-house delivery of the associated Registers Review. This has seen us implement a structured assessment methodology, with an initial focus on groups of service vessels, and will remain an ongoing prioritised activity.

This Plan also sets out our wider vision for the next five years, identifying new areas of focus. These reflect direct feedback received from the historic vessel sector, including responses gathered during an online survey in September 2023, where 109 respondents highlighted their top priorities.

In a country threaded with navigable waterways where one is never more than 70 miles from the coast, maritime heritage should generate a sense of national pride and be inclusive to all. This strategy will focus on managing the long-term sustainability of historic vessels, whilst reaching out to new audiences, raising the profile of our sector to build skills, and encourage knowledge sharing.

Cover: Photo Competition 2023 - *SB Cambria* on the long jetty, by James Crisp.

Below: Photo Competition 2023 - Bows On - HMS *Medusa*, by David Stearne.



## 1. Funding

The last 5-year period saw us shine a spotlight on vessels at risk. With the challenges wrought by the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit, the economic crisis and the implications of climate change, many craft have struggled to keep going. Following our 'At Risk' Assessment, 12% of the National Historic Fleet has been identified as being at imminent risk, whilst a further 20% requires monitoring. Funding for conservation and unexpected maintenance costs have been flagged as key risk factors so, with no statutory protection to prevent vessel loss, there is an identified need to find ways to help custodians facing monetary issues.

To assist historic vessels requiring financial support, we will:

- increase the level of guidance and advice available to help those applying for grant aid,
- work closely with funding bodies to advise on sector investment priorities,
- continue to offer and aim to boost funding supplied via the NHS-UK [Small Grants Scheme](#),
- pursue ways to obtain benefits or discounted opportunities for vessels on the National Registers.

## 2. Skills & Training

Without the skills and infrastructure to maintain, conserve, operate and interpret historic vessels, many of these craft will prove unsustainable and the sector will increasingly lack the necessary personnel to remain functional. A national survey undertaken in 2021 indicated interest in heritage transport amongst 16-24 year olds at a worryingly low level of 9%. It is therefore critical that we grow and retain specialist knowledge, seeking to endow a younger, more diverse group of stakeholders with the tools and passion to keep maritime heritage skills alive.

We will continue our work in this field by:

- consolidating and expanding the NHS-UK training and learning framework, including the roll-out of our new Traditional Seafarer Introductory Certificate,
- working closely with our [Shipshape Network](#) Hubs to provide support at both a national and local level,
- facilitating the development of [Heritage Harbours](#) in conjunction with our partners Historic England and the Maritime Heritage Trust,
- engaging with places which recognise their maritime past and raising awareness of facilities vital to the continued maintenance and operation of historic vessels.



Above: Photo Competition 2023 - Riding the rainbow, by Samson Adams.



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### 3. Sustainability & Climate Change

In 2021, NHS-UK published its two-volume report on Climate Change, looking at current and predicted impacts on historic vessels and the maritime heritage sector. In line with the ethical approach this report advocates, we have taken the decision to publish this and future editions of our Forward Plan in digital form only.

To go on raising awareness of environmental issues and protect our heritage, we will:

- continue to monitor, collate and disseminate relevant environmental research,
- help build a resilient sector by providing guidance on ways to plan mitigations for the likely effects of climate change,
- share case studies and digital outputs to ensure that significant vessels and infrastructure which it is not possible to save are appropriately documented.



Above: Photo Competition 2023 - LV21 - The Beacon at Bawley Bay by Tom Duff.

### 4. Outreach & Awareness

Our Annual Awards programme, including the national Photography Competition with its accompanying exhibition at the Historic Dockyard Chatham, has proved an excellent way of promoting maritime heritage to wider audiences. Raising awareness helps to secure investment, generate higher engagement levels and create targeted support to assist with regulatory and planning issues. As the official voice for historic vessels in the UK, we will:



Above: Photo Competition 2023 - Fuel Boats *Tadworth* and *Bordesley* Entering Marsworth Lock on the Grand Union Canal, by Kev Maslin.

- explore further ways of publicising craft on the National Registers to wider audiences, including the use of new digital tools,
- facilitate mechanisms for increased self-promotion and marketing by historic vessel custodians,
- build on relationships with other sector support and membership bodies to kindle broader collective appeal.



Left: Photo Competition 2023 - *Tadworth* and *Bordesley* in the ice, by Andrew Haysom.



**Below:** Photo Competition 2023 - *Lady Daphne* in calm Harbour, by Stuart Opie.

**Below:** Photo Competition 2023 - *The Happy Wave (Swan)* by Alan McGee.



**Above:** Photo Competition 2023 - *Boat in the Clouds*, by James Crisp.

## Measuring the Outcomes

We will measure our achievements and the outcomes of this Forward Plan by:

- issuing surveys and feedback forms throughout the period,
- monitoring demand and take-up of our Small Grants Scheme,
- tracking numbers and demographics of students on NHS-UK accredited courses and training initiatives,
- using Google Analytics to identify new and existing audiences,
- collating a record of press activity and online engagement.



**Above:** Photo Competition 2023 - *Call for Water to Tack*, by Kevin Appleton.

**Above:** *Gentle Breeze out to Sea - Pin Mill 60th Barge Race*, by Kevin Appleton.



**Above:** Photo Competition 2023 - *Former British Waterways Tug Tardebigge* approaching Great Haywood, by Kev Maslin.





Above: Photo Competition 2023 - Summer Sunrise at Crail Harbour, by John Pow.

## What will Success look like?

If, by 2028, the following outcomes have been achieved, we will consider this Plan has been successful:

- additional guidance and tangible benefits are in place for vessels in need of financial aid,
- a programme of monitoring has been created for vessels identified as being at risk,
- a significant number of trainees and students have benefited from the NHS-UK learning and skills framework through courses, workshops and training,
- the Traditional Seafarer Introductory Certificate is being delivered by a number of providers,
- regular events are being hosted through the Shipshape Hubs, and subsequent engagement is being logged,
- there is better understanding of the importance of historic maritime infrastructure,
- the Heritage Harbours scheme has expanded to include a wider network of individual places and achieved greater recognition,
- there is stronger appreciation of the risks that climate change may bring and ways to manage the impact in relation to historic vessels,
- digital outputs from historic vessel recording projects have been captured and shared,
- promotional activity is at a high level with new digital tools being explored,
- support has been provided to assist vessel custodians with marketing tools and techniques.

We welcome any comments on this Forward Plan by emailing: [info@nationalhistoricships.org.uk](mailto:info@nationalhistoricships.org.uk).

You can write to us at: National Historic Ships UK, Park Row, Greenwich, London SE10 9NF.



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