

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

Background Paper

Marine and maritime cultural heritage can have a strong hold on people's imaginations, contributing to sense of place within communities as well as attracting domestic and international tourism. However, marine and maritime cultural heritage is often fragmented. Traditional institutional divisions separate what is in the sea, what is from the sea and what is by the sea despite new technologies making marine and maritime cultural heritage much more visible and accessible. There is both a need and an opportunity to develop new models for engaging society in the history of its seamless sea.

Our 2016 Policy Forum is intended to encourage connectivity in public engagement. It provides an innovative opportunity to discuss how we can increase the social and economic benefits of marine and maritime cultural heritage by bringing together audiences and joining-up diverse assets, resources and research.

Presentations and discussion will address two themes, as follows:

Seablind heritage?

Making places for marine and maritime heritage in society

- raising the public profile of marine and maritime heritage
- recognising and enhancing the contribution of marine and maritime heritage to sense of place
- distinguishing marine and maritime heritage when quantifying impact and formulating policy

In the sea, from the sea and by the sea

How can we better connect marine and maritime heritage?

- making connections between marine and maritime heritage in different environments – built; afloat; on display; online; underwater
- engaging different audiences – locals; visitors; volunteers
- developing new narratives – relevance and significance

An extended discussion period, facilitated by discussants, will build on the day as a whole to arrive at firm directions for future development. The Steering Committee hopes to develop a statement of intent or principles that can be applied through the Steering Committee's activities and to help inform the Honor Frost Foundation's own priorities. With the objectives of raising public profile and presenting a more integrated perspective on marine and maritime cultural heritage, participants might like to consider:

- their aspirations;
- the challenges they have experienced or anticipate;
- their 'top priority' institutionally, for the sector, and for the public at large.

The Policy Forum will explore this subject matter within a UK context, but the intention is to remain mindful of how UK experience may also resonate in other places around the world, especially – given the regional focus of the Honor Frost Foundation – in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Policy Forum is for an invited audience and, to encourage openness and information-sharing, will be conducted according to the Chatham House Rule. Information and discussion at the Policy Forum can be freely referred to but must remain non-attributable. We would ask that participants respect identities and affiliations accordingly. For example, whilst participants are welcome to use social media to refer to comments at the Policy Forum, please refrain from identifying the speaker either directly or indirectly.

Appendix

The Policy Forum builds upon the report *The Social and Economic Benefits of Marine and Maritime Cultural Heritage* published by the Honor Frost Foundation in September 2015. The report can be downloaded from the HFF website here: <http://honorfrostfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/HFF-Report-Social-Economic-Value-of-Marine-and-Maritime-Cultural-Heritage.pdf>.

In its conclusions, the report identified the following practical steps towards recognising and enhancing the social and economic benefits of marine and maritime cultural heritage:

- Marine and maritime cultural heritage should receive much greater attention as a facet of culture and heritage generally, and as a facet of the marine environment. Its presence is pervasive even far from the sea and its importance to people economically and socially warrants specific consideration. Its absence from debates and from policy should be remedied. Marine and maritime cultural heritage is not a minority concern; participation and economic activity can already be measured in millions.
- The value of marine and maritime cultural heritage in social and economic terms should be regarded as an accompaniment to its value as a component of the historic environment. Conservation of marine and maritime cultural heritage is warranted for its own sake, but it makes sense also to pursue the social and economic benefits that it accords.
- It is essential that the breadth and diversity of marine and maritime cultural heritage is recognised, and that this becomes a driver for a joined-up approach to identifying and increasing social and economic benefits. The ‘offer’ of marine and maritime cultural heritage will be much greater if traditional boundaries between disciplines and environments are overcome.
- Further research, including quantification, should be carried out on the social and economic benefits of marine and maritime heritage, equivalent to the research and quantification that is being carried out for culture and heritage on land and for the marine environment. Marine and maritime heritage should be identifiable in periodic surveys of, for example, visitor numbers, participation and spending.