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National Historic Ships UK Registers Review: Pilotage Group

Summary

In 2013 an [assessment methodology](#) was developed for use when analysing craft on the National Register of Historic Vessels (NRHV) in terms of their significance and potential eligibility for inclusion on the National Historic Fleet (NHF). Public consultation brought further refinement to this process and a summary of responses can be viewed here: [Review of the National Historic Fleet and Assessment Methodology 2014 \(nationalhistoricships.org.uk\)](#).

The [National Historic Fleet](#) (NHF) is a sub-section of the NRHV comprising vessels which are considered to: be of pre-eminent national or regional significance; span the spectrum of UK maritime history; illustrate changes in construction and technology; and merit a higher priority for long term conservation.

Funding was sought to implement this methodology via a full review of the National Registers, but when it proved difficult to secure the necessary grant aid, a decision was taken to continue the process internally, albeit over a longer time frame. Due to available resources, the current review only covers those vessels presently listed on the National Historic Ships Registers and does not extend to those on the [National Small Boat Register](#) or others as yet unrecorded.

The first part of the review is a pilot phase being undertaken with a focus on service vessels. Two reports have been published to date, the first in May 2024 assessing 157 historic lifeboats, the second in May 2025 covering 104 historic tugs.

The next group of vessels to be analysed within the functional category of service is pilotage craft and 59 vessels have now been scored, with consequent changes to the NHF as set out in this report.

Methodology

A working group comprised of: the NHS-UK Director; Resources Manager; Policy, Projects & Course Manager; and Fieldworker, with Stuart Anderson as the dedicated project volunteer, met throughout 2025 into early 2026 to undertake research and assessment of registered light vessels, pilot vessels and tenders. Simon Stephens, Curator of the Ship Model and Small Boat Collections at Royal Museums Greenwich and member of the NHS-UK Council of Experts was



asked to give support on vessel visits and help with technical queries. Additional expertise on the sailing pilot vessels was kindly provided by Tom Cunliffe and Malcolm McKeand, both of whom have specialist knowledge in this field.

The scoring system, with its component parts including specialist scores, was re-examined initially to ensure it was fit for purpose (see Appendix A). A rarity guide was created which grouped the light vessels in terms of hull construction (wood, composite, iron or steel) and the pilot vessels / tenders by propulsion (sail or motor). The publications *Lightships, Their Design, Development and Diversity* by Anthony Lane and Martin Augustus (Amberley, 2024) and *Pilot Cutters Under Sail* by Tom Cunliffe (Seaforth, 2013) were used as a reference for the classification and scoring of these craft.

Assessment of technical merit for the light vessels was based on originality of machinery and equipment (generator, signals, fog, light). Motorised pilot vessels and tenders were scored around originality of their engines and machinery, whilst sailing pilot cutters were considered in terms of originality or authenticity of hull form, accommodation, rig and gear. This reflected the fact that many sailing pilot cutters have undergone significant reconstruction since build.

As outlined above, a decision was taken not to include pilotage craft listed on the National Small Boat Register (NSBR) in this group due to the team's limited capacity, as well as the fact that the NSBR database has been undergoing maintenance. This can be revisited in future if resources permit.

Individual pilotage vessels on the National Register were scored by working group members, with results reviewed by the Director to ensure consistency of approach. A call was put out via the NHS-UK website, e-newsletter, and social media, asking owners of pilotage craft to check their online entries for accuracy and get in touch with any additional data they might hold. Custodians were also contacted with specific queries, or to obtain missing and more up to date information. 24 vessels from the pilotage group were visited by the NHS-UK team.

Once all vessels in the group had been scored, those with the highest rating were revisited as possible NHF candidates. At this stage, it was possible to assess potential implications for the existing Fleet and highlight which vessels might be subject to a change in status. The custodians of pilotage vessels affected by a potential change were contacted and given the opportunity to verify the findings. [Statements of significance](#) were written for all Fleet vessels and published online.



Findings

59 pilotage craft were identified and scored as part of this process, comprising just under 3% of all vessels currently on the National Registers.

At the start of this exercise, eight pilotage vessels were listed on NHF, three of which were pilot vessels and five light vessels. There was also an additional pilot vessel on the Overseas Watch List (OWL) which had previously held NHF status and was found to have returned to UK waters.

Three of these vessels now scored significantly lower than the top range suggesting that their status needed to change. This was due to various factors including alterations in their material circumstances and the registration of other craft of the same type which impacted their rarity score. The status of these craft has now been amended so that they will sit on the NRHV rather than the Fleet, and their custodians have been informed.

A total of seven pilotage vessels are included on the Fleet following this Review, six of which have retained their original status and one which was newly assessed as being sufficiently significant to merit this recognition. This outcome means that 12% of all registered pilotage craft are represented on the National Historic Fleet which has been agreed by the working group as being proportionate to the overall number reviewed and in line with the approach

taken during the earlier assessment of historic tugs and lifeboats, the previous groups considered under the Review.

A full breakdown of vessels examined during the Review and their final allocated status can be found in Appendix B.

One pilotage craft has been marked for further review in January 2027. The need for this extended assessment is due to pending conservation work likely to impact originality and condition scores.

What will happen next?

Whenever a pilotage vessel is added to the NRHV in future, it will be assessed internally using the same methodology and scoring system. If it scores at the same level or higher than an existing pilotage vessel in the Fleet, it will be flagged for potential review and comparison against these craft. Likewise, if we are informed of any material changes to pilotage vessels on the Fleet, their existing score will be updated and checked to see if this could affect their status.



An annual survey will be sent to custodians of Fleet vessels, asking them to advise of any significant alterations to the craft in their care, the conditions in which it is kept, or its method of use. These returns will be assessed each January alongside any vessels identified during the year as being potential Fleet candidates. Vessel scores will be updated as necessary and any revisions to status made at this time, so that the Fleet remains current and responsive to changes in vessel circumstances. If custodians do not complete the

necessary paperwork or update us accordingly, it may impact on the vessel's status and could lead to removal from the Fleet.

The Ongoing Review

Work has already begun to assess the next set of vessels within the Service group of the National Register which has been categorised as Service: Miscellaneous. This encompasses customs, firefighting and fisheries protection craft. 17 vessels currently listed on the National Registers have been identified for inclusion in this group and a full report will be published on these once all assessments have been completed. In the meantime, we encourage any custodians of a customs, firefighting or fisheries protection vessel to ensure their entries on the Register are accurate and fully updated.

You can keep informed about the latest progress via our Registers Review project page at: [Registers review | National Historic Ships](#).

National Historic Ships UK
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APPENDIX A - PILOTAGE GROUP SCORING SYSTEM

Core score	Description	0	1	2	3	4	5	
1	All vessels	Age (Date of Build)	Less than 50 years old (DNMC)	50-99 years old	100-149 years old	150-199 years old	200-249 years old	250+ years
2	All vessels	Innovations (New ideas and techniques)	Contains no design innovation of importance / built by unknown designer	Contains one important design innovation (plus 1 point for known builder or designer)	Contains two or more important design innovations (plus 1 point for known builder or designer)	Add one point for each named innovation (maximum 4 points) plus an additional point for known builder or designer		
3	All vessels	Historical Associations (People and events)	No historical associations	Solely local significance	Solely regional significance	Regional significance with elements of national significance	National significance with elements of international significance	Clear international significance (e.g. took part in Dunkirk evacuation 1940)
4a	Vessels whose primary purpose is fabric preservation (afloat/static)	Level of originality (hull fabric / design feature / vessel form / rig / internal and deck fittings)	No conservation principles applied / very little original fabric or features surviving	Vessel preserved / restored with introduction of considerable new materials	Vessel preserved / restored with substantial original fabric or features missing	Vessel preserved / restored with some loss of originality to all elements	Vessel preserved / restored with hull significantly intact but with some features missing or over-restored	Vessel preserved with exceptional originality of fabric and key features of form and function intact
5a	Vessels whose primary purpose is fabric preservation (afloat/static)	Condition	Significant problems, fabric in extremely poor condition or status unknown	Fabric in poor condition and declining	Unsatisfactory, fabric being inappropriately preserved or unstable	Visible improvement in condition or vessel stabilised, but with limited controls in place	Satisfactory, with any minor changes under control and monitored	Optimal - vessel stabilised and regularly monitored in appropriate environmental conditions
4b	Vessels whose primary purpose is operational	Level of originality (hull fabric / design feature / vessel form / rig / internal and deck fittings)	No conservation principles applied / little original material surviving	Significant reconstruction, adaptation or maintenance work which doesn't use like-for-like materials or changes vessel appearance	Extreme reconstruction applied using conservator principles	Major reconstruction / adaptation resulting in loss of key features or new material out-weighting old	Reconstruction or adaptation where key features have been accurately and sympathetically replicated using like-for-like materials, without impact to form or function	All key features of form and function intact: no reconstructive work carried out other than maintenance / minor reconstruction or restorator work resulting in minimal introduction of new materials
5b	Vessels whose primary purpose is operational	Condition	Very poor and deteriorating condition, or status unknown	Significant localised problems	Vessel in need of repairs / significant re-fit / no maintenance policy	Vessel in good or stabilised condition / regular maintenance	Condition very good / any localised problems do not prevent operation / annual maintenance plan in place.	Condition excellent and 5 year+ maintenance plan in place.
6	All vessels	Rarity (based on number of known vessels in this batch)	100 plus	51-100 surviving examples	11-50 surviving examples	6-10 surviving examples	2-5 surviving examples	Unique survivor

Specialist Score	Description	0	1	2	3	4	5	
1	Light Vessels	Originality of machinery (score 1 each for 5 original features in place; If historical replication or partially present, the score is a maximum of 3)	None of 5 original features listed in place	Original/ historical replication MAST AND RIG configuration in place	Plus original/ historical replication GENERATOR and ancillary machinery in place	Plus original/ historical replication SIGNALS equipment in place	Plus original/ historical replication FOG equipment in place	Plus original/ historical replication LIGHT equipment in place
	Motorised Pilot Vessels and Tenders	Originality of engines and machinery	Main Engine(s) and Machinery no longer fitted	Modern or replica engine(s) and ancillary machinery	Engine(s) fitted but not the same as original	Engine(s) fitted with modern adaptations (i.e. modern boiler, fuel source conversion)	Engine(s) fitted, with historically correct replacement machinery	Original engine(s) and auxiliary machinery plant
	Sailing Pilot Vessels	Originality/Authenticity of hull form, accommodation, rig and gear	No rig or inappropriate configuration(e.g. Bermudan instead of Gaff). Major changes to hull form and deck furniture. Accommodation stripped. Equipment and gear largely missing.	Rig fitted in original style but with significant differences in scale or design. Changes to hull form, raised butwarks, remodelled stern etc. Additions of deck furniture not in keeping. Interior fitout not in keeping with pilot cutter. Modern machinery.	Original rig configuration and equipment with some modern adaptations (e.g. topmast, winches, modern rope, wheel steering etc - see separate list). Hull form original changes to deck furniture. Modern accommodation with no hint of original pilot cutter layout. Engine and modern instrumentation added.	Original rig configuration with historically correct replacement spars and equipment. Hull form correct to original design but with minor changes to cockpit and deck furniture. Yacht accommodation below fitted with some attempt to follow pilot cutter layout. Engine, modern instrumentation and hydraulic or electric windlass installed.	Original rig configuration with historically correct replacement spars and equipment. Hull form and deck furniture as per original. Yacht accommodation below fitted along the lines of pilot cutter accommodation. Engine and modern instrumentation added.	Rig to original configuration with historically correct like for like replacement. Hull form and deck furniture as per original build. Accommodation as per pilot cutter layout. Engineless and correct machinery in place.
2	Pilotage	Age	1961 onwards	1951-1960	1941-1950	1921-1940	1901-1920	Before 1900
3	Pilotage	Batch Rarity	13+ survivors	8-12 survivors	5-7 survivors	3-4 survivors	2 survivors	Unique survivor

APPENDIX B - VESSELS IN PILOTAGE GROUP

Registration Number	Vessel Name	NHS-UK Status Post Review	Vessel Type	Visited during Review
444	Edmund Gardner	National Historic Fleet	Pilotage	Y
2663	Jolie Brise	National Historic Fleet	Pilotage	Y
472	Kindly Light	National Historic Fleet	Pilotage	Y
671	Light Vessel 12 Spurn	National Historic Fleet	Pilotage	Y
131	Light Vessel 16 Inner Dowsing	National Historic Fleet	Pilotage	Y
141	Light Vessel 50 H.Y. Tyne	National Historic Fleet	Pilotage	Y
137	Light Vessel 91 Helwick	National Historic Fleet	Pilotage	Y
102	Alpha	Registered	Pilotage	Y
2781	Berneray	Registered	Pilotage	N
655	Britain	Registered	Pilotage	N
408	Cariad	Registered	Pilotage	Y
3516	Cloch	Registered	Pilotage	N
467	Cornubia	Registered	Pilotage	Y
2799	Denise Simone	Registered	Pilotage	N
2442	Fenguide	Registered	Pilotage	Y
142	John Sebastian	Registered	Pilotage	Y
2782	Light Ship Petrel	Registered	Pilotage	N
2447	Light Vessel 14 Sula	Registered	Pilotage	Y
1395	Light Vessel 15 - Trinity	Registered	Pilotage	Y
1573	Light Vessel 16 Colne Light	Registered	Pilotage	Y
1916	Light Vessel 18 Saint Gowan	Registered	Pilotage	Y
2330	Light Vessel 21 Varne	Registered	Pilotage	Y
1572	Light Vessel 23 Mersey Bar	Registered	Pilotage	N
140	Light Vessel 44 Carnarvon Bay	Registered	Pilotage	N
144	Light Vessel 78 Calshotpit	Registered	Pilotage	N
488	Light Vessel 86 Nore	Registered	Pilotage	N
644	Light Vessel 87 East Goodwin	Registered	Pilotage	N
2872	Light Vessel 93 Galloper	Registered	Pilotage	N
3844	Light Vessel 95 South Goodwin	Registered	Pilotage	N
689	Mascotte	Registered	Pilotage	Y
2815	MV Fingal	Registered	Pilotage	Y
1932	MV Guide	Registered	Pilotage	N
613	North Carr	Registered	Pilotage	Y
615	Olga	Registered	Pilotage	Y
2129	One	Registered	Pilotage	Y
3603	Peggy	Registered	Pilotage	Y

3620	Scotia	Registered	Pilotage	N
2694	Seamark	Registered	Pilotage	Y
1011	Ariadne	Archived	Pilotage	N
2310	Baroque	Archived - Overseas Watch List	Pilotage	N
2395	Bembridge	Archived - Overseas Watch List	Pilotage	N
2237	Dolphin	Archived	Pilotage	N
3003	Kernow	Archived - Overseas Watch List	Pilotage	N
1620	Largo Law	Archived	Pilotage	N
2298	Leader	Archived	Pilotage	N
2492	Letty	Archived	Pilotage	N
139	Light Vessel 38 Gull	Archived	Pilotage	N
143	Light Vessel 72 Juno	Archived	Pilotage	N
645	Light Vessel 88 Cockle	Archived	Pilotage	N
647	Light Vessel 89 The Wash	Archived	Pilotage	N
646	Light Vessel 94 Morecambe Bay	Archived	Pilotage	N
1574	Lightship 2000	Archived	Pilotage	N
91	Madcap	Archived - Overseas Watch List	Pilotage	N
3717	MV Landward	Archived	Pilotage	N
2459	Plessey	Archived	Pilotage	N
2345	Seacraig	Archived - Overseas Watch List	Pilotage	N
476	T.S. Orwell	Archived	Pilotage	N
2732	The Lightship	Archived	Pilotage	N
2907	Warren Evans	Archived	Pilotage	N