

JNAPC Submission to the UK Government Comprehensive Spending Review 2020

Submitted on 24th September 2020

The Joint Nautical Archaeology Policy Committee (JNAPC) has pleasure in submitting its response to the UK Government Comprehensive Spending Review 2020.

The JNAPC was formed in 1988 from individuals and representatives of institutions who wished to raise awareness of the United Kingdom's underwater cultural heritage (UCH) and demonstrate that underwater sites of historic importance should receive no less protection than those on land.

As part of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2020 the JNAPC would propose that HM Treasury increase funding to DCMS which would allow the department and in turn the UK government's heritage agencies to improve the management and delivery of their commitments - specifically the effective management and protection of our nation's important and vulnerable UCH.

Protection of underwater cultural heritage might often seem like a cost and a constraint, but it is widely accepted that UCH can contribute economically as a public resource through recreation, tourism, place-making and through the knowledge economy. Previous chancellors have recognised that "one of the best investments we can make as a nation is in our extraordinary arts, museums, heritage, media and sport", and that "cuts [to the arts] are a false economy" with the sector returning one quarter of a trillion pounds from a £1 billion investment. As an island nation with a famously rich maritime history our UCH is intrinsically part of this sector that can offer such a high return on investment.

By its very nature UCH is international in nature. Vessels voyage and trade across national boundaries and are often crewed by different nationalities. This international character is supplemented in the case of the United Kingdom (UK) by centuries of dominance of the oceans by its merchant fleets and the Royal Navy. This has left a legacy of historic wrecks around the world and created not just a UK maritime heritage, but a global heritage shared with other nations. This provides the UK Government with an opportunity to promote its Soft Power and influence through cultural links using this shared heritage as a part of the GREAT Britain campaign.

The JNAPC would welcome the opportunity to work with Government to develop strategies for using our maritime heritage as a means of exercising Soft Power worldwide, accepted that until the UK signs and ratifies the UNESCO Convention under the leadership of DCMS, its influence in such matters will be constrained.

The JNAPC would propose as part of the 2020 Comprehensive Spending Review that annual funding to DCMS for the management and protection of the UK's important UCH around the world should be increased by a modest £1 million. This level of investment will enable DCMS and the UK government's heritage agencies to improve the management of their existing commitments and deliver their statutory responsibilities and would have an impact out of all proportion to the size of the investment. It would also allow the development of the UK as a world leader in the field of UCH management, research, investigation, conservation science, and the presentation of maritime heritage to the public, and potentially stave off issues in respect of failure to protect important heritage assets which could prove very damaging to the reputation of the government, the department and the nation.

Since the 1980s with the discovery and recovery of the *Mary Rose*, the UK's capability to effectively manage the discovery of nationally important maritime heritage assets has waxed and waned with resources and infrastructure being built up for a particular project and then subsequently dismantled, with the resulting depletion of infrastructure, capacity, skills and knowledge as a negative consequence. With

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this cyclical phenomenon the sector (including the UK heritage agencies) currently struggle to adequately or quickly respond to the discovery of new heritage assets on the seabed.

When compared to the resources available to the equivalent agencies in France, Spain, Holland, USA, Canada and Australia, the UK is falling behind, with other nations having invested over the last decade to increase their ability to manage their UCH around the world, via a shared heritage collaborative approach. Such investment has enabled these countries to gain an increased voice and profile on global platforms such as UNESCO and ICOMOS ICUCH (International Committee on the Underwater Cultural Heritage).

The JNAPC has identified six areas of activity that must be advanced for the UK to step up and retrieve its position as a global leader in the field of UCH management and practice. The six identified areas and their proposed annual spend are outlined below.

1. The investigation of wrecks beyond UK territorial waters arising from offshore development of chance finds made by fisherman or divers.

Over recent years there have been examples (including the historic wreck found as part of the Galloper offshore windfarm development), where new discoveries are being made of British vessels outside UK territorial waters. Currently, the investigation of such sites is limited due to DCMS's financial constraints, but with offshore development increasing and with the quality of survey data improving, the number of new heritage assets being discovered is going to increase. At present other nations, such as Holland are using their considerable resources to undertake research on assets both in and outside UK territorial water, while the UK flounders for want of budget. This work could be contracted to archaeological units with pre-existing capabilities on behalf of DCMS and should include capacity building initiatives and educational programmes to maximise the social benefit of the investment.

Proposed annual budget £150,000.

2. The monitoring of known historic wrecks beyond UK territorial waters.

The UK has a legacy of many thousands of historic merchant vessel and warship wrecks throughout the world. These are also of great cultural importance for the countries in whose waters these wrecks lie. Examples of this legacy are the recently discovered wrecks of HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror* in Canada's Arctic waters, HMS *Tamar* in Hong Kong harbour and the ex-HMS *Endeavour* in US waters. These historic wrecks are cultural assets shared with many other countries which could enhance our Soft Power strategy.

There are recent examples of such sites, including the remains of HMS *Victory* (1737-1744), where the lack of resources has meant that very limited or no official monitoring has been undertaken to inform management decisions. Although many of the heritage assets beyond UK territorial waters are likely to be in deeper water, they are shallow enough to be visited, monitored, documented with the resulting knowledge being used to design conservation statement and management plans for each asset.

An annual programme of work could be developed in collaboration with other bodies to ensure that targeted monitoring visits are undertaken in a timely manner and that (where appropriate) capacity building and educational initiatives are tied into these visits. This work could be contracted to archaeological units with pre-existing capabilities on behalf of DCMS and should include capacity building initiatives and educational programmes to maximise the social benefit of the investment.

Proposed annual budget of £150,000.

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3. The emergency conservation and storage of artefacts from both Scheduled and Designated wrecks within UK territorial waters.

The Heritage at Risk Register maintained by Historic England, includes heritage assets deemed to be at risk of damage or destruction, be it by natural or man-made agents. One of the maritime assets currently on the Register is the wreck of the *London* which blew up in the Thames Estuary in 1665. The *London* is on the “at risk” register because structure, artefacts and human remains are actively eroding out of the seabed. However, for the past three years there are no funds available from Historic England to save, conserve and study the material. Despite the wreck being protected by the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973, Historic England are unable to protect it simply for the want of resources.

To allow the UK Government to fulfil its obligations under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973, it should bolster capacity within the heritage sector by establishing a budget for the emergency conservation and storage of artefacts from both Scheduled and Designated wrecks within UK territorial waters.

It would be possible to enhance the pre-existing facilities operated by the UK heritage agencies, including within Historic England’s facility at Fort Cumberland to undertake this work. The facility would engage in partnerships with existing heritage agencies, other national centres of excellence such as the National Oceanography Centre, third sector bodies, universities, museums and commercial contractors, to support DCMS and the UK heritage agencies to deliver on their statutory obligations. The conservation facility would also coordinate capacity building initiatives, research opportunities and educational programmes to maximise the social benefit of the UK Government’s investment.

The operations required to save this “at risk” material from both Scheduled and Designated wrecks within UK territorial waters could be contracted to archaeological units with pre-existing capabilities, but should also include capacity building initiatives and educational programmes to maximise the social benefit of the investment.

Proposed annual budget of £400,000.

4. Management and maintenance of the Marine Antiquities Scheme.

Each year new archaeological discoveries are made by divers, fishermen, boat operators and coastal visitors in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Currently the Marine Antiquities Scheme provides a way to record these finds, both protecting and improving our knowledge of the underwater cultural heritage. Guided by the approach ‘record any discovery before any recovery’, the scheme allows finders to learn more about their discoveries, help characterise the archaeological nature of the marine environment, and allow public access to the data for research.

Proposed annual budget of £100,000.

5. The compilation and maintenance of a record of UK maritime sites beyond territorial waters.

At present the National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE) in England and the databases maintained by the devolved nations, contains records of heritage assets limited to UK territorial waters. For the UK Government via DCMS to properly deliver on commitments to manage our heritage assets, the record should be extended to the edge of the UK’s maritime area. In due course, this record should also be extended to create a record of the UK heritage assets dispersed all over the world. As an example, the Royal Navy Loss List, shows that there are over 5,000 Royal Navy wrecks scattered across the oceans of the world, covering the period between 1512 and 2004.

Proposed annual budget of £150,000.

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6. UNESCO Convention ratification.

The international standard for countries wishing to conserve their UCH is now widely accepted as the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (UNESCO Convention). The UK has adopted the Rules of the Annex to the UNESCO Convention as its policy for maritime archaeology. Additionally, the UK Marine Policy Statement (UKMPS) stipulates the importance of UCH when public bodies are making decisions. The UKMPS and the adoption of the Rules as policy make the UK virtually fully compliant with the UNESCO Convention.

In the Culture White paper of 2016, DCMS stated they *would review the position on ratifying the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage*. Now is the time, under the leadership of DCMS for the Government to ratify the Convention. This would enable the UK to open dialogues with other countries for the future study, management and protection of our shared underwater cultural heritage to the advantage of each country, from a position of moral leadership. The UK has a high level of marine archaeological and conservation expertise, which is often sought out by other countries, especially those seeking to develop a heritage tourist industry. This provides the UK with an opportunity to develop strong socio-economic links with countries that are only just beginning to recognise the economic potential that such heritage offers.

Proposed annual budget of £50,000.

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