



## National Historic Ships Heritage Harbours Survey 2022

In April 2022, a survey was publicised via social media and shared with owners of vessels listed on the National Register of Historic Vessels in relation to the condition and significance of harbourside infrastructure in harbours associated with historic vessels. It looked at threats and opportunities, and asked for feedback on the Heritage Harbours initiative. The survey received 83 responses, of which 67 related to identifiable coastal docks and harbours.<sup>1</sup>

The majority of these responses related to harbours on the east (34.3%) and southeast (26.8%) coastline, while the Cornwall-South Devon (11.9%) region was also well-represented. In these regions, Maldon and Heybridge Basin, London Docks, and Charlestown were particularly well-represented, constituting over a quarter of its regional responses.<sup>2</sup> Most of the responses relating to the Cornwall-South Devon coastal region detail a regular usage of a number of harbours, with half of the respondents describing their use of at least four harbours. This is distinctive to the Cornwall-South Devon region, likely reflecting the particular strength of Cornish regional identities in inter-connected fishing communities and is only matched on the East Coast where seven owners used more than three regional harbours, including Maldon, Ipswich and Lowestoft.

The northwest and south coast were notably under-represented, with only two responses relating to the South Coast indicating the views of current vessel owners despite there being a number of working harbours located on the south coast from West Sussex to the Dorset-Devon border.

	Number of responses	(% total) <sup>3</sup>	Relevant case studies
Northeast	5	8%	Whitby
Northwest (incl North Wales)	2	3%	Liverpool Docks
<b>East Coast</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>34%</b>	Maldon and Heybridge Basin
<b>London and the Southeast</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>27%</b>	Ramsgate Royal Harbour
South coast	3	5%	
<b>Cornwall and South Devon</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12%</b>	Charlestown
South Wales and Bristol Channel	4	6%	Bristol
Scotland	3	5%	
Total	67		

The most common concerns for inland and coastal harbour users were a loss of traditional skills (75%) and lack of moorings (50%). Other issues were common to approximately 30% of responders, including such practicalities as rising mooring fees, dry docking facilities, and access to quayside. Concerns were also raised for the security and quality of the historic environment, including property development, erosion of historic landmarks and loss of community. The least common concern to both inland and coastal sites is of crowded harbour facilities, and competition for space with larger modern vessels (18%).

Each of the listed benefits from the Heritage Harbours initiative were accepted by at least 30% of vessel owners, suggesting that the initiative has successfully presented itself as a scheme of wide and varied remit. As responders' primary concerns were for a loss of traditional skills and lack of moorings, it is unsurprising that the two most commonly desired benefits were the institution of designated moorings for historic vessels

<sup>1</sup> Eleven responses exclusively related to inland waterways, and five did not relate to an identifiable harbour or coastal region. The inland waterways represented were: Sunderland; Portland Basin, Ashton under Lyne; West Stock with; Brayford Pool, Lincoln; Chesterfield Canal; Manchester Ship Canal; Faversham, and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads.

<sup>2</sup> Maldon and Heybridge Basin constituted 8/23 responses (34.8%); Whitstable related 8/18 responses (44%); and Charlestown 3/8 responses (37.5%).

<sup>3</sup> Calculated from 67 responses with identifiable location, excluding responses relating to 'n/a' and inland waterways.



(86%), and survival of traditional skills (72%). The next most common benefits aims were protection from redevelopment, improved public engagement, and conservation of historic landmarks. This clearly reflects the common concerns for the conservation of historic environment, and for the protection of local harbourside communities. The least common benefits noted by vessel owners were engagement with local authorities (34%) and an increase in tourism (47%), although it is likely that these will be more desirable for local harbour owners, and waterfront businesses and communities than visiting owners, who are more likely to regularly engage with local authorities.

A number of vessel owners expressed concern for the declining use of historic harbours as working harbours for visiting craft. Reasons noted for this include prioritising of landside tourist experience over vessel usage (Rye, Southwold and Thameside harbours), over-development and commercialisation (Lowestoft) and degradation and dilapidation of facilities (Brixham, Ellesmere, Ramsgate and Port Richborough). Concerns were expressed for harbours across the British coast, particularly the southern and eastern coastlines.

The majority of responders expressed interest in the initiative and were already engaging local organisations with some success (43%), primarily local heritage organisations, harbour commissioners and vessel organisations. A number of responders did not express awareness of any organisations currently working to conserve the historic harbourside environment (50%) or noted that engagements which had been made were not successful (4%).