



**The Seamless Sea:
joining-up marine and maritime cultural heritage for
the public**

A Statement of Common Ground

HFF Steering Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage
March 2017

This document summarises a series of broadly accepted statements about marine and maritime heritage, based on discussion at a Policy Forum organised by the Honor Frost Foundation Steering Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage on 19 October 2016.

The sea provides attractive and powerful places that are important to people today and have been so in the past.

The sea has shaped our histories in numerous and profound ways; yet the role of the sea in history is often poorly understood or appreciated.

Our conception of marine and maritime cultural heritage has to be broad to encompass heritage in different environments, intangible and tangible, and the contributions of different – often fragmented – sectors: curatorial; university; voluntary; commercial.

There are particular challenges in extending public appreciation of marine and maritime cultural heritage to include things that are – and will remain – underwater.

It is important to develop captivating concepts, narratives and brands – and to engage with media and creative industries – when representing marine and maritime cultural heritage.

Over-reliance on familiar stereotypes undermines the capacity of marine and maritime cultural heritage to be diverse, layered, challenging – and more engaging to broader audiences.

Factors affecting awareness of, respect for and the importance attributed to marine and maritime cultural heritage vary and require tailored approaches.

People-based narratives enable communities to engage with and safeguard marine and maritime cultural heritage that they can regard as their own.

It is important to share the means as well as the ends of investigating marine and maritime cultural heritage. The public is interested in the processes through which archaeologists and historians discover connections and meanings as much as they are in artefacts and conclusions.

In considering marine and maritime cultural heritage it is unhelpful to separate culture and nature because people's interaction with the marine environment is such a complex blend of both. Recognising the effects of human interaction with the sea over many millennia is essential to understanding the present condition of the marine environment, and to achieving a sustainable future.

Many different interpretations can be placed on marine and maritime cultural heritage, but they are not all equally valid. Marine and maritime cultural heritage depends for its veracity and authenticity on sound research, so that conclusions are reasoned, transparent and contestable.

It is important to draw attention to the connection between financial inputs and resulting outcomes so that those who benefit economically from marine and maritime cultural heritage are encouraged to invest in its development.

The circumstances of marine and maritime heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean are very different to those in the UK, but the exchange of perspectives and experience is enriched by commonalities as well as contrasts. Making comparisons between marine and maritime heritage is beneficial to practitioners in the UK as much as in the Eastern Mediterranean.
