



## Review of the National Historic Fleet and Assessment Methodology 2014



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**SUMMARY  
of responses  
to the  
consultation**

# 1. Summary of responses

In total responses were received from 32 individuals and organisations.

Not surprisingly vessel owners and enthusiasts, and organisations with specialist focus concentrated their responses within areas of their own subject areas of expertise, whilst bodies such as Heritage Lottery Fund concentrated on the broader strategic issues in their responses. Taken as a whole, the range of responses covers all six main batches of vessels under consideration well.

## Vessel groupings

The overall response has been that the suggested method of grouping vessels is the correct approach and ensured consistency of evaluation. That said there are differing opinions as to how those groupings should be arranged (issues of function, propulsion, period, and construction material have prompted some conflicting suggestions). Vague terms such as 'sloop' and 'clipper' were felt to be unhelpful. A glossary of acronyms was requested by one respondent and another suggested aligning NHS-UK's terminology with that of English Heritage's maritime craft thesaurus. Overall there have been a large number of comments about possible omissions of vessel types and about the terminology used.

Among the responses to key question one, there have been a high proportion of comments regarding lifeboats and, to a lesser degree, fishing and pleasure craft, particularly the 'luxury steam' category. Some responders would like to know how a vessel will be grouped if its function has changed over time.

Detractors to the proposal felt that the classification, as it stands, is overly complicated for a relatively small group (currently around 200) of vessels and new vessels may be considered in the future that do not conform to the current grouping framework. Opinion is divided as to whether or not a vessel can belong to more than one group. Classification by function is seen by some to be further complicated by overlaying other classification criteria such as rig, construction material, and ownership. Inconsistencies have been pointed out – in the 'Passenger' section for example, there is no differentiation of propulsion method, but there is for other categories.

One responder suggested the batch groupings could imply an assumption that NHS-UK wishes to collect an example of everything, while another felt that the batches implies a pre-eminence of technology over human interest.

## Scoring system

Key question two prompted the most numerous and detailed responses. The consensus among responders is that the scoring criteria are logical and that it will reduce the risk of subjectivity and partiality in the process of determining a vessel's importance. There are however reservations expressed from some responders, such as: there is an emphasis on the historical value in preference to the cultural and social significance; the scoring system doesn't take into account some important factors such as aesthetic qualities and educational value; and the age-related marking doesn't take into account a vessel's size or bulk, ie a small vessel is easier to protect than a large one.

Almost all responders felt that there should be a separate scoring system for operational vessels as opposed to preserved vessels, particularly as issues pertaining to originality, conservation, maintenance and ability to demonstrate a vessel's use are very different for each of these categories. Some recognised that it might be a delicate balancing act to get right the weighting for the scoring of seaworthy and static vessels, but the majority that expressed an opinion felt that operational vessels – or at least those that were in the process of being made operational – should be scored more highly. It is recognised that operation can damage fabric but that the benefits may outweigh the risks. It was mooted that it may well be an advantage to have more than one of a particular type of vessel on the Register as it provides opportunities for them to be preserved – and used – differently from one another.

The question as to whether specialist scores are needed to take into account the distinctiveness of different vessel groupings prompted much comment. Changes to a vessel over the course of its life, particularly regarding propulsion, were deemed to be important factors. In fact the subject of propulsion, generally, was the focus of a number of points regarding specialist scores - leisure steam was felt to be significant by a number of responders partly because the batch represents the earliest use of mechanical power to propel vessels.

Other factors felt to warrant specialist scoring include examples of innovation, originality of fabric, historical associations (such as the evacuation of Dunkirk in 1940), and uniqueness or rarity. Paddle vessels, of which there are currently eight in the UK built more than fifty years ago, are not represented in any group and fall within several categories in terms of significance. The importance of the number of lives saved in the course of a vessel's career and how those statistics are interpreted was raised by a couple of responders.

## Statements of significance

The intention to require owners of vessels likely to achieve NHF status to produce statements of significance was universally endorsed. It was felt that it would be helpful for

owners, NHS-UK, and the wider public alike, especially if the results are published online. It is seen as an opportunity to explain the social history or stories connected with a vessel; a useful tool for fundraising initiatives; a potentially invaluable way for owners to investigate, understand and appreciate what sort of vessel they have in their possession; and a way of encouraging responsible stewardship.

Some organisations, like the Australian Register of Historic Vessels (ARHV), already have such a scheme in place. Several respondents have stressed the need for statements of significance to be as objective as possible, 'transparent', and evidenced-based.

There was slight concern that not all vessel owners would have the necessary skills set to draft such a document to a uniform standard. There could conceivably be a marked contrast between statements written by individuals and those written by professional bodies in the heritage and conservation sector. It was universally agreed however that the guidance provided in the consultation report and in the NHS-UK publication *Conserving Historic Vessels* was helpful in explaining to owners how to draft a statement of significance. Comments and suggestions about the actual composition of the statements included setting a word-count range so that statements were neither too brief nor over-long, supplying examples, providing a template, and changing the title of the document as the word 'statement' can be seen to have literary connotations.

### [Changes to vessels that comprise the National Historic Fleet](#)

The consultation report has unanimously helped those who responded to it attain a greater understanding of the criteria required for vessels within the NHF. The report has been acclaimed as timely and a major step forward in the prioritizing of historic vessels.

In terms of the effectiveness the proposed changes will be, most responders felt that the review will be effective in correcting present errors and anomalies. Some feel that the proposals need to be tested before their effectiveness can be properly evaluated. There are some concerns surrounding the implementation of the changes. What if vessel owners do not complete a statement of significance? Is there a danger that vessels will be removed from the NHF if owners do not comply with requirements? It is feared that some owners will inevitably lack the time, expertise or resources to file and maintain the necessary paperwork. The current culture of involvement encouraged by NHS-UK could change as the onus shifts towards the pressure of burdening owners with the extra bureaucracy.

Other concerns tend to centre on how the batches might disadvantage some vessels. Larger vessels might be disadvantaged since, from the proposed new batches, the majority of the vessels in the majority of groupings will be smaller craft. Similarly would all paddle steamers be placed in one batch?

The template for requesting vessel assessment was positively received; respondents felt it was helpful and well written, though there were suggestions that there should be the ability to submit photographs and that the headings in Appendix C be the same as those set out in the checklist. Most respondents are happy with the projected timetable with the caveat that there could be resource issues. For individuals, volunteers, charities and the like the timeframe as it stands could be onerous.

Responses were received from:

Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum Wales  
Paul Annison-Newgass  
Arts Council England  
Australian National Maritime Museum  
Edward and Melody Morgan-Busher  
Malcolm Brown  
Canal and River Trust  
Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust  
The Consuta Trust, The Thames Boats Trust and  
Sally and Peter Dodds  
English Heritage  
Heritage Lottery Fund  
Peter Hollins  
Institute for Archaeologists  
David Jay  
Joint Nautical Archaeology Policy Committee  
Eric Kentley  
Loch Lomond Steamship Company  
David Newbury  
Paddle Steamer Preservation Society  
Paul Ridgway  
John Robinson  
Royal National Lifeboat Institution Heritage  
Sea-Change Sailing Trust  
Scottish Fisheries Museum  
The Shamrock Trust  
Steam Tug Kerne Preservation Society  
South West Maritime History Society  
SS Sir Walter Scott Trust / The Heritage Steamboat Trust  
Warrior Preservation Trust  
The Wellington Trust  
Wherry Yacht Charter Charitable Trust

## Next steps

A meeting of the Registration Group will be held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014. The purpose is to review all the responses we have received, to debate the merits of the detailed comments and agree modifications to the method proposed in the consultation documents.

Given the number of comments made, this task is unlikely to be completed in a single day. When all the issues have been grounded to the satisfaction of the Group, they will be placed before the full Council of Experts for discussion and finalisation. We will however publish the full amended methodology on our website as soon as practical.

Our intention remains to implement changes resulting from the 'luxury steam' and 'rescue' groups case study by the end of March 2015 and then review further groups, starting with 'trawler'. We also intend to invite applications for a change in National Historic as soon as is practicable in 2015 – probably early Summer.