



UK Government Soft Power Strategy
Ten Questions from Michael Ellis

**Response by the Honor Frost Foundation (HFF)
Steering Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage**

The Honor Frost Foundation (HFF) is a UK-based charity founded in 2011 to support maritime archaeology in the Mediterranean. Honor Frost was an early pioneer in the field of underwater archaeology. When Honor died in 2010 she left the bulk of her estate to establish the Foundation to promote marine and maritime archaeology with a focus on the eastern Mediterranean.

HFF's mission is to promote the advancement and research, including publication, of maritime archaeology in the eastern Mediterranean and elsewhere, with an emphasis on Lebanon, Syria and Cyprus.

HFF's objectives are as follows:

- To provide grants to independent scholars, individuals working in research establishments and to institutions for work on marine and maritime archaeology.
- To publish and disseminate research work which is a result of the HFF grants and papers from the Honor Frost archive.
- To provide grants to museums, galleries and other national institutions to assist in displaying works relevant to the study of maritime archaeology and for public education in the field.
- To sponsor public lectures and seminars within the field of marine and maritime archaeology.
- To support excavations of archaeological sites, including but not exclusively, ports, harbours, offshore anchorages, and ancient anchors found undersea relevant to Levantine archaeology.
- To support conservation work relevant to marine and maritime archaeology in the region.
- To support exchange visits of museum staff from the Lebanon, Western Syria and Cyprus.
- To facilitate the training of individuals from the region in restoration and conservation techniques relevant to marine and maritime archaeology.
- To foster and promote the protection of underwater cultural heritage (UCH).

This response has been drafted by HFF's Steering Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH), which provides advice to HFF and helps to shape its policy towards UCH. The HFF Steering Committee on UCH identifies potential public policy issues, considers the way to strengthen relationships with key audiences, advises on how to communicate activities, and implements its programme of work accordingly. The HFF Steering Committee on UCH has published a number of reports that are of direct relevance to questions about Soft Power and are referred to below as appropriate.

Honor Frost Foundation, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH, United Kingdom

Tel. + 44 (0) 207 969 5223

Fax. + 44 (0) 207 969 5401

Chair: Ms Alison Cathie — Hon. Treasurer: Mr Roger J. Clark

info@honorfrostfoundation.org

www.honorfrostfoundation.org

The Honor Frost Foundation would welcome the opportunity to discuss its activities with respect to maritime archaeology in the eastern Mediterranean with DCMS and FCO in further detail. HFF would be keen to attend further events by DCMS and FCO on the role of heritage and culture in international relations.

HFF welcomes the Secretary of State's recognition of the importance of culture to soft power and on the development of a Soft Power Strategy. We have addressed each of the ten questions below.

For further information about HFF please see <http://honorfrostfoundation.org/>.

- Q1. Given that the UK has reached Number 1 in the Soft Power Index in the absence of a Government strategy, how can we ensure that any strategy genuinely adds value?
- 1.1. It is very gratifying that the UK's great strengths in culture have been recognised by the Soft Power Index. It reflects the perception that the UK has an extensive and influential role internationally in the maritime heritage sector, including marine archaeology. The Soft Power Index itself makes no reference to this particular sector, though maritime heritage certainly plays a significant role in tourism arrivals and expenditure, in museum attendance, and in the outstanding universal value of the UK's coastal World Heritage Sites. Whether expressly recognised or not, maritime heritage and underwater archaeology are important conduits for the UK's exercise of soft power around the globe.
 - 1.2. As the question implies, the UK's international standing in maritime heritage and underwater archaeology has been achieved in the absence of a Government strategy. In fact, the UK's standing has been maintained despite Government largely ignoring the contribution of this sector and, in important respects, actively damaging the UK's prospects. As HFF has shown in its 2015 report on *The Social and Economic Benefits of Marine and Maritime Heritage*¹, the contribution of the maritime sector is almost entirely obscured in statistical initiatives such as *Taking Part* and *Heritage Counts*, even though some of the UK's most popular visitor attractions relate to our maritime past.
 - 1.3. Equally, the Government's apparent ambivalence to treasure hunting in the marine sphere and its failure to ratify the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage is extremely damaging internationally. As well as harming our reputation, failure to ratify means that the UK is excluded from the institutions of the 2001 UNESCO Convention and from the influence and opportunities that arise in that context².
 - 1.4. In terms of a government strategy being sure to add value, we can reasonably conclude that the UK's strength in this sector is being achieved despite our own Government holding one arm behind our back. This is a sector that could be doing very much better, for the mutual benefit of the UK and the wider world, if the Government were to adopt a positive strategy.
 - 1.5. In seeking to ensure that its strategy genuinely adds value, Government must start by recognising and, where possible, quantifying the impact of UK maritime heritage at home and abroad. Once it has a sense of the existing baseline, Government could reasonably seek to measure the value added by its strategy.

¹ http://honorfrostfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/HFF_Report_2015_web-4.pdf.

² See *2001 UNESCO Convention: the case for UK ratification* (2014) <http://honorfrostfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/2001-Convention-The-Case-for-Ratification-FINAL.pdf>.

1.6. When it is developing its priorities and taking decisions to give effect to its strategy, Government is strongly encouraged to seek the views of organisations such as HFF that are already active in this sector. By engaging with those who already have practical expertise in delivering cultural heritage projects abroad, quantitative measures of success can be augmented with a more qualitative appreciation of what works on the ground. HFF is a member of a group of Cultural Heritage Preservation Funders co-operating in this field whose views would help ensure the effectiveness of the Government's strategy.

Q2. What are the strengths and assets the UK has which we should be seeking to protect or enhance in any Soft Power strategy?

2.1. It is worth underlining the intrinsic potential of maritime heritage within the UK's soft power strategy. The UK's global position is attributable to its maritime history: the UK's maritime power over the centuries has resulted in an astounding maritime heritage in the UK that already attracts millions of overseas and domestic tourists; and the heritage of many places around the world often reflects the UK's maritime role in the past. The pervasiveness of historical maritime connections to and from the UK applies to both intangible and tangible heritage, and encompasses everything from shipwrecks to art collections to maritime buildings to entire coastal landscapes. The maritime dimension extends to all forms of creativity and heritage and is in many respects a USP for the UK. It is extraordinary, therefore, that so little has been done expressly to consider the scope and impact of UK maritime heritage globally.

2.2. Hand-in-hand with the extraordinary range of maritime heritage assets with UK connections around the world, the UK has a highly prized reputation in maritime heritage expertise, professional services, research, education and training. In the public sector, university sector, private sector and amongst NGOs, the UK has truly world-leading capabilities. Again, the fact that Government has not sought to comprehensively quantify or promote these strengths means that their global impact and potential are underplayed. It is perhaps worth underlining the degree to which, even without express support from Government, UK organisations actively engage with maritime archaeology internationally. This is a sector in which the UK's impact could increase very visibly.

Q3. How do we best deploy the convening power of Government in supporting collective activity across and beyond the Culture sector?

3.1. Government can use its convening role in two ways that would provide immediate support to the role of the UK maritime heritage sector internationally:

- First, Government must recognise maritime culture and heritage as a core component of the UK's overall cultural offer. Indeed, as indicated above, the maritime dimension is a particular strength for the UK both domestically and internationally, and should be developed as such.
- Second, Government must also recognise that culture and heritage is a key strand of its other marine and maritime policies, both in the UK and abroad. The UK has many strengths in the marine sphere, but culture and heritage are too frequently omitted from its maritime offer. Specifically, it is hoped that the International Ocean Strategy

currently being developed by FCO will include a section on the UK's capabilities in maritime heritage and underwater archaeology.

Q4. Are there other Governments which have policies which are successfully enhancing the Soft Power of their countries?

4.1. Several countries make particular use of maritime heritage and especially marine archaeology to advance their profiles internationally. For example:

- France maintains a very capable maritime archaeology department – DRASSM – with its own dedicated research vessel that carries out high-profile investigations internationally, as well as in France's overseas departments and territories and in metropolitan waters³. France's replica of the Eighteenth-Century frigate *L'Hermione* has made journeys to the US and around the Mediterranean.
- Canada has invested heavily in discovering and investigating HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror* from the infamous Franklin Expedition, demonstrating Canada's capabilities as well as providing political and cultural profile in Arctic waters⁴.
- China has also commissioned a specific archaeological research vessel, *Kaogu-01*, that has been actively engaged in investigations that help demonstrate the extent of China's maritime influence historically. China has also established a Centre for Underwater Cultural Heritage and opened a National Underwater Cultural Heritage Conservation Base.

Q5. Should we prioritise our activity towards specific countries, and if so, on which countries should we focus?

5.1. As indicated above, HFF would like Government to recognise and support the important role that HFF is developing in the eastern Mediterranean, especially Lebanon, Syria and Cyprus. HFF would also like to underline the threat to coastal and marine cultural heritage in the wider MENA region, but also the tremendous opportunity to support countries in the MENA region to understand and appreciate maritime heritage as assets for the future.

Q6. Given our commitment to continue to invest 0.7% of Gross National Income in Foreign Aid, should we do more to align the Culture and Development agendas, in partnership with DfID, for example by growing the Cultural Protection Fund?

6.1. HFF considers maritime heritage to have great potential in providing both economic and social benefits that encourage Development, and that greater alignment and investment in culture should be a central plank of the UK's Foreign Aid budget. For example, *Rising from the Depths* is a Global Challenges Research Fund project that is seeking to use maritime heritage to develop sustainable social, economic and cultural benefits in East Africa⁵, indicating the role that maritime heritage could play in international development elsewhere. HFF is currently developing an extension to the EAMENA project⁶ focussing on endangered archaeology in the coastal and marine zone, which is likely to have a profound impact on the contribution

³ See http://www.culture.gouv.fr/var/culture/storage/culture_mag/drassm_en/files/docs/all.pdf.

⁴ See <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/culture/franklin>

⁵ See <https://risingfromthedepts.com/>

⁶ See <http://eamena.arch.ox.ac.uk/>

that heritage can play in the future peace and prosperity of the Middle East and North Africa. HFF has also liaised with the Cultural Protection Fund and would support expansion of its remit and programme, to include specific objectives with respect to maritime archaeology.

- Q7. How can Government's global network, by which I mean our Ambassadors and High Commissioners, and their FCO teams working in tandem with DIT and the British Council, support you more effectively in your international engagement?
- 7.1. It would be helpful for UK Ambassadors and High Commissioners to be appraised of the importance of maritime heritage in general and of the specific interests that the UK has in maritime heritage in the specific country. This might include, for example, details of historic shipwrecks with which the UK has verifiable links, including wrecks still owned by UK Government⁷. UK Ambassadors and High Commissioners in many countries should also be appraised of the large amount of work relating to maritime archaeology previously carried out by UK-based organisations. Where issues arise – even if they seem innocuous – the UK's representatives should be encouraged to take advice from FCO and DCMS to avoid inadvertent problems⁸.
- 7.2. Correspondingly, FCO and DCMS should be encouraged to work closely together to develop policies, expertise and communications channels so that they can provide advice to all branches of Government on international matters relating to maritime heritage.
- 7.3. UK skills and expertise in the maritime heritage sector, including in university education, is a great strength. Both the Department for International Trade and the British Council should be encouraged to recognise the UK's capabilities and potential in this sector with a view to extending them internationally. Where UK Government is involved in marine environmental projects, in developing marine management or in promoting marine infrastructure, consideration should also be given to the threats and opportunities that arise in respect of maritime heritage. As noted previously, maritime heritage should form part of both the UK's cultural offer and its maritime offer internationally.
- Q8. How can we most effectively grow cultural exports, contribute to the Trade agenda, cultivate corporate and philanthropic investment and thereby strengthen your financial resilience?
- 8.1. It should be noted that HFF is already a major source of philanthropic investment in maritime archaeology in the eastern Mediterranean. UK Government is encouraged to recognise the role that HFF is already playing in this regard.
- 8.2. To effectively grow our cultural exports, UK Government is encouraged to take the steps already noted. Specifically, Government should recognise the scope and capabilities of the UK maritime heritage sector, quantifying its current contribution and outlining its potential for growth. Government should develop a unified, unambiguous policy on the value of maritime heritage, to include a commitment to ratify the 2001 UNESCO Convention as soon as practicable; this will ensure that the UK is providing a clear message to the international community upon which specific initiatives can build. Government should embed maritime

⁷ For interests in wrecks – including UK international interests – please see *Managing Shipwrecks* (April 2018): <http://honorfrostfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Managing-Shipwrecks-April-2018-web.pdf>

⁸ For example, the discredited 'Captain Kidd's Treasure' claim in Madagascar in 2015, attended by the UK Ambassador.

heritage as a key sector in both cultural and maritime policies, and ensure that appropriate expertise is available to all its branches

- 8.3. A strong, coherent position from UK Government as it faces the world will provide confidence to the different facets of the maritime heritage sector that their own effort and investment internationally are not isolated. In itself, this will provide a major boost to UK companies, NGOs and universities.
- Q9. How can we best support the Cultural equivalents of SMEs to grow their international relationships? I want to continue to support our London-based flagship institutions, but I also want to ensure we support new entrants and those outside London. Would more culture-focused trade missions be useful to you, or do you need more tailored support?
- 9.1. Although it not within HFF's direct area of activity, there is known to be a market internationally for UK services in the maritime heritage sector. The range of services is very wide, and even in the field of maritime archaeology it encompasses diving services, geophysical survey and interpretations, and consultancy, for example. Such services have emerged in the context of marine development in the UK, including offshore wind; and as offshore wind develops as a sector globally, there are major opportunities for UK companies to capitalise on their lead internationally. The UK also hosts the most widely-recognised training scheme in underwater archaeology, which is delivered by the Nautical Archaeology Society (NAS) and its international partners. Ensuring that existing trade missions promote the UK's services in this sector would be a beneficial step; and it may also be productive to carry out specific initiatives focussing on the UK and maritime heritage that can generate both new openings around the world, but also attract tourists and students to the UK.
- Q10. How can we build a mutually supportive relationship between the Culture sector and the GREAT Britain campaign, and ensure the Culture Diary works as a global asset for the whole of the Culture sector?
- 10.1. Again, the most pressing step is for Government to recognise the strength of the UK maritime heritage sector and its potential as a 'USP' both for inward and outward relationships. Maritime heritage is at best implicit in the GREAT Britain campaign, yet it could form a distinctive and attractive strand of its own. A coherent, unambiguous vision for the UK's maritime heritage internationally would be a major positive step.
- 10.2. As noted above, it is essential that maritime heritage forms part of both the UK's cultural offer and its maritime offer, encompassing maritime heritage assets in the UK and around the world, and underlining UK skills and expertise in this sector.

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