Strategic Review of Physical Dive Trails on Protected Wrecks

Project Report

MSDS Heritage

MSDS Marine

2026/MSDS25349/1

Strategic Review of Physical Dive Trails on Protected Wrecks

Project Report

Project Name	Strategic Review of Physical Dive Trails on Protected Wrecks	
Client	Historic England	
Client Project Number	In-Tend Ref: 453	
MSDS Marine Project Number	MSDS25349	
Author and contact details	Jenny Kent jenny@MSDSMarine.co.uk	Alison James alison@MSDSMarine.co.uk
Origination date	02/12/2025	
Reviser (s)	Alison James	
Date of last revision	12/03/2026	
Quality Assurance Approval	Michael Lobb	
Version number:	1.1	
Summary of changes	Minor changes following HE and stakeholder comment.	

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following people for their help and assistance in relation to this project:

- Danny Daniels
- Dave Johnston
- Dave Ronnan
- Dave Wendes
- Derek Green
- Garry McGinty
- Ginge (Roger) Crook
- Hefin Meara
- Izzy Allsop
- Jane Maddocks
- Julie Satchell
- Kevin Camidge
- Mark Beattie Edwards
- Mark Pearce
- Martin Davies
- Nick Reed
- Terry Newman

Cover Images

Column 1 top to bottom
A protected wreck site buoy
A float covered in marine growth on the *Coronation* dive trail. Credit: Coronation Wreck Project
A map showing the protected wreck sites. Credit: Historic England
Column 2 top to bottom
Divers visiting the *Hazardous* Dive Trail. Credit Maritime Archaeology Trust/ *Hazardous* Wreck Project
A diver preparing to dive the Thorness Bay dive trail. Credit: MSDS Marine
A diver on the *Colossus* dive trail. Credit: CISMAS
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Trail marker floats being prepared for the *Coronation* dive trail. Credit: Coronation Wreck Project
A diver on the *Coronation* dive trail. Credit: Coronation Wreck Project
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Divers preparing to dive the *Coronation* dive trail. Credit: Coronation Wreck Project

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1.0 Summary

1.0.1 This report presents a strategic review of physical dive trails on England's protected wreck sites, undertaken for Historic England by MSDS Marine. Its purpose is to assess how existing dive trails are used, maintained, and promoted, and to provide practical recommendations to improve their sustainability, visitor numbers, and public benefit. The review complements earlier work on virtual dive trails and focuses specifically on physical underwater trail infrastructure such as marker stations, lines, tags, and waterproof interpretation materials.

1.0.2 The report covers eight current or recent dive trails — including those on HMS *Colossus*, HMS *Coronation*, HMS/m *A1*, *Holland No.5, Iona II*, Normans Bay, Thorness Bay and *Hazardous* — plus earlier pilot trails at the Needles and Alum Bay. Methods included one-to-one interviews with licensees and dive charter skippers, plus an online survey of divers and boat operators.

1.0.3 Historic England investment in dive trails since 2004 totals nearly £350,000 across physical and virtual schemes, with approximately £190,000 attributed to physical trails. It should be noted that many of these projects had additional outcomes too and as such are not simply costs that are fully attributable to dive trails. For example, some projects included geophysical data collection to inform virtual trails, however, the data was also required to inform the creation of updated site plans and to inform ongoing site management in relation to change. An additional £54,607 has been spent on maintenance since 2009.

1.0.4 Since 2005, nearly 8,000 diver visits have been recorded across protected wreck dive trails, although the figures do not distinguish between recreational visits and maintenance or research dives. Visitor numbers peaked between 2011 and 2018, supported by new trail launches and coordinated promotion, but have not fully recovered since the Covid pandemic.

1.0.5 Dive trails vary significantly in design and maintenance burden. Some sites use seabed infrastructure such as sinkers, tags, floats, and ground lines, which require regular cleaning, repair, and periodic replacement due to fouling, storm damage and sediment movement. Others operate low-infrastructure or "guide-only" models using waterproof slates and booklets, resulting in much lower maintenance costs.

1.0.6 A consistent theme is that dive trails depend heavily on volunteer licensees and their teams, with costs often personally absorbed. Knowledge sharing between sites is currently informal, leading to duplicated experimentation and lost learning. Promotion is fragmented and inconsistent, and diver survey results show low awareness overall, despite strong interest among those informed. Charter boat decline, aging diver demographics, and loss of local dive shops have also been shown to reduce access and visibility.

1.0.7 The report provides a number of key recommendations to support Historic England in the future development and operation of dive trail schemes. Overall, the report concludes that with modest, well-targeted support and coordination, dive trails can significantly enhance protected wreck access, understanding, and long-term care.

1.0.8 Table 1 below provides a summary of overarching and site-specific recommendations.

Overarching Recommendations	
Recommendation 1	Creation of a knowledge sharing network and resource hub
Recommendation 2	Ongoing support for dive trails
Recommendation 3	Establish a public protected wreck dive trails portal
Recommendation 4	Co-ordinated central promotion
Recommendation 5	Establish an annual dive trail photography competition
Recommendation 6	Onshore signage for dive trails
Recommendation 7	Develop a partnership working approach across all dive trails
Recommendation 8	Ensure sustainable maintenance models exist before approval of new trails
Recommendation 9	Continue to recognise and support challenging dive trails
Recommendation 10	Undertake a review of reporting
Recommendation 11	Undertake a study on the impact of mooring
Recommendation 12	Commission research and practical trials to develop standardised, best-practice approaches for seabed signage used in dive trails
Site Specific Recommendations	
HMS *Colossus* Recommendation 1	Support annual pre-season maintenance of the *Colossus* trail
HMS *Colossus* Recommendation 2	Support a next generation diving and heritage skills initiative on Scilly
HMS *Colossus* Recommendation 3	Revitalise engagement through collaborative projects and signage
HMS *Colossus* Recommendation 4	Consider supporting additional dive trails where conditions allow
HMS *Coronation* Recommendation 1	Review foreshore interpretation panels
HMS *Coronation* Recommendation 2	Target promotion in the Plymouth area for the Coronation, and the wider dive trail schemes, to capitalise on the success of the area as a diving hub
HMS/m *A1* Recommendation 1	Support reprinting the dive trail guides
Iona II Recommendation 1	Support reprinting the dive trail guides
Thorness Bay Recommendation 1	Promote Research into the wrecks identity

Table 1: A summary of overarching and site-specific recommendations made in this report.

2.0 Aims

2.0.1 The primary aim of this project was to undertake a strategic review of physical dive trails on England's protected wrecks. It will identify the key issues with maintenance and promotion of the trail. The project will provide a set of recommendations for how Historic England's National Listing and Marine Team can support licensees in opening up access to England's protected wreck sites. The objectives of the project are summarised as follows:

- Undertake a review of the use of physical dive trails through informal interviews with protected wreck licensees and dive boat skippers
- Produce recommendations for how Historic England should support the ongoing maintenance and promotion of physical dive trails in order to increase visitor numbers, and maximise the public benefit of the trails

3.0 Background to Dive Trail Scheme

3.0.1 In October 2025 Historic England put out a tender to undertake a strategic review of physical dive trails on England's protected wreck sites. In March 2018 Historic England undertook a review of the virtual dive trails scheme and made a number of recommendations for their future development[1]. This review did not include physical trails.

3.0.2 Historic England has provided funding for the installation of physical dive trails on the seabed on several protected wreck sites. These comprise stations marking out key features on the wreck, lines connecting the stations together, and interpretative material in the form of waterproof booklets, site maps, and dive slates. The trails require regular maintenance to ensure they stay functional. Marine growth needs to be removed, and occasionally stations and lines need replacing.

3.0.3 As outlined in 1.0.3 it is hard to establish the financial cost of dive trails as some funded projects included multiple elements to address more than one site management aim. Since the inception of the Historic England dive trail installation scheme in 2004, Historic England has invested £348,811 into projects involving the development of physical and virtual dive trails. It is hard to break down a figure for the physical trails alone as some Historic England funded projects included both virtual and physical trails within one project grant (in addition to other elements), however, removing the virtual only trail projects from this figure, Historic England have spent c.£190,000 on projects that resulted in nine physical dive trails (including six virtual trails) and a further £54,607 into their maintenance. .

3.0.4 In late 2025 following a tender process, MSDS Marine were appointed to undertake a review of the use of the physical dive trails and provide recommendations on how Historic England can support volunteer licensees in the ongoing maintenance of these trails.

[1] https://historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/get-involved/dive-trails-review-pdf/

4.0 Methodology

4.0.1 There are seven protected wreck site dive trails currently operating in English waters, Figure 1. Additional trails on *Hazardous* and the Needles, with an additional trail on a nearby undesignated site in Alum Bay, are also included within this report. The dive trail on *Hazardous* was operational from 2001 - 2011, when it became inaccessible due to sand moving across the site. The team behind the trail hope to reopen it in 2026. The Needles and Alum Bay dive trails were only operational for a few years as part of a pilot project funded by Historic England (formerly English Heritage) in the early 2000's.

4.0.2 The dive trails covered in this review are:

- HMS *Colossus*
- *Iona II*
- *Coronation*
- HMS/m *A1*
- Hazardous
- *Holland No 5*
- Normans Bay
- Thorness Bay
- Needles and Alum Bay

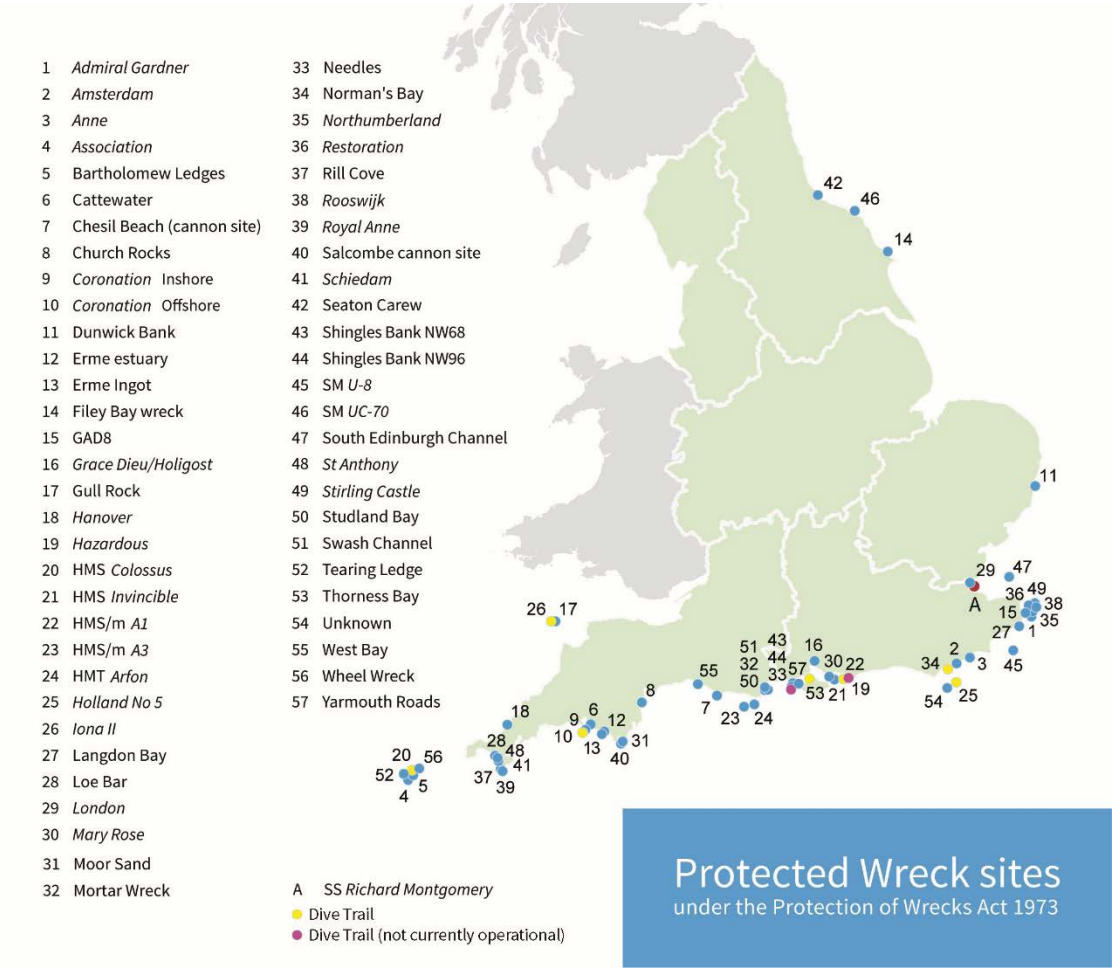


Figure 1: Map showing sites all English sites designated under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973 with the sites of current and past dive trails.

4.0.3 To understand how the various trails operate and why those sites were chosen to host trails, all Licensees and boat skippers involved in the listed trails were asked to take part in a 1:1 online interview. A total of eleven interviews were undertaken in December 2025 on Microsoft Teams,

see Table 2 below. The knowledge gained from these interviews is outlined in this report on a site-by-site basis in Sections 6.0 - 15.0.

Name	Role	Site	Date of Interview
Kevin Camidge	Licensee	HMS *Colossus*	02/12/2025
Izzy Allsop	Skipper	HMS *Colossus*	10/12/2025
Derek Green	Licensee	*Iona II*	16/12/2025
Ginge Crook	Licensee	*Coronation*	01/12/2025
Mark Pearce	Licensee	*Coronation*	01/12/2025
Martin Davies	Licensee	HMS/m *A1*	18/12/2025
Dave Johnston	Licensee	*Hazardous*	02/12/2025
Mark Beattie Edwards	Licensee	Normans Bay / *Holland No 5*	09/12/2025
Dave Ronnan	Skipper	Normans Bay / *Holland No 5*	01/12/2025
Garry McGinty	Licensee	Thorness Bay	18/12/2025
Julie Satchell	Licensee	Needles and Alum Bay	15/01/2026

Table 2: List of Interviews undertaken

4.0.4 To further understand how Historic England can support dive trails it is important to understand how the diving community and dive charter boat skippers view them and engage with them. To achieve this a Microsoft Forms based survey was created. This is reported on in Section 16.0.

4.1 The use of Artificial Intelligence

4.1.1 To align with best practice as set out in the CIfA statement on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)[2], the following sections outline the use of artificial intelligence in the project.

4.1.2 Survey: ChatGPT was used to assist in analysing the free-text answers to questions in the online survey. The survey responses were provided to ChatGPT without any personal details (it should be noted that no personal details were collected at any point during the survey). The analysis by the AI involved the identification of themes within the survey responses relating to free-text questions. Once this analysis was complete, the themes generated by ChatGPT were manually checked and cross-referenced against the responses.

4.1.3 Interviews: As outlined in Section 4.0.3 the 1:1 interviews were held online with an automatic transcription generated with the permission of the participants. ChatGPT was used to create summaries of these transcriptions. These summaries were manually checked for their veracity before being used as a basis for identifying key points.

4.1.4 ChatGPT was used during January 2026. The project team are satisfied that the data generated by AI has been checked for accuracy and take responsibility for the factual accuracy of this report. The project team also declares that the use of AI within the project is responsible and lawful and complies with data protection and copyright legislation.

[2] https://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/2025-07/Statement-on-the-use-of-Artificial-Intelligence_final-July-2025_1.pdf

5.0 Dive Trail Usage

5.0.1 Historic England provided figures on visiting divers since 2005, Table 3 and Figure 2. Since 2005 nearly 8,000 divers have dived on a protected wreck dive trail. It is not possible to break this down into the number of unique individual divers.

5.0.2 As with all the diver numbers presented in this report, it is impossible to break down the number of divers visiting the dive trails and the number of divers diving on the sites for other reasons such as archaeological survey or site maintenance. The recording of individual dives on dive trails has long been acknowledged as a difficulty within the current system as set out in the 2013 report by Mark Beatie-Edwards[3].

Year	Number of Divers	Year	Number of Divers	Year	Number of Divers
2005	20	2012	724	2019	228
2006	6	2013	702	2020	21
2007	16	2014	689	2021	124
2008	9	2015	646	2022	256
2009	179	2016	406	2023	236
2010	312	2017	417	2024	226
2011	1484	2018	379	2025	246

Table 3: The number of divers visiting English protected wreck sites with dive trails since 2005.

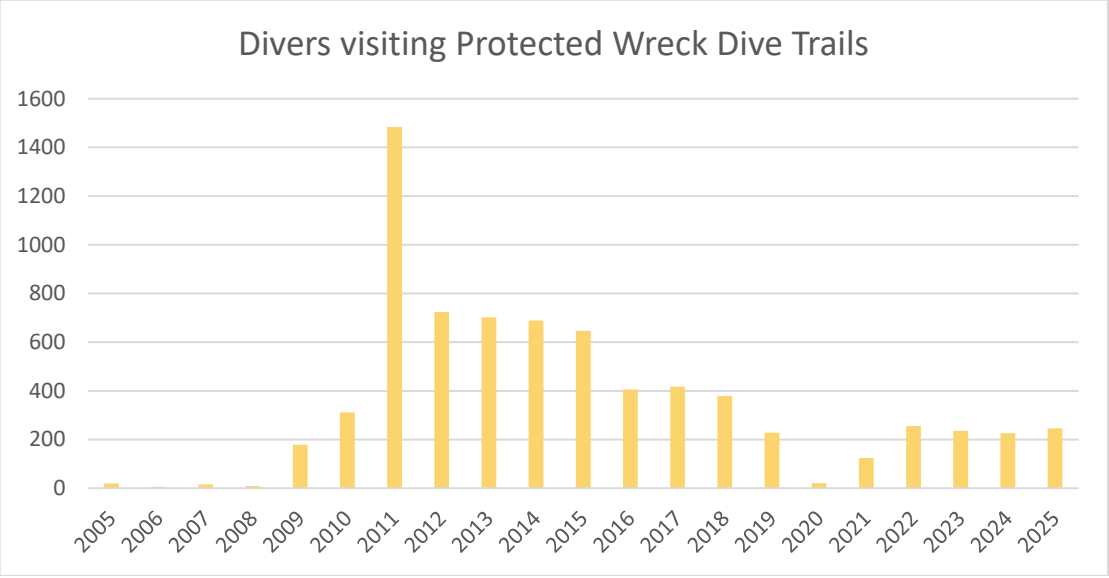


Figure 2: The number of divers visiting English protected wreck sites with dive trails since 2005.

5.0.3 There are some clear highs and lows in the data that can be explained. Perhaps the most obvious are the low numbers visiting the site in 2020, the first year of the Covid pandemic. Numbers did recover in the following years but have never recovered to the earlier highs of 2011 – 2018.

[3] Beattie-Edwards, M. 2013 *The local economic value of a protected wreck: Final Report HE 6606,* unpublished report for Historic England

5.0.4 The 2011 high coincided with the launch of the *Coronation* dive trail and was the fourth year of the *Colossus* dive trail operating which consistently had high visitor numbers at this time. A slight rise in numbers in 2017 can perhaps be attributed to Historic England having a marketing push in 2016 and 2017 with articles appearing in the diving press and online, presentations at the annual BSAC conference to over 600 divers in person, as well as many more online, and with 2017 culminating in the Nautical Archaeology Society and Historic England attending the annual Dive Show to promote dive trails, both virtual and physical.

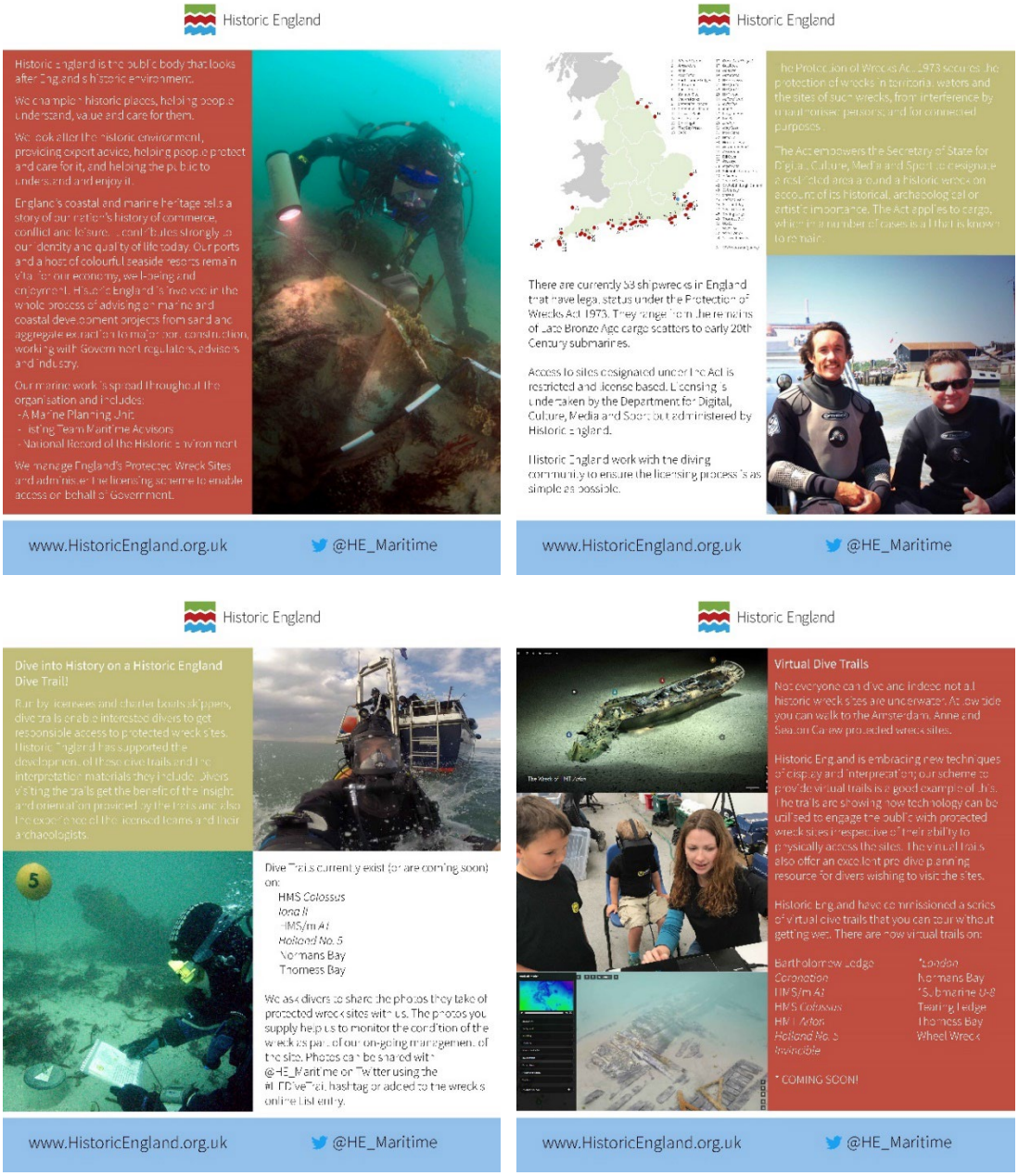


Figure 3: Promotional banners used by Historic England at the 2017 Birmingham Dive Show to promote dive trails and protected wreck sites.

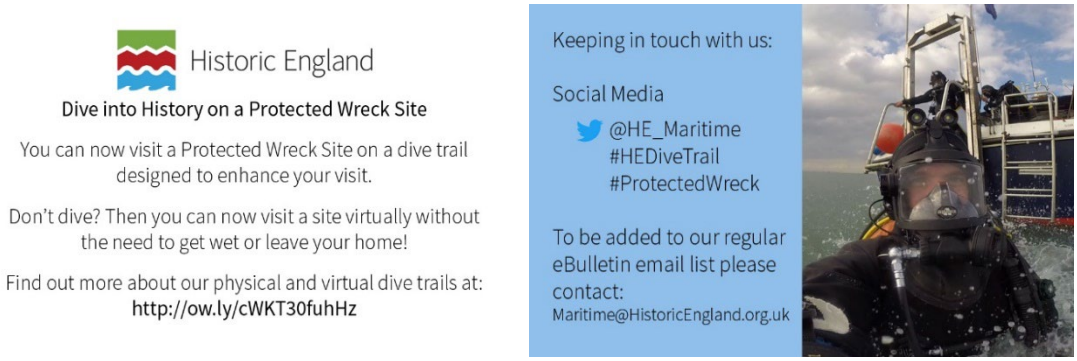


Figure 4: Promotional business cards first used by Historic England in 2016 and 2017 to promote dive trails and protected wreck sites.

Figure 5: The NAS and Historic England display at the 2017 dive show.

5.0.5 The impact of weather on dive trail visits cannot be underestimated. Whilst preparing this report it has become clear there is not an easily accessible and understandable source of wind speed and directional data for England's coastal areas. Wind speed data does exist from 1949 – 2023 from the Met Office[4] and is available online, however, it requires lengthy interrogation to understand any local variances in wind that is outside the scope of this review.

5.0.6 In addition, there is no national weather impact reporting from the dive agencies or elsewhere. Anecdotal evidence from stakeholders shows that the impact of weather cannot be underestimated and that climate change may be making the situation worse. Solent based dive charter boat skipper Dave Wendes reports that in the years 2023 – 2025, 50% of his charter bookings were cancelled due to wind[5]. Using Isle of Purbeck Sub Aqua Club data, club diver Nick

[4] https://catalogue.ceda.ac.uk/uuid/91cb9985a6c2453d99084bde4ff5f314/
[55] Dave Wendes, pers comm 2026.

Reed reports 39% of planned dives were cancelled between 2007 and 2025 (excluding the figures for 2020 and 2021 to remove the effects of the covid pandemic). His figures do not clearly show the reasons for cancellation, but wind will be the likely cause in most cases. In good years, just 24% of dives were lost with this rising as high as 56% in 2015[6]. Diver Jane Maddocks, BSAC, reports 15 out of 24 (62.5%) hard boat dives were cancelled in 2024 due to bad weather[7].

5.0.7 Together, these figures demonstrate that weather variability alone can remove 25 % - 50% of planned dive trail visits in any given year, placing a significant constraint on public access, engagement, and the undermining the reliability of access to dive trails.

[6] Nick Reed, pers comm 2026.
[7] Jane Maddocks, pers comm 2026.

6.0 Individual Protected Wreck Dive Trails

6.0.1 Whilst there are some commonalities amongst dive trails and their infrastructure, there is a large variation in their form with individuals often developing techniques in isolation as individual trails have been created.

6.0.2 The following sections present a summary of how each trail operates and further information on their operation following a series of one-to-one interviews with stakeholders. If relevant, site-specific recommendations are made. Where recommendations are valid across all sites they are given in Section 17.0.

6.0.3 Table 4 sets out a summary of the format of each dive trail and basic information about it for comparison purposes.

Site	NHLE Number	Depth	Location	Tagged features	Sinkers	Pitons	Groundlines	Buoys / Floats	No sea bed infrastructure	Website	Top side Booklet	Underwater Booklet	Slate map
Hazardous	1000048	6 - 8 m	off Bracklesham Bay, West Sussex							https://hazardousproject.info/index1.html			
HMS *Colossus*	1000078	14 m	Isles of Scilly							https://hmscolossus.cismas.org.uk/			
HMS *Coronation* (offshore)	1000069	18 m	Penlee Point in Plymouth Sound							https://www.coronationwreck.org/			
HMS/m *A1*	1000043	11 m	Eastern Solent, Off East Wittering, West Sussex							https://www.nauticalarchaeologysociety.org/a1-submarine-dive-trail			
Holland 5	1000081	30 m	SE of Royal Sovereign Lighthouse, near Eastbourne							https://www.nauticalarchaeologysociety.org/holland5-dive-trail			
Iona II	1000051	24 m	East Coast of Lundy Island							https://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/lundyisland/discovering-lundy/activities/diving/divesites/iona-ii-dive-trail/iona-ii-dive-trail2-divingthewreck/diving-the-wreck-guides/			
Normans Bay	1000084	15 m	Normans Bay, East Sussex							https://www.nauticalarchaeologysociety.org/normans-bay-dive-trail			
Thorness Bay	1402103	15 m	off the Isle of Wight							https://msdsmarine.com/projects/dive-trails/thornessbay/			
Needles and Alum Bay	1000087	5-7 m	North coast at the extreme west of the Isle of Wight							Not an Active Trail			

Table 4: Summary of the format of each individual dive trail.

7.0 *Hazardous*

7.0.1 The *Hazardous* protected wreck site lies in Bracklesham Bay, near Chichester, in 6 - 9 m, 800 m from the shoreline.

7.0.2 In 2001, the *Hazardous* was the first protected wreck to have a dive trail installed in English waters. However, the data on visitor numbers does not reflect this as Historic England only have data readily accessible from 2005 onwards.

7.0.3 The volunteer led *Hazardous* Project group hold a licence to investigate, survey and catalogue the wreck. They originally established the trail in 2001 under the leadership of then Licensee Iain Grant. The trail ran successfully run for ten years until becoming buried in encroaching sand in 2010 and included both archaeology and biology points with funding partly coming from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and from volunteer funds.

7.0.4 Access to the trail was supervised, with the local dive shop Wittering Divers organising and running the trips and a team member from the *Hazardous* Project giving a talk at the dive shop prior to diving taking place. The project team would then travel to site in their own RIB, lay the shot and prepare the trail by ensuring lines were uncovered and signage was clear of marine growth. Dive trail visits would make their own way to the site and diving would then be supervised by the project team who would remain on site at all times.

Figure 6: Two divers exploring the Hazardous *dive trail.*
Credit: Maritime Archaeology Trust / Hazardous *Wreck Project*

7.0.5 The trips were run several times a year on pre-advertised dates, weather permitting, with additional trail days added later in the season if there was demand.

7.0.6 Each dive required major pre-cleaning of the trail: exposing buried lines, scrubbing tags, digging out sections lost under sand and placing shot lines. This led to a lot of additional work being undertaken by the volunteer team with the added burden of restricting their ability to progress the core archaeological aims of each season.

7.0.7 The trail was c.200 m long and consisted of:

- Eleven base stations chosen to highlight representative examples of the wreck and biological/geological features on the seabed
- Concrete sinkers (concrete cast into plastic buckets with the plastic then removed)
- Small floats
- Plastic sheet tags handwritten with marker pen
- Galvanised rigging wire (plastic coated for durability) / ground line linking all stations
- An underwater booklet given to all divers

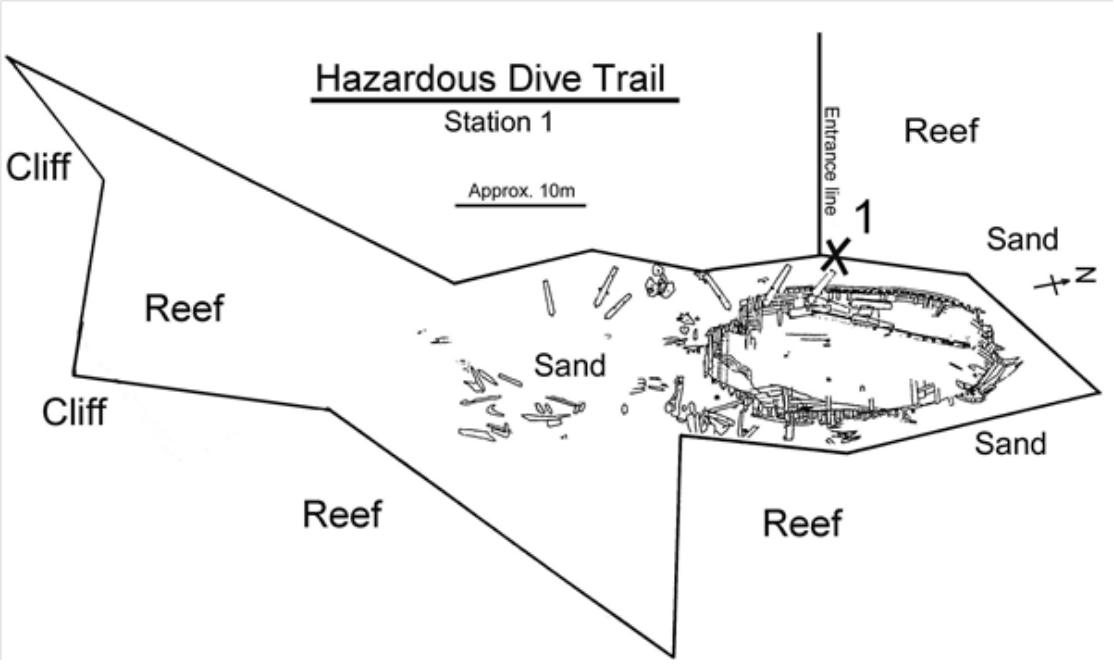


Figure 7: Hazardous *dive trail map from 2005 showing station 1. Credit: The* Hazardous *Wreck Project*

7.0.8 In 2008 the site was completely buried under sediment, and in 2011 Wittering Divers closed down. In addition, the team saw increasingly low visitor numbers and highly weather-dependent diving windows and as a result the dive trail was last operational in 2007. The *Hazardous* Project have plans to reinstate a new trail in 2026.

7.0.9 Figure 8 below shows the number of dive trail users since the trail was launched on an annual basis. Between 2003 when the first records are available and 2007 when operation of the trail ceased, 136 divers visited *Hazardous*. As with all the diver numbers presented in this report, it is impossible to break down the number of divers visiting the dive trail and the number of divers diving on the site for other reasons such as archaeological survey or site maintenance.

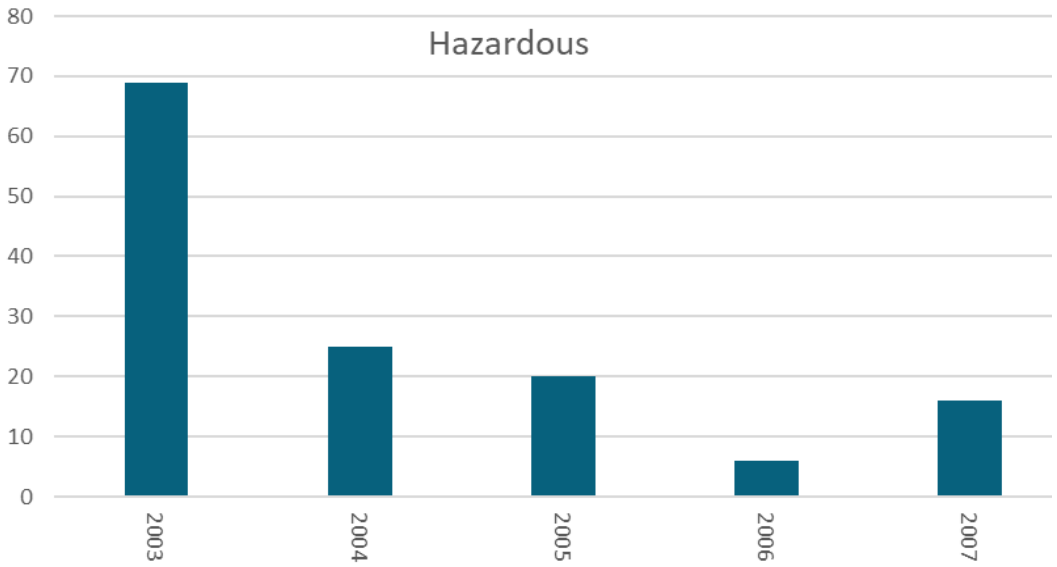


Figure 8: Annual diver numbers on Hazardous *since the dive trail launched in 2005 - 2011. Note data shown in blue has been derived from Licensee reports rather than official Historic England records.*

7.1 Licensee – Dave Johnston

7.1.1 As part of the research for this project an interview was conducted with Licensee Dave Johnston. Dave was also part of the *Hazardous* Project when the team started the dive trail in 2001. Dave worked closely with Iain Grant the Licensee whilst the trail was operational.

7.1.2 Although the dive trail hasn't been active since 2007, Dave plans to relaunch it 2026, with infrastructure already being gathered on the site. The new trail will consist of:

- 12 new concrete sinkers: yellow plastic tubs filled with concrete, each with a marine-grade stainless-steel eye bolt.
- The sinkers will be placed at the start of the season, and removed to a safe area off the main site over the winter to prevent site damage
- Temporary reels and tags will be deployed as and when the trail is dived

7.1.3 The *Hazardous* Project team have their own boat, so although boat hire for dive trail maintenance isn't an issue for them, boat maintenance costs are. Visiting divers are required to use their own boats, charter local vessels or take part in a NAS protected wreck day using pre-arranged dive charter.

7.1.4 The *Hazardous* Project team are actively experimenting with stainless, CNC-engraved laminate, and brass and copper plates for underwater tags and are conscious this knowledge needs to be shared as all Licensee teams have all tried various methods since the inception of the dive trail scheme with little discussion about what has worked best. Their 2026 research will deploy stainless, brass and copper to test the best system for deploying signs underwater without marine growth.

7.1.5 The team have designed the trail infrastructure on the seabed to be removed seasonally in order to prevent winter storm damage and increase the longevity of floats and tags. Whilst the

specifics of the new trail are still in development, they hope to offer online pre-dive talks when the 2026 trail is launched.

7.1.6 During its initial operation the trail relied on Wittering Divers and word of mouth for promotion, and after the shop folded, the trail advertising element disappeared with it.

7.1.7 Dave believes Historic England could look to promote the *Hazardous* dive trail, alongside others, with targeted promotion including flyers, social media advertising and direct promotion through the dive training agencies. Any promotional work should ensure liaison with local stakeholders to ensure that the information is current and accurate. The current onshore information panel should be reviewed to ensure information is up to date.

7.1.8 Dave is concerned about the current proposals from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to remove the current exemption from marine licensing for establishing and maintaining dive trails on protected wreck sites[8] will have a big impact on those installing and maintaining trails due to the time required and expense of gaining a licence. Currently the lifting of the exemption is only proposed for dive trails on protected sites within Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) btu Dave believes this could set precedent for other sites outside of HPMAs for the future.

7.1.9 In 2025 DEFRA consulted on the proposals and the response from the Protected Wreck Association, submitted by Dave on their behalf, strongly advocated that the current exemption for dive trail installation is maintained across all sites.

7.2 Site-Specific Recommendations - *Hazardous*

7.2.1 There are no site-specific recommendations linked to the *Hazardous*, however, the trail would benefit from all the dive trail wide recommendations made in Section 17.0.

[8] https://consult.defra.gov.uk/marine-licensing/marine-licences/

8.0 HMS *Colossus*

8.0.1 The dive trail on *Colossus* was created by the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Maritime Archaeology Society (CISMAS) in 2009 with funding from Historic England. The idea for the *Colossus* dive trail originated from open days hosted by CISMAS for recreational divers, which led to the formal development of the trail. The trail comprises of:

- 13 stations (an additional 13th station was added to the original 12 in 2025)
- Concrete sinkers marked with a buoy, beneath the buoy is a stainless-steel plate with the numbers defined by drilled holes, Figure 9.

8.0.2 Previous iterations of the trail have included a similar system with numbered floats attached to a concrete sinker by nylon line with anti-foul paint and embossed plastic tags used to number the stations. A dive slate illustrates two pre-defined circular routes. The dive stations on the Blue Route are quite close together and the next station can often be seen if the visibility is reasonable. For this reason, there are no bottom lines except from the sign at the start of the trail to dive station 1. On the Green Route, as the stations are much further apart, there is a bottom line fastened to the seabed to guide divers between the station markers (Camidge et al 2025).

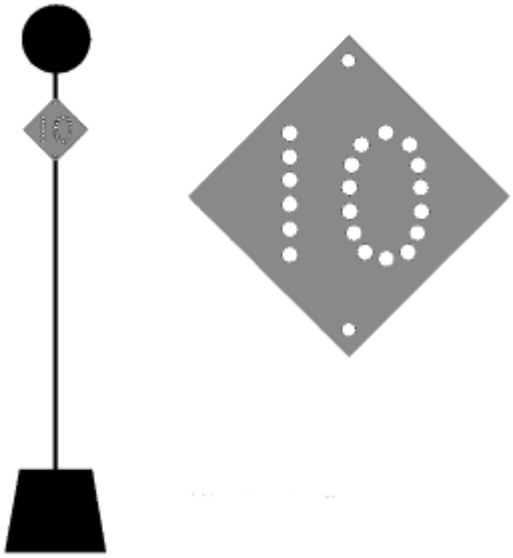


Figure 9: The newly designed Colossus *marker stations installed in 2025. Credit: CISMAS.*

8.0.3 Further information about the dive trail is available in *Colossus 2025 Diver Trail Refurbishment* by Camidge et al, 2025.

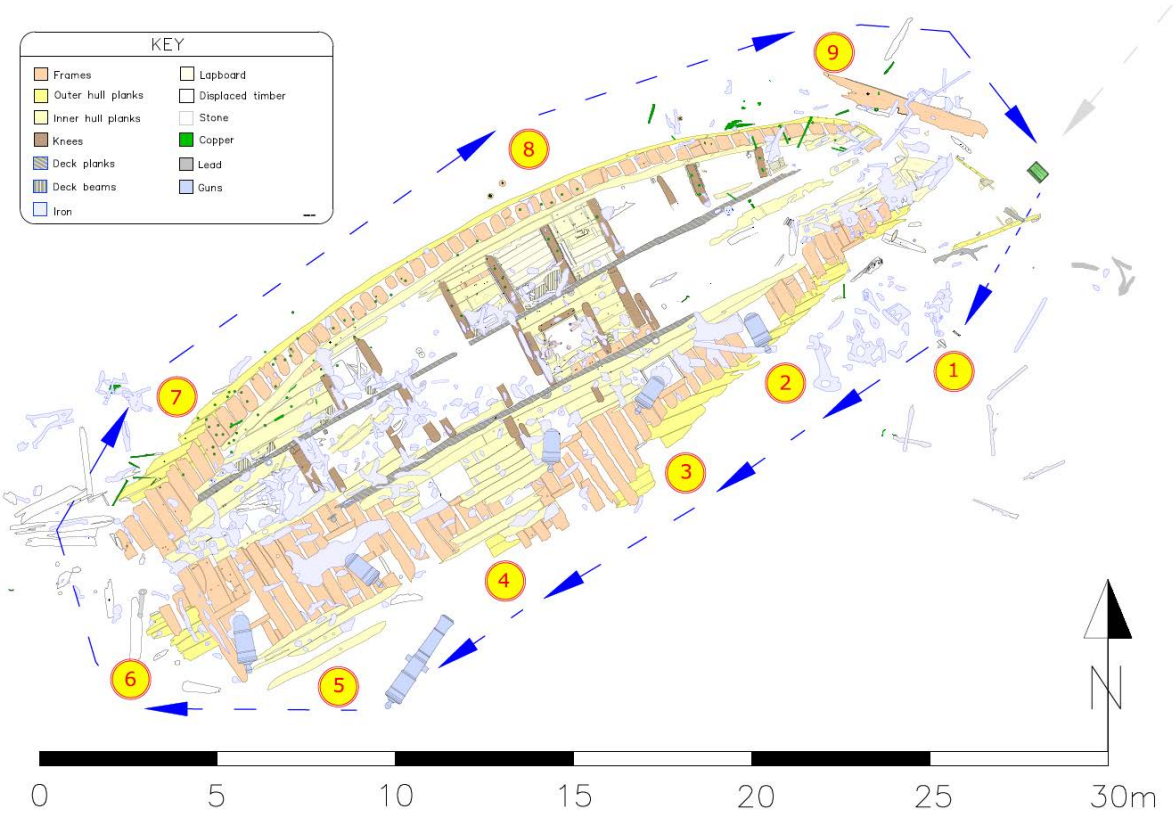


Figure 10: The Colossus *dive trail slate. Credit: CISMAS*

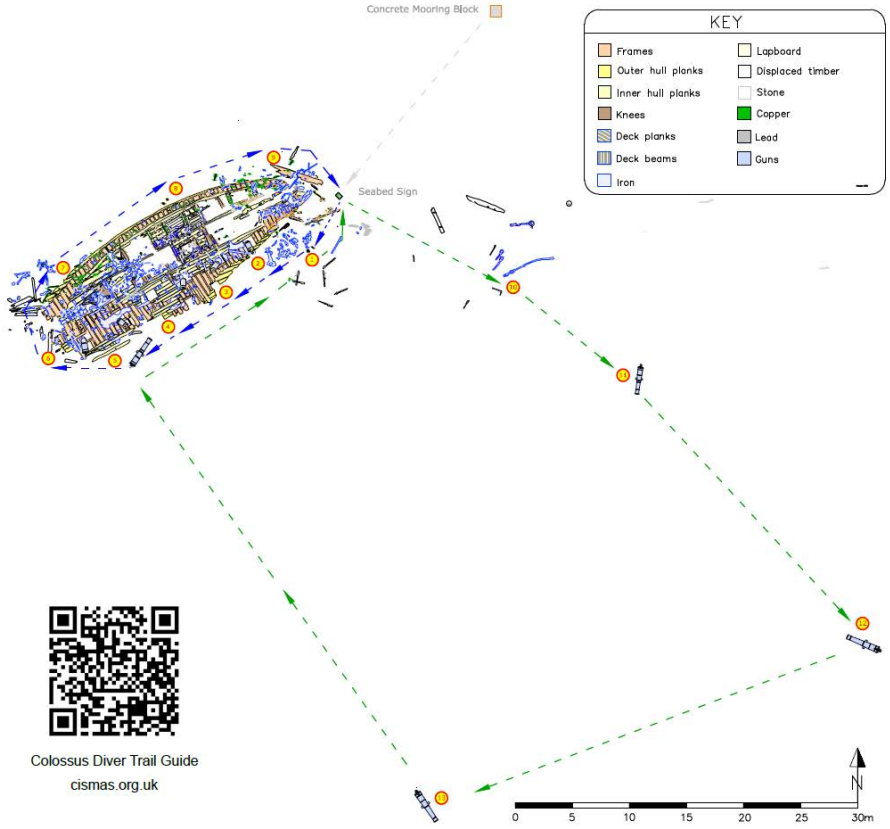


Figure 11: The Colossus *dive trail slate including the extended trail. Credit: CISMAS*

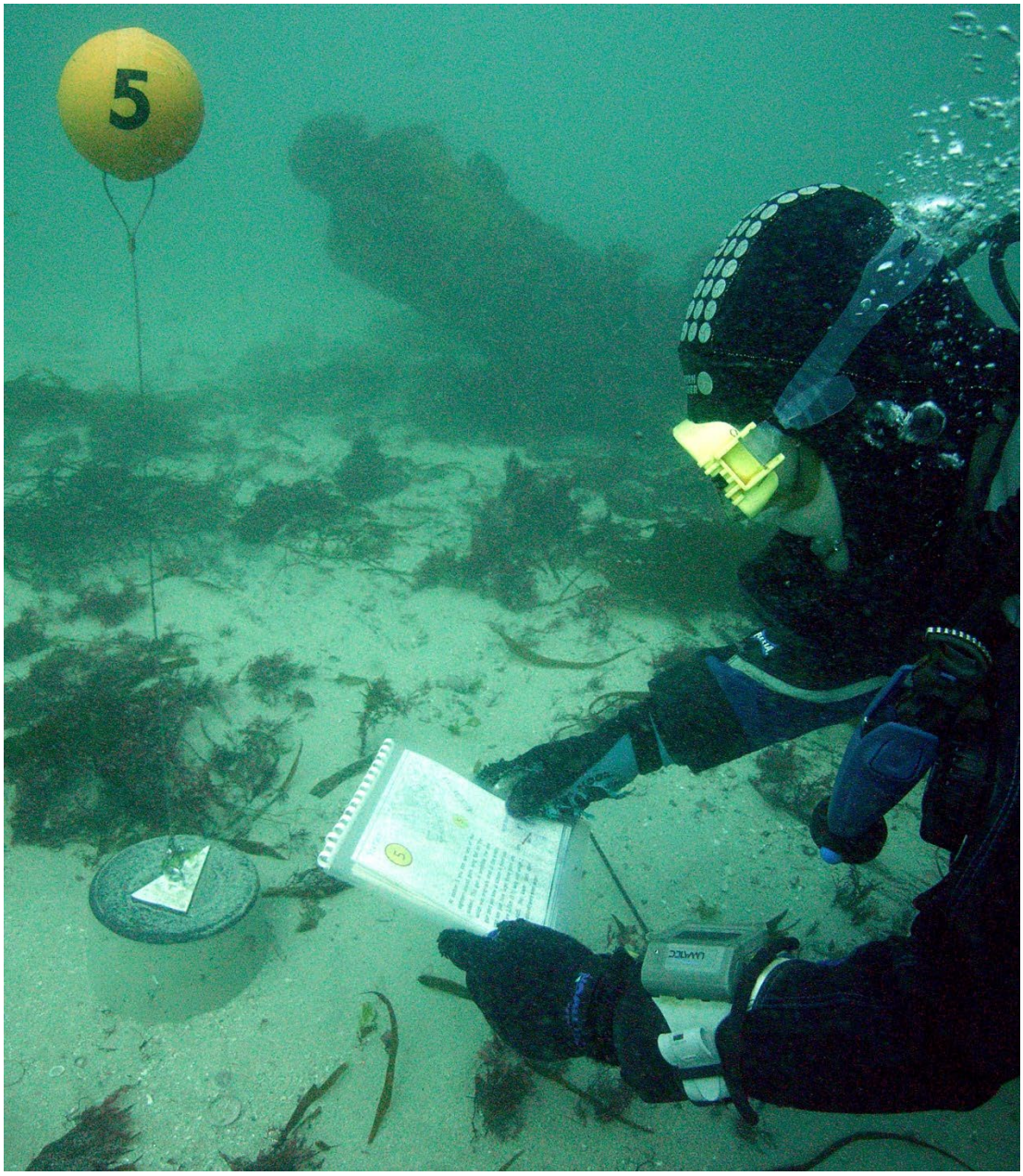


Figure 12: Station 5 on the Colossus *dive trail. Credit: CISMAS*

8.0.4 The dive trail supports Management Policy 1 of the Conservation Statement and Management Plan for HMS *Colossus* and supports visitor access to the site[9]. Management Policy 1 states *"We will continue to support and develop visitor access to the monument as a mechanism to develop the value of the* Colossus*".*

8.0.5 Figure 13 below shows the number of dive trail users since the trail was launched on an annual basis. Since 2009 3,840 divers have visited *Colossus*. As with all the diver numbers presented in this report, it is impossible to break down the number of divers visiting the dive trail and the number of divers diving on the site for other reasons such as archaeological survey or site maintenance.

[9] Camidge, K. 2016 *HMS Colossus Conservation Statement and Management Plan*

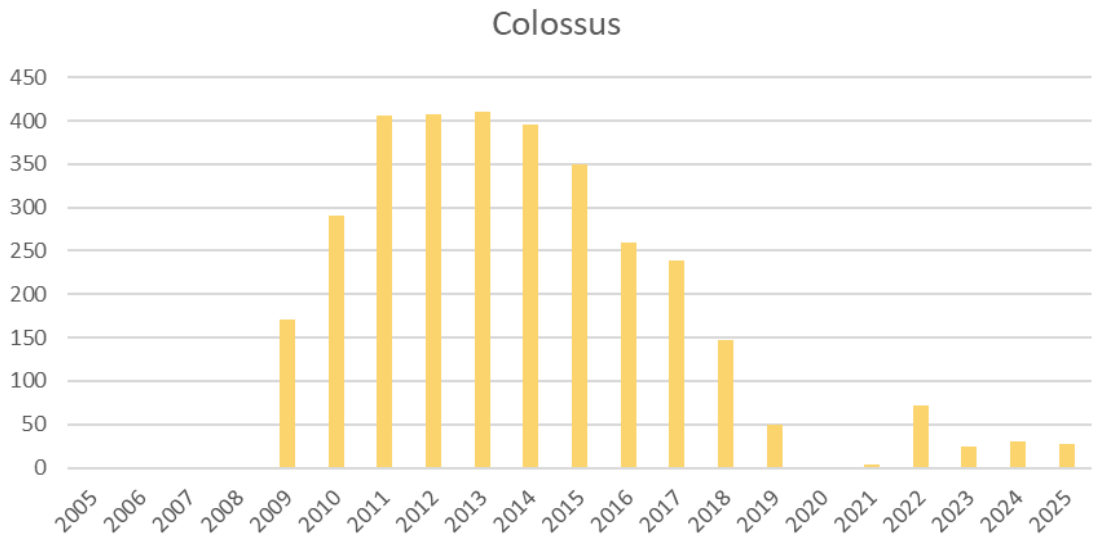


Figure 13: Annual diver numbers on Colossus *since the dive trail launched in 2009.*

8.0.6 *Colossus* once attracted very high levels of divers, but post covid numbers have been greatly reduced. This reflects in part the loss of two local dive charter vessels (only one now remains in the Scillies), a decline in the condition of the dive trail and reduced diver confidence due to poor visibility and heavy weed. The reduced dive charter vessel provision is something that is currently being seen across the country as vessel operators retire or leave the profession due to increasing costs and bureaucracy.

8.0.7 As part of the research for this project interviews were conducted with Licensee Kevin Camidge (CISMAS) and Izzy Allsop a local dive charter skipper and recreational diver.

8.1 Kevin Camidge – Licensee

8.1.1 Kevin leads CISMAS in maintaining the *Colossus* dive trail; this currently requires a team of at least six divers for one day per year, primarily to clean signage and buoys and reset ground lines. The costs are high for non-local teams such as CISMAS who are based on the mainland due to ferry expenses to the Isles of Scilly, with a week-long trip for six divers costing approximately £6,000. Kevin noted that using trained local divers would significantly reduce costs.

8.1.2 Recent improvements include the introduction of new stainless-steel tags recommended by the *Coronation* team. These tags are designed to reduce weed growth and be easier to clean underwater.

8.1.3 At present, there is no active promotion of the *Colossus* dive trail. Kevin suggested that Historic England could support both ongoing maintenance and promotion. Maintenance support could include replacing buoys and signage every four years (subject to the performance of the new tags) and training a local team to undertake routine maintenance of the trail. Promotion could be improved through the production of a leaflet covering all dive trail sites, with QR codes linking to booking information, to be distributed via museums, dive shops and tourist information centres on St Mary's and Tresco.

8.1.4 Kevin also highlighted opportunities for expansion and wider engagement. The Wheel Wreck was identified as a strong candidate for a future dive trail, requiring only a slate, map and QR-linked information. He expressed interest in engaging non-divers, potentially through local Scillies funding streams to create a large-scale physical model of the *Colossus* site and virtual reality experiences.

8.1.5 Kevin is keen to relaunch promotion of the site in collaboration with Historic England but emphasised the need for improved photography and video content. Izzy Allsop is supportive and has suggested a May visit to clean weed growth ahead of the diving season, noting that without cleaning the site becomes unrecognisable. This visit will also serve as an opportunity to mentor local divers in site maintenance. It should be noted that since this interview took place, Historic England have provided funding to CISMAS to undertake this work.

8.1.6 Kevin believes seabed signage needs to be improved with best practice developed centrally by Historic England rather than each group having to come up with their own solutions and risk reinventing the wheel. He highlighted that Historic England are the experts and that guidance should come from them.

8.1.7 During the preparation of this report Historic England provided statistics on the number of divers accessing dive trails. Kevin does not believe the figures presented for *Colossus* are accurate but highlighted that without better reporting systems it is impossible to monitor dive trail use.

8.1.8 Additional suggestions included printing the new dive trail site plan on permatrace to reduce costs, improving onshore signage to raise awareness of the site and annually asking divers who have visited for feedback on the trail.

8.2 Izzy Allsop – Skipper

8.2.1 Izzy is the only remaining local dive skipper operating in the Isles of Scilly and regularly takes divers to the *Colossus* protected wreck site. She also supports maintenance and visitor reporting. During the diving season Izzy usually takes divers to *Colossus* once per week. They rarely want to dive the site more due to a wish to dive a wide range of sites during a week-long dive trip.

8.2.2 *Colossus* is a valuable addition to local dive sites as it is shallow, sheltered, and safe for a wide range of divers of different skill levels, thus providing a safe introduction to diving a historic wreck site. Divers tend to stay on-site due to the trail's layout, further reducing risk.

8.2.3 In recent years access to the trail has become difficult due to broken ropes, old buoys and heavy weed coverage. This has affected diver enjoyment and reduced site usage. In 2025 CISMAS refurbished the trail with an additional station, new tags and a simplified layout and this is expected to significantly improve accessibility in 2026. Izzy believes the 2026 season is key in the long-term survival of the trail and that as well as the 2025 refurbishment the site requires a deep clean at the start of the dive season to give it its best chance of being enjoyed by divers. Early season conditions, and work constraints locally, mean that local maintenance alone cannot return the site to an accessible state and CISMAS's input is invaluable, however Izzy is able to maintain the site during the dive season if it has a thorough deep clean at the start.

8.2.4 Izzy believes there is potential to engage a next generation of divers to create a new and collaborative diving culture in Scilly with CISMAS taking a lead on mentoring, providing training in archaeological drawing, surveying, and site care. This could be a similar programme to the one Historic England funded for the Salcombe and Moor Sand protected wreck sites which has been an excellent example of proactive engagement (HE 9161). This would ensure local stewardship of the trail and ensure it survives for the future.

8.2.5 Izzy identified a need for better promotional materials aimed directly at the diving community and not just at the wider tourist market. This could include magazine articles show casing the new and improved *Colossus* trail. Izzy currently advertises on social media but would happily promote the site more, especially if there was a range of dive trail resources that could be shared. Izzy suggested a photography competition to attract local divers.

8.2.6 The main Museum on St Marys is currently being redeveloped which provides a unique opportunity to promote both the *Colossus a*nd other local protected wreck sites. There is potential to work with the Museum to further open access to the *Colossus* through schemes that open access to non-divers such as 360 videos experiences through VR headsets.

8.2.7 The abundance of protected wreck sites in the Scillies makes it a unique destination and this could be maximised by further dive trails on other sites such as the Wheel Wreck. Dive trails should consider the marine wildlife as well as the archaeology to attract wider variety of divers. Izzy highlighted that partnership working is key, linking the trail to an organisation such as Sea Search (who monitor flora and fauna growth and conduct active studies) could help with long term management of trails.

8.3 Site Specific Recommendations – HMS *Colossus*

HMS *Colossus* Recommendation 1: Fund and Schedule Annual Pre-Season Maintenance of the *Colossus* Trail

8.3.1 *Colossus* becomes overwhelmed by weed growth, broken ropes and missing buoys during winter that severely impacts the trail's operation if not addressed. Maintenance undertaken by island-based dive boat skippers alone is not realistic at present.

8.3.2 Historic England should support an annual pre-season dive to clear the trail at the start of each season involving CISMAS and then support local dive charter skippers to maintain the trail over the course of a season. Support should include both a co-ordinating role and funding to enable the work to take place.

8.3.3 Funding should take the form of a light touch annual grant making process to cover consumables without requiring burdensome applications. Thought should be given to an emergency funding stream to enable rapid replacement of equipment such as buoys and lines when weather events damage the trail infrastructure.

8.3.4 This supports Management Policy 1 "We will continue to support and develop visitor access to the monument as a mechanism to develop the value of the Colossus".

HMS *Colossus* Recommendation 2: Support a Next Generation Diving and Heritage Skills Initiative on Scilly

8.3.5 As with many areas of recreational diving, Scilly has an aging demographic of local divers as well as historic divisions within the diving community. There is a need to act now to engage the next

generation of divers and to ensure knowledge transfer as well as secure a supportive volunteer community to support Historic England in ongoing site management across the Scillies.

8.3.6 Historic England should fund or support a small, structured youth programme in partnership with CISMAS and Izzy Allsop, including training in maritime archaeology and opportunities to become involved with site maintenance.

8.3.7 This supports Management Policy 5 "Where projects are commissioned on the site, we will encourage the use of the site as a training resource where this is appropriate".

HMS *Colossus* Recommendation 3: Revitalise Engagement Through Collaborative Projects and Signage

8.3.8 Whilst the following recommendation could be seen as a national one, unique opportunities to promote the *Colossus* dive trail as well as the other protected wreck sites in the Scillies, through specific events and local partnership should be considered.

8.3.9 The new St Marys Museum provides an ideal opportunity to present the protected wreck site, and the trail, to new audiences and at present there is a risk the *Colossus* will be underrepresented. Historic England should identify opportunities to promote the site within the Museum and in partnership with other local stakeholders.

8.3.10 CISMAS have captured several 360° videos of the trail in recent years that can be used in conjunction with VR technology to enable virtual site access. Making this accessible to those on Scilly, both residents and visitors, would allow greater access to the dive trails beyond visiting divers. In addition, this would encourage any visiting divers to visit the sites in person.

8.3.11 Signage in St Mary's Garrison used to promote the trail. It is not clear if this is still in situ and consideration should be given to reinstating or updating this signage.

8.3.12 Foreshore panels located at strategic locations on the islands, would help highlight the protected wreck sites and at the same time advertise these sites to divers, encouraging them to visit through a dive trail scheme.

8.3.13 Aside from private vessels, access to the Scillies is limited to boat access via the *Scillonian,* helicopter and aircraft. This offers a unique opportunity to work with transport providers to promote protected wreck sites, and specifically the *Colossus* dive trail to visitors as part of their journey to the islands.

8.3.14 This supports Management Policy 4 "Mechanisms will be identified and implemented so as to develop shared ownership and partnership working".

HMS *Colossus* Recommendation 4: Consider Supporting Additional Dive Trails Where Conditions Allow

8.3.15 The Scillies have a unique combination of a high density of protected wreck sites and conditions that make diving and visiting sites enjoyable for a wide range of recreational divers. Other sites on Scillies, including the Wheel Wreck, are suitable for dive trail development. A feasibility study of the other sites in the area should be undertaken and consideration given to implementing new trails. This would help develop the Scillies as a protected wreck site dive trail destination that could be a draw to visiting divers who could dive multiple protected wreck site dive trails during one trip. In addition, multiple dive trails in one area would potentially lead to the benefit of scale in future site maintenance.

9.0 HMS *Coronation*

9.0.1 The *Coronation* is located at Penlee Point, Cornwall, at a depth of 14 – 21 m. The wreck lies in two parts and is linked by a debris trail c.1,500 m long. The dive trail is located on the offshore site and is approximately 200 m long.

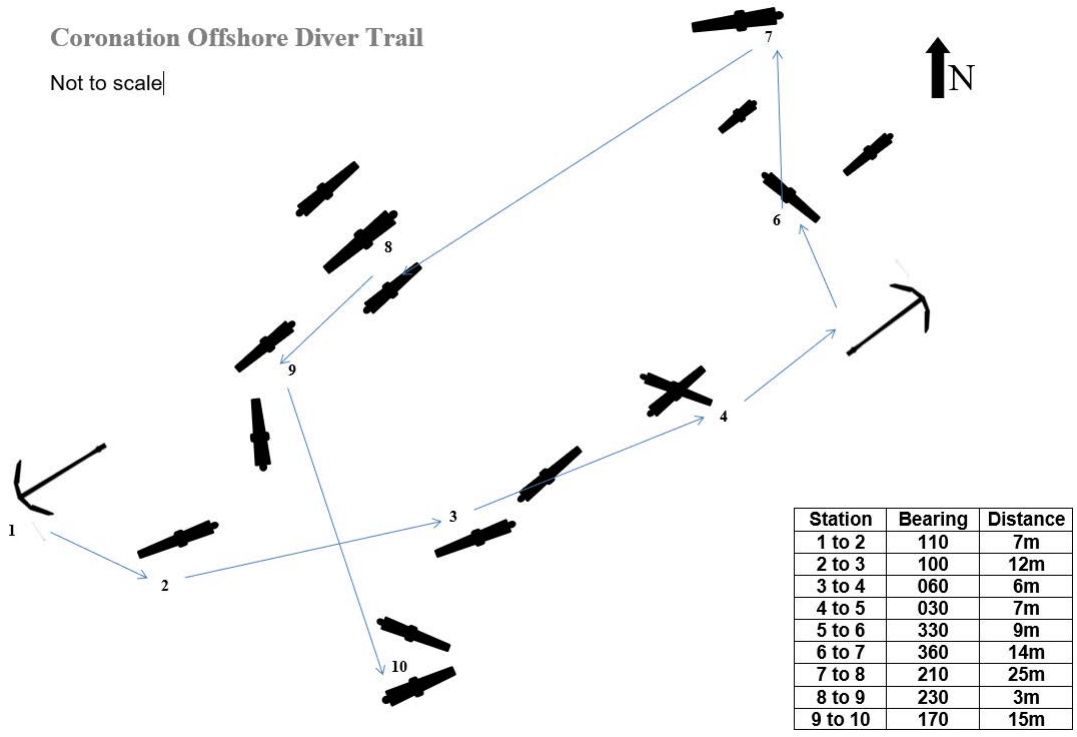
9.0.2 In 2011, the Coronation Wreck Project established a dive trail on the site. The trail was originally self-funded by the Coronation Wreck Project with support from MAST. The trail consists of:

- 10 Stations
- Seabed-mounted stainless-steel numbered discs (discs are laser-cut 316 stainless steel, fixed with pitons and chains to prevent wear).
- Floats as markers (Floats offer visibility from a distance but experience on the site has shown these can get quickly overgrown, hence the discs provide definitive positioning for divers)
- Laminated map
- Dive trail booklet

Figure 14: Numbered floats. Credit: Coronation Wreck Project

Figure 15: Stainless-steel numbered discs. Credit: Coronation Wreck Project

Figure 16: An underwater marker station on the Coronation *dive trail. Credit: Coronation Wreck Project*



Station	Bearing	Distance
1 to 2	110	7m
2 to 3	100	12m
3 to 4	060	6m
4 to 5	030	7m
5 to 6	330	9m
6 to 7	360	14m
7 to 8	210	25m
8 to 9	230	3m
9 to 10	170	15m

Figure 17: Side 1 of the underwater guide provided to visiting divers. Credit: Coronation Wreck Project

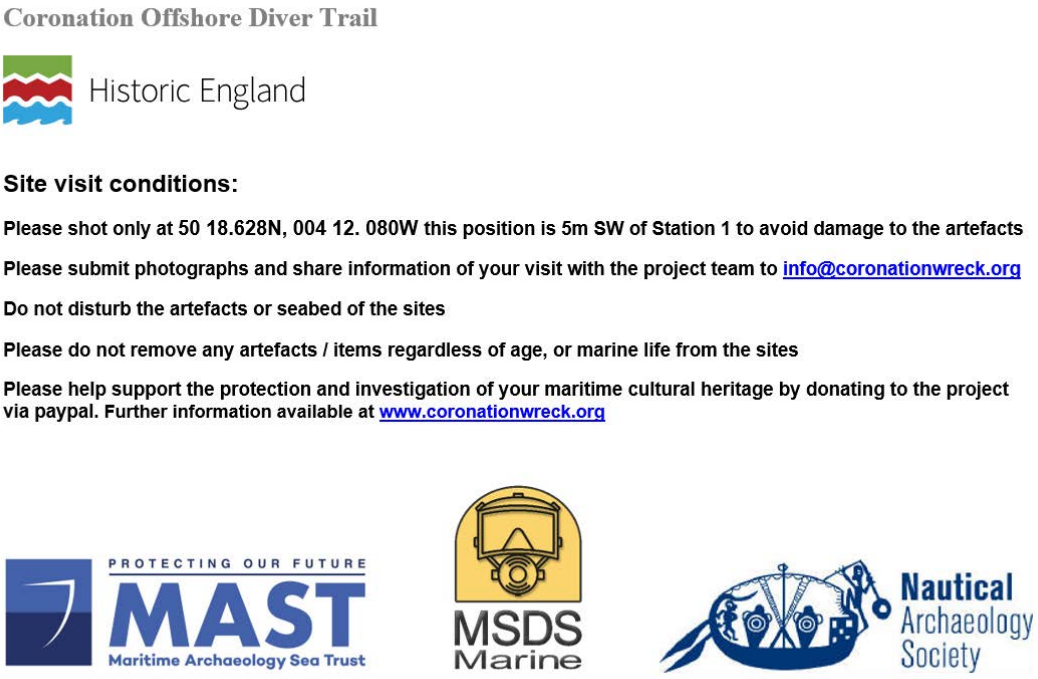


Figure 18: Side 2 of the underwater guide provided to visiting divers. Credit: Coronation Wreck Project

9.0.3 The pre-dive booklet provided to divers in advance of their visit is available online[10].

9.0.4 The dive trail supports Management Policy 1 of the Conservation Statement and Management Plan for the *Coronation* and supports visitor access to the site[11]. Management Policy 1 states *"We will continue to support and develop visitor access to the monument as a mechanism to develop the value of the* Coronation*".*

9.0.5 To visit the site, divers contact the Licensee's Mark Pearce and Ginge Crook through the *Coronation* website[12]. The Coronation Wreck Project have access to their own boat through a boat share syndicate, so although boat hire for site maintenance isn't an issue for them, boat maintenance costs are.

9.0.6 Figure 19 below shows the number of dive trail users since the trail was launched on an annual basis. Since 2011 2,468 divers have visited the *Coronation*. As with all the diver numbers presented in this report, it is impossible to break down the number of divers visiting the dive trail and the number of divers diving on the site for other reasons such as archaeological survey or site maintenance.

[10] https://simplebooklet.com/coronationguide
[11] Historic England & Coronation Wreck Project 2024 *Coronation (1685-1691) Off Penlee Point, Cornwall Conservation Statement and Management Plan*
[12] www.coronationwreck.org

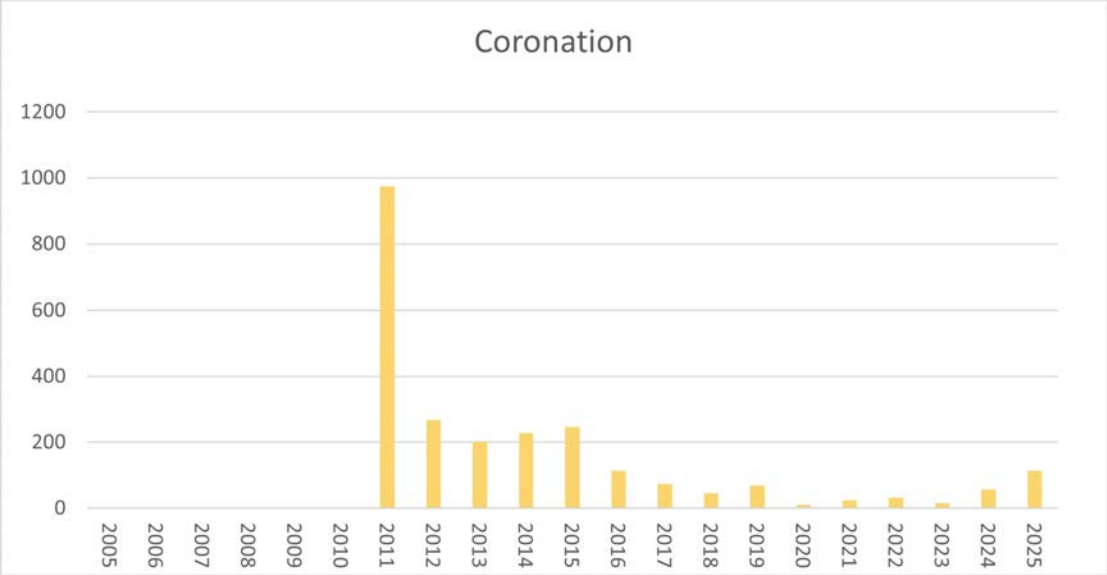


Figure 19: Annual diver numbers on Coronation *since the dive trail launched in 2011.*

9.0.7 As part of the research for this project an interview was conducted with Licensees Ginge Crook and Mark Pearce on the 1st December 2025.

9.1 Ginge Crook and Mark Pearce – Licensees

9.1.1 Ginge and Mark lead the Coronation Wreck Project team in maintaining the *Coronation* dive trail; this currently requires regular cleaning of the stainless-steel discs and floats. The team keep a duplicate set of tags and floats which ensures rapid replacement if something is lost.

9.1.2 In 2024, the team received a grant from Historic England, which meant they could buy a new out board motor for their RIB and enabled the installation of new stainless-steel discs and floats on the trail. The stainless-steel discs were seen as an experiment, they are more expensive, but it is hoped they will last longer underwater. Ginge and Mark shared this idea with the *Colossus* licensee and he too is now experimenting with this material for discs on the *Colossus* dive trail. This is a great example of knowledge sharing at work.

9.1.3 The *Coronation* site, although tidal, is quite accessible to dive due to its depth and its location close to a busy diving scene in Plymouth, which is reflected in the visitor numbers. The Licensees encourage all divers to clean the tags whilst on site to help with general maintenance. They find this assistance helps with workload and fosters stewardship within the diving community.

9.1.4 At present, the only promotion for the site is through the project website and through word-of-mouth within dive clubs. It should be noted that diving in Plymouth is still a thriving industry unlike in other areas of the UK that have seen decline, and in some places complete collapse, of diving infrastructure. Ginge and Mark think that a targeted dive trails page to signpost to all UK dive trails would be hugely helpful along with a printed or digital timeless flyer for use at dive shows and tourism centres. Whilst a page exists on the Historic England website it is deeply buried and hard to find and does not act as an easy to find hub with the associated resources required to support and explain access requirements.

9.1.5 As dive clubs plan 6–12 months ahead for their trips if Historic England did an annual media push early in the year, ideally in January this would also have a positive effect on visiting divers.

9.1.6 Historically, Historic England funded large weatherproof interpretive boards at key viewpoints to engage the public with the site (Penlee Point, National Marine Aquarium and Bovisand). Some boards are now lost or weathered; new ones are currently being considered, potentially with QR codes linking directly to the website.

9.2 Site Specific Recommendations – HMS *Coronation*

HMS *Coronation* Recommendation 1: Review foreshore interpretation panels

9.2.1 The interpretation panels along the coast were a huge success when they were installed, in part due to Plymouth being a popular tourist and diving destination. Renewing these boards will help raise the profile of the *Coronation* to both divers and non-divers and encourage new divers to access the trail.

HMS *Coronation* Recommendation 2: Target promotion in the Plymouth area for the *Coronation*, and the wider dive trail schemes, to capitalise on the success of the area as a diving hub

9.2.2 Plymouth is still a uniquely active area for divers. This should be capitalised on by Historic England with targeted advertising at areas regularly accessed by divers such as the Mountbatten Watersports and Activities Centre, dive shops and with local dive charter vessels.

10.0 HMS/m *A1*

10.0.1 HMS/m *A1* is located in the Eastern Solent, off East Wittering, West Sussex at a depth of 10 – 12 m.

10.0.2 In 2013 the Nautical Archaeology Society (NAS), with funding from Historic England, established a diver visitor trail on the wreck. An online interactive virtual trail was also created[13].

10.0.3 The dive trail was originally managed by the NAS in partnership with the Southsea branch of the British Sub-Aqua Club (SSAC). The dive trail is currently managed by the Licensee Martin Davies who is a member of the Southsea Sub-Aqua Club and has been the licensee of the site since 2006.

10.0.4 If divers would like to dive the trail they need to contact Martin. Martin shares information about the dive trail and diving it on his website[14].

Figure 20: Conning Tower of the HMS/m *A1. Credit: Martin Davies*

[13] https://www.nauticalarchaeologysociety.org/a1-submarine-dive-trail
[14] https://indepthphotography.co.uk/hmsm-a1-submarine/

10.0.5 An underwater information guide for divers visiting the site was designed that aids navigation and assists divers in recognising features on the wreck. The guide explains the background to the remains and the issues of protecting and managing the wreck. There is no seabed infrastructure related to the trail. The laminated guide is based on multibeam imagery and includes:

- Wreck layout
- Key features
- Illustrations of typical marine life

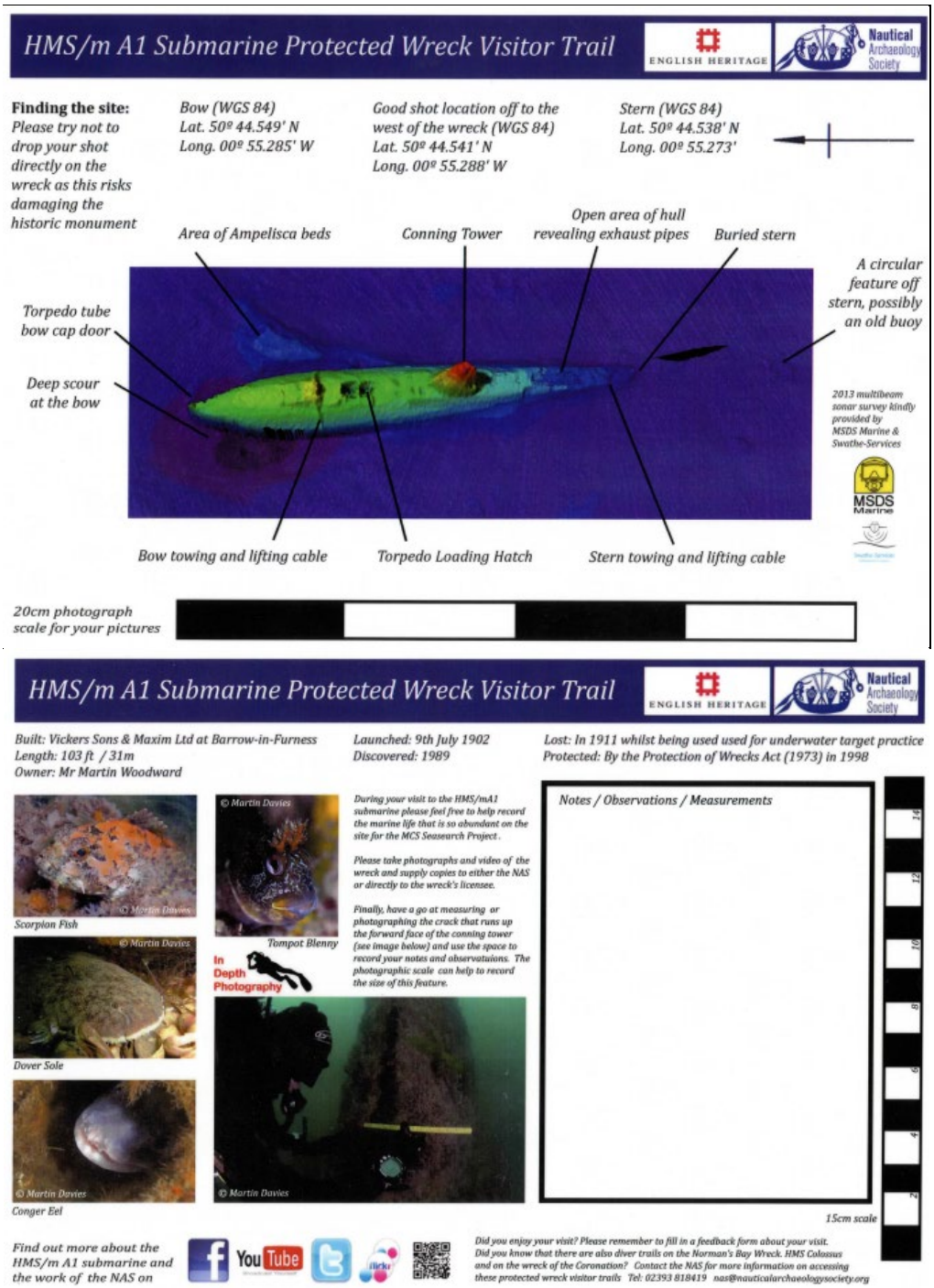


Figure 21: HMS/m A1 dive trail guide. Credit: Nautical Archaeology Society

10.0.6 The dive trail supports Management Policy 1 of the Conservation Statement and Management Plan for HMS/m *A1* *"We will continue to support current and future appropriate visitor access to the submarine A1"* and enables visitor access to the site[15].

10.0.7 Figure 22 below shows the number of dive trail users since the trail was launched on an annual basis. Since 2016 202 divers have visited HMS/m *A1*. As with all the diver numbers presented in this report, it is impossible to break down the number of divers visiting the dive trail and the number of divers diving on the site for other reasons such as archaeological survey or site maintenance.

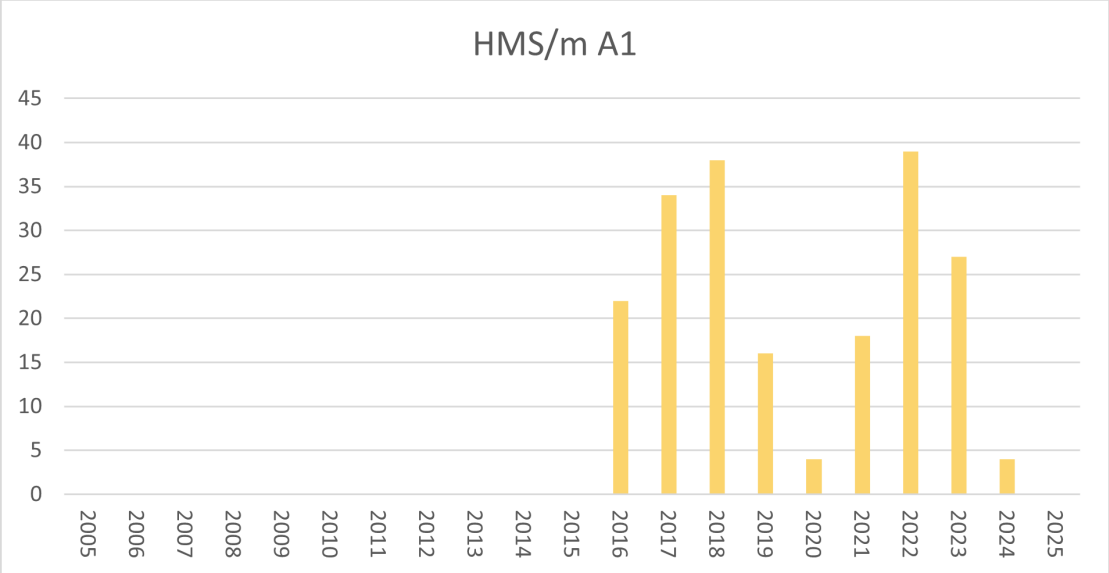


Figure 22: Annual diver numbers on HMS/m *A1 since the dive trail launched in 2011.*

10.0.8 As part of the research for this project an interview was conducted with the licensee Martin Davies on the 18th December 2025.

10.1 Martin Davies – Licensee

10.1.1 The site is very low maintenance, as there is no physical trail to repair or replace. However, there is the cost of producing the laminated dive guides. This cost is currently covered by the Licensee, but without the guide, there is no dive trail. Martin notes, that even though the cost is small, it is not currently supported by Historic England, despite its importance.

10.1.2 Divers are encouraged to take part in the monitoring and stewardship of the site through taking repeat photographs of key features (for example cracks in the conning tower) this provides informal monitoring information on the site to enable its ongoing management.

10.1.3 Martin is present on all dive trips to oversee site condition, ensure artefacts remain in situ and to collect accurate visitor data.

10.1.4 Historically, HMS/m *A1* received around 20 – 30 divers per year in stable seasons. Diving activity declined sharply in 2020 due to the covid pandemic. Southsea Sub Aqua Club also struggled with their boat and lost access to reliable boats. Dives have been run through:

[15] McElvogue, D. 2023 *The protected wreck of his majesty's submarine boat A1 (1902): Conservation Statement and Management Plan.*

- NAS-organised heritage dive days
- Club charters (e.g. Eastleigh Sub Aqua Club)
- Martin's own club connections

10.1.5 NAS-led activity declined post-covid and has not fully recovered. Future dives are now expected to resume on a small, programmed basis with clubs and the NAS.

10.1.6 Martin strongly supports a holistic approach, combining archaeology with marine life recording and has previously hosted Seasearch surveys on HMS/m *A1* and Includes marine life information on the trail guide.

10.1.7 Promotion is currently minimal with most via the NAS website and word of mouth. Martin supports the idea of greater Historic England promotion of all dive trails and feels Historic England should contribute financially towards one site visit per year and provide a small, flexible maintenance budget.

10.1.8 Martin agrees knowledge sharing between licensees is crucial, he thinks this would help not only with sharing practical lessons on materials, signage, fouling, and durability, but also with greater accessibility to sites.

10.2 Site-Specific Recommendations - *HMS/m A1*

HMS/m A1 Recommendation 1: Support reprinting the dive guides

10.2.1 As the HMS/m *A1* dive trail has no infrastructure on the seabed, the cost of maintenance associated with the dive trail is relatively small and comes from producing the laminated dive guides. A small budget to enable reprinted guides, or simply producing the guides for the team, would make a big difference to the operation of the trail in 2026 and beyond.

11.0 *Holland No 5*

11.0.1 The *Holland No 5* submarine is located off Royal Sovereign Bank, off Bexhill, East Sussex, at a depth of 30 m. Between 2016 and 2018 with funding from Historic England the NAS developed a new virtual diver trail and associated underwater visitor guide.

11.0.2 The virtual dive was created using over 1,700 digital photographs taken by Martin Davies from InDepth Photography[16].

11.0.3 There is no underwater physical structure as part of the trail, and it is very similar in operation to that on HMS/m *A1* in its use of a laminated underwater visitor guide. All dives to the site are run the through the NAS and are promoted via their website.

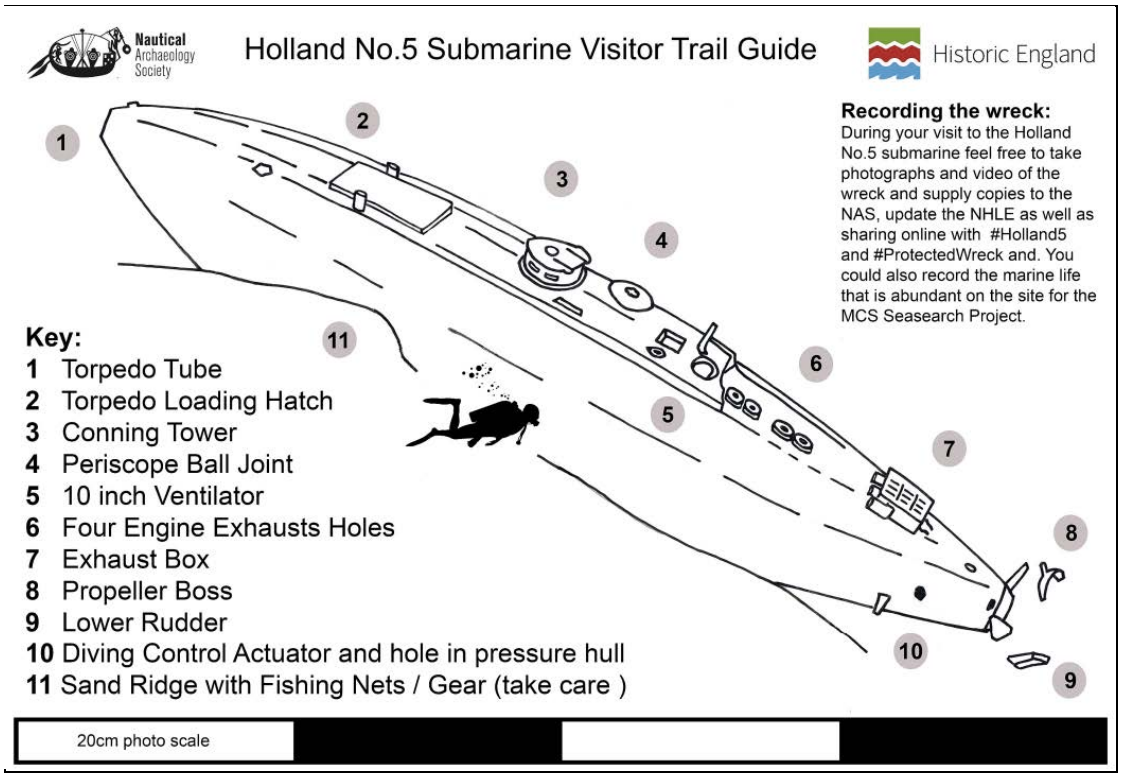
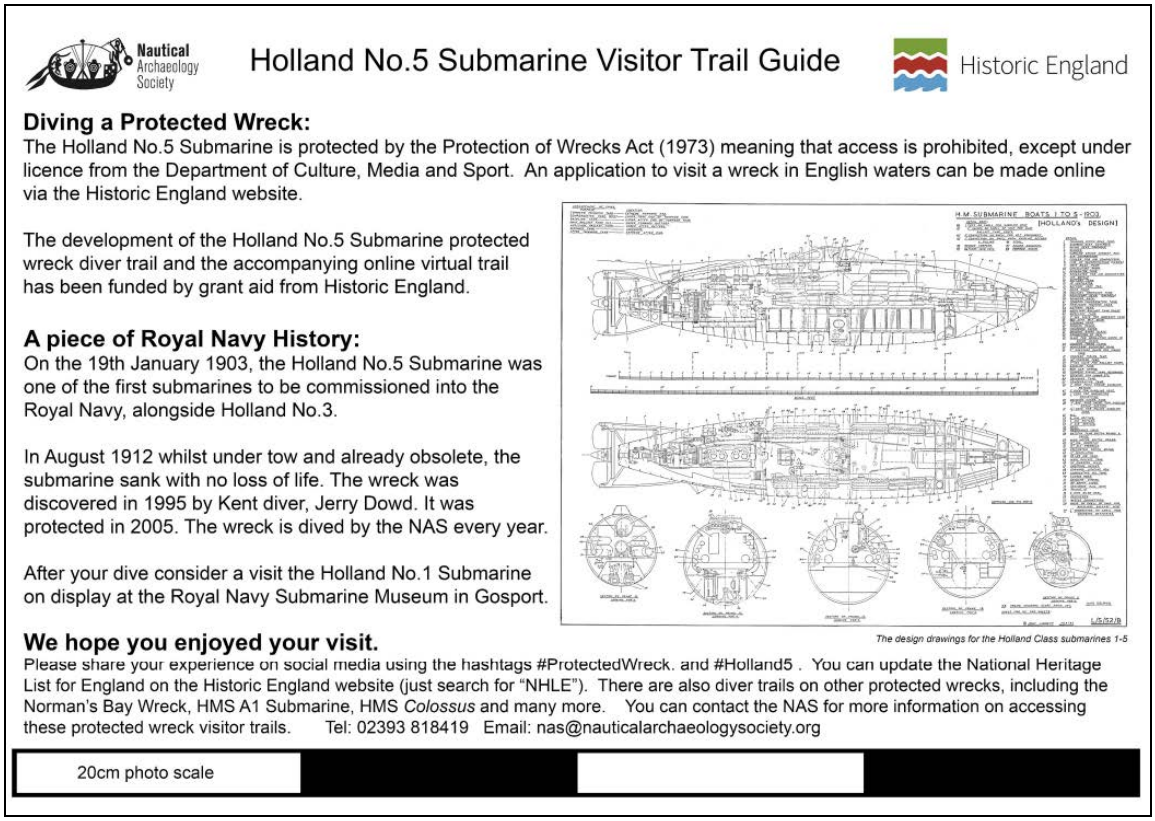


Figure 23: Side 1 of the Holland No 5 *dive trail guide. Credit: Nautical Archaeology Society*

[16] https://www.nauticalarchaeologysociety.org/holland5-dive-trail



Holland No.5 Submarine Visitor Trail Guide

Historic England

Diving a Protected Wreck:

The Holland No.5 Submarine is protected by the Protection of Wrecks Act (1973) meaning that access is prohibited, except under licence from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. An application to visit a wreck in English waters can be made online via the Historic England website.

The development of the Holland No.5 Submarine protected wreck diver trail and the accompanying online virtual trail has been funded by grant aid from Historic England.

A piece of Royal Navy History:

On the 19th January 1903, the Holland No.5 Submarine was one of the first submarines to be commissioned into the Royal Navy, alongside Holland No.3.

In August 1912 whilst under tow and already obsolete, the submarine sank with no loss of life. The wreck was discovered in 1995 by Kent diver, Jerry Dowd. It was protected in 2005. The wreck is dived by the NAS every year.

After your dive consider a visit the Holland No.1 Submarine on display at the Royal Navy Submarine Museum in Gosport.

The design drawings for the Holland Class submarines 1-5

We hope you enjoyed your visit.

Please share your experience on social media using the hashtags #ProtectedWreck. and #Holland5 . You can update the National Heritage List for England on the Historic England website (just search for "NHLE"). There are also diver trails on other protected wrecks, including the Norman's Bay Wreck, HMS A1 Submarine, HMS *Colossus* and many more. You can contact the NAS for more information on accessing these protected wreck visitor trails. Tel: 02393 818419 Email: nas@nauticalarchaeologysociety.org

20cm photo scale

Figure 24: Side 2 of the Holland No 5 *underwater visitor guide. Credit: Nautical Archaeology Society*

11.0.4 Figure 25 below shows the number of dive trail users since the trail was launched on an annual basis. Since 2018, 172 divers have visited *Holland No 5*. As with all the diver numbers presented in this report, it is impossible to break down the number of divers visiting the dive trail and the number of divers diving on the site for other reasons such as archaeological survey or site maintenance.

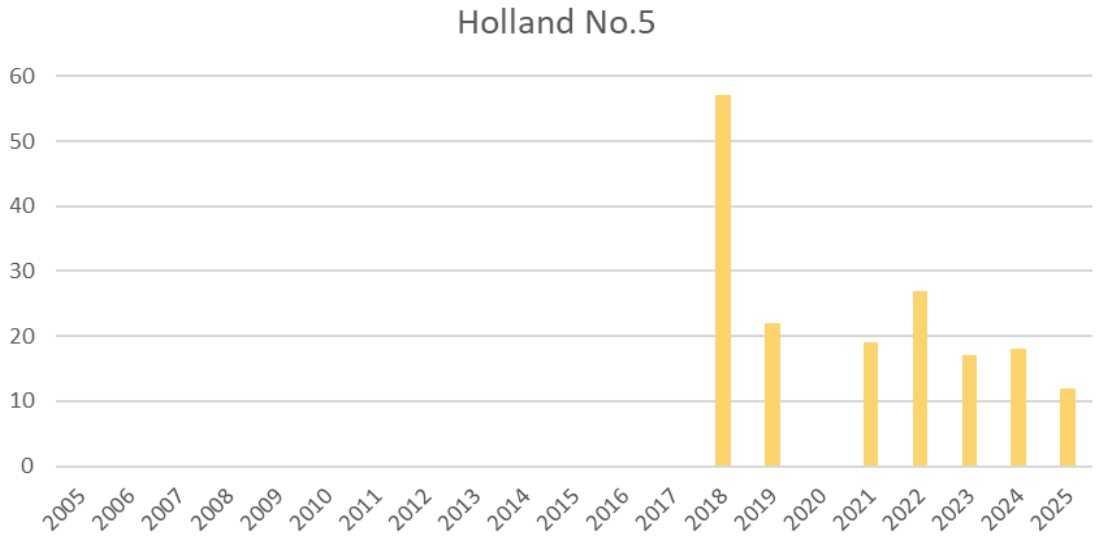


Figure 25: Annual diver numbers on Holland No 5 *since the dive trail launched in 2018.*

11.0.5 As part of the research for this project an interview was conducted with Mark Beattie Edwards on 9th December 2025. Mark was the Licensee for the *Holland No 5* at the time the dive trail was installed and first operational.

11.1 Mark Beattie Edwards – Previous Licensee

11.1.1 The NAS co-ordinate the dive trips to the *Holland No 5* and created the dive trail on the site. Mark Beattie Edwards is also the licensee of Normans Bay and was the Licensee for the site at the time the trail was installed. He is responsible for organising the NAS dive trips to protected wreck sites, including to the *Holland No 5.*

11.1.2 Promotion is achieved through the NAS website and mailing lists, if the trips are not full then the boat skipper is asked to share the trip through his contact list.

11.1.3 Due to the *Holland No 5* having no physical dive trail infrastructure on the seabed, maintenance costs are similar to those on HMS/m *A1* with only dive guides needing printing and laminating.

11.2 Site-Specific Recommendations – *Holland No 5*

11.2.1 There are no site-specific recommendations linked to the *Holland No 5,* however, the trail would benefit from all the dive trail wide recommendations made in Section 17.0, especially a small budget to produce underwater guides and advertising.

12.0 *Iona II*

12.0.1 The *Iona II* is located off Lundy Island and lies in 25 m of water. A virtual dive trial was opened on the site by Wessex Archaeology in 2014 with funding from Historic England.

12.0.2 The trail has no physical infrastructure on the seabed; the interpretation is provided through waterproof printed dive guides (ring-bound cards). These are currently sold in the Lundy shop and distributed to dive clubs and charter boats who book onto the trail. Many clubs are thought to still hold sets previously purchased.

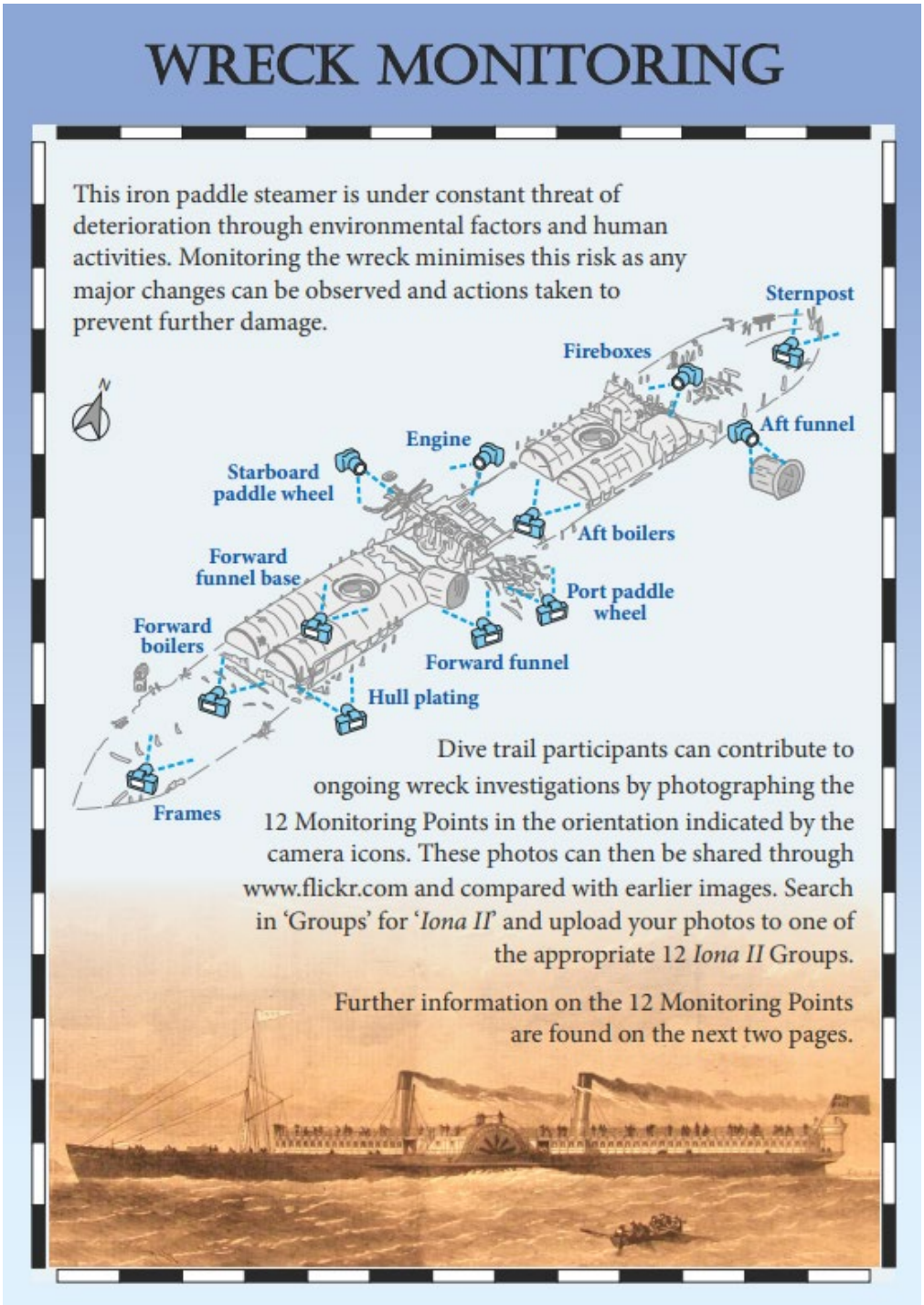


Figure 26: Page 1 of the Iona II dive trail guide. Credit: Wessex Archaeology

12.0.3 Due to seabed infrastructure the trail is low maintenance, with no ongoing underwater upkeep required. A unique feature of the trail was the creation of monitoring points to aid ongoing management of the wreck, see Figure 26.

12.0.4 The site is easily accessible, as the *Iona II* is located not far from a buoy marking the wreck of the *Robert*. A chain runs from the *Robert* to the *Iona II* and acts as a natural ground line, allowing divers to follow it easily even in poor visibility. This significantly reduces the risk of divers getting lost and missing the wreck and reduces the need for dive vessels to place a shot weight on the site on a dive-by-dive basis.

12.0.5 In 2022, as part of a Lundy Marine Festival legacy project, a diver completed a photogrammetry survey of the *Iona II* and this resulted in a virtual dive trail hosted on the Lundy Marine Protected Area website[17]. The Licensee, Derek Green, provided the spoken commentary, combining shipbuilding knowledge with historical narrative. Users can explore the wreck virtually on a computer or mobile device, following a trail-like sequence with interpretation.

12.0.6 Figure 27 below shows the number of dive trail users since the trail was launched on an annual basis. Since 2014 249 divers have visited *Iona II.* As with all the diver numbers presented in this report, it is impossible to break down the number of divers visiting the dive trail and the number of divers diving on the site for other reasons such as archaeological survey or site maintenance.

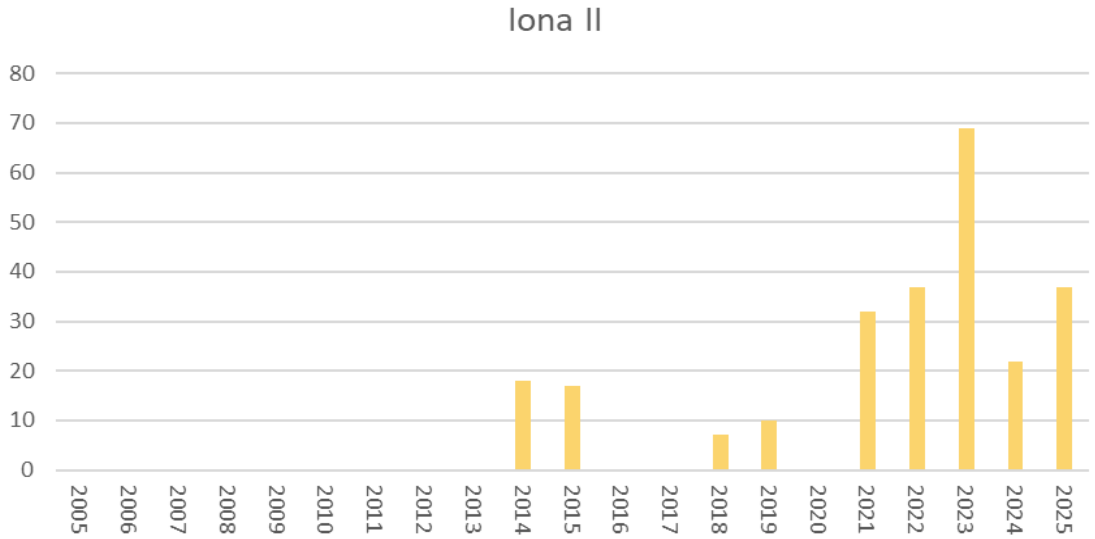


Figure 27: Annual diver numbers on Iona II *since the dive trail launched in 2014.*

12.0.7 As part of the research for this project an interview was conducted with Derek Green on 16th December 2025. Derek is the Lundy Island Manager, Chair of the Lundy Management Forum, long-standing diver, stakeholder and Licensee.

12.1 Derek Green – Licensee

12.1.1 Most divers arrive on their own club boats or charter boats; many never come ashore.

[17] https://www.lundympa.org.uk/shipwrecks/ps-iona-ii

12.1.2 Visitor numbers are tracked via Licensed individuals reporting directly to Historic England and Lundy Diving operations reporting through the island licence. Derek assists by sharing contacts and facilitating reporting consistency.

12.1.3 The *Iona II* dive trail is promoted via:

- The Lundy Island website
- On-island interpretation boards near the landing area
- Printed dive guides

12.1.4 Derek is supportive of additional promotion and suggests that the following should be considered:

- National HE dive-trail booklets
- Early-season promotion to dive clubs
- Photography competitions and calendars (previously very successful)

12.1.5 Derek notes a shift away from wreck diving towards snorkelling with seals, which has grown rapidly since covid. Snorkelling is easier and more profitable for skippers than diving. However, the *Iona II* remains too deep for snorkellers to access, keeping it firmly within the diving domain. Being inside Marine Protected Area enhances wildlife encounters (e.g. lobsters), adding interest for divers.

12.1.6 The *Iona II* site requires no underwater maintenance, unlike sites such as *Colossus* or Norman's Bay. The only potential costs relate to reprinting dive guides and updating promotional materials. The *Iona II* is a strong example of a self-sustaining, low-cost dive trail. Derek states they only have one printed copy left in the shop for people to buy. A reprint of the dive trail books is needed.

12.2 Site-Specific Recommendations – *Iona II*

Iona II Recommendation 1: Support reprinting the dive guides

12.2.1 As the *Iona II* dive trail has no infrastructure on the seabed, the cost of maintenance associated with the dive trail is relatively small and comes from producing dive guides. A small budget to enable reprinted guides would enable the trail to stay accessible to new divers.

13.0 Normans Bay

13.0.1 The Norman's Bay dive trail is located off the coast of Norman's Bay, East Sussex, in 10 – 15 m of water.

13.0.2 The dive trail was created in 2010 and launched in spring 2011 with funding from Historic England. An underwater information booklet to guide divers around the site was designed, this aids navigation and assists visitors in recognising features on the wreck. The information booklet also explains the background of the exposed remains and the problems of identifying the wreck.

13.0.3 In 2017, the NAS with further funding support from Historic England, developed a virtual diver trail for the site to increase public access to the wreck site. This can be viewed on the NAS website[18].

13.0.4 The dive trail itself consists of:

- 10 concrete sinkers
- Cow tags
- Leaded ground lines to connect stations
- Cave diver arrows that point towards the exit (used to help lost divers navigate)
- A5 waterproof slates with a site plan

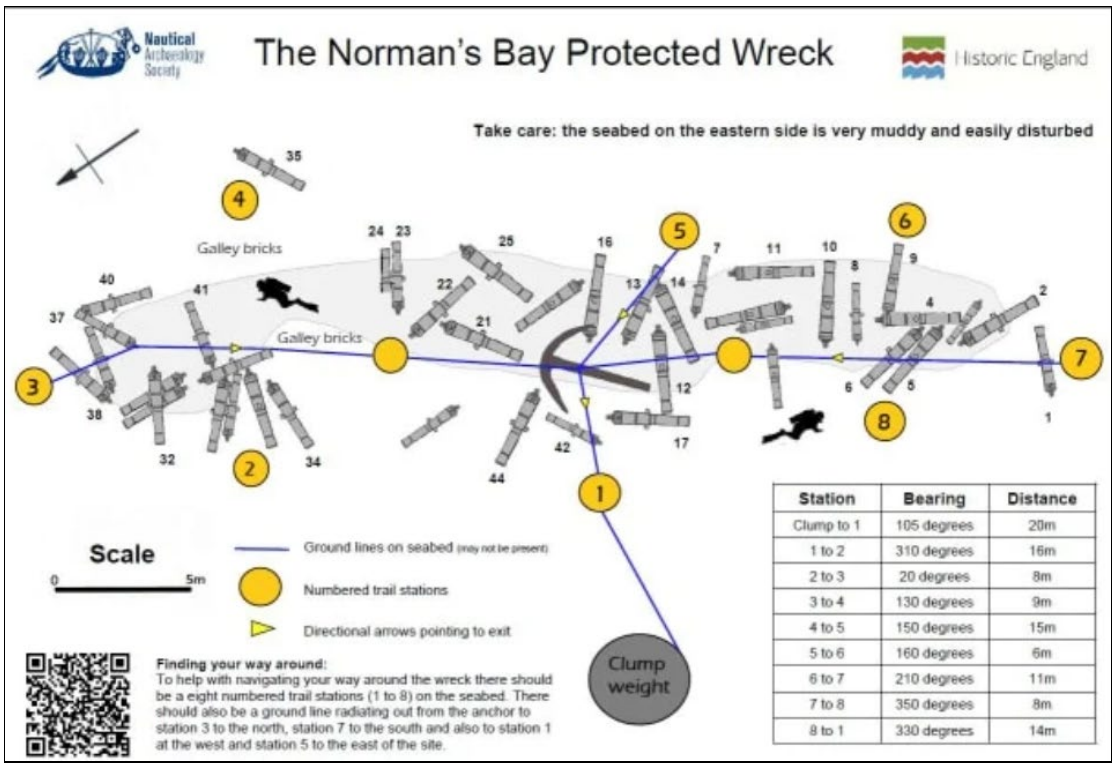


Figure 28: Norman's Bay Dive Trail Map. Credit: Nautical Archaeology Society

13.0.5 Figure 29 below shows the number of dive trail users since the trail was launched on an annual basis. Since 2011 801 divers have visited Normans Bay. As with all the diver numbers presented

[18] https://www.nauticalarchaeologysociety.org/normans-bay-dive-trail

in this report, it is impossible to break down the number of divers visiting the dive trail and the number of divers diving on the site for other reasons such as archaeological survey or site maintenance.

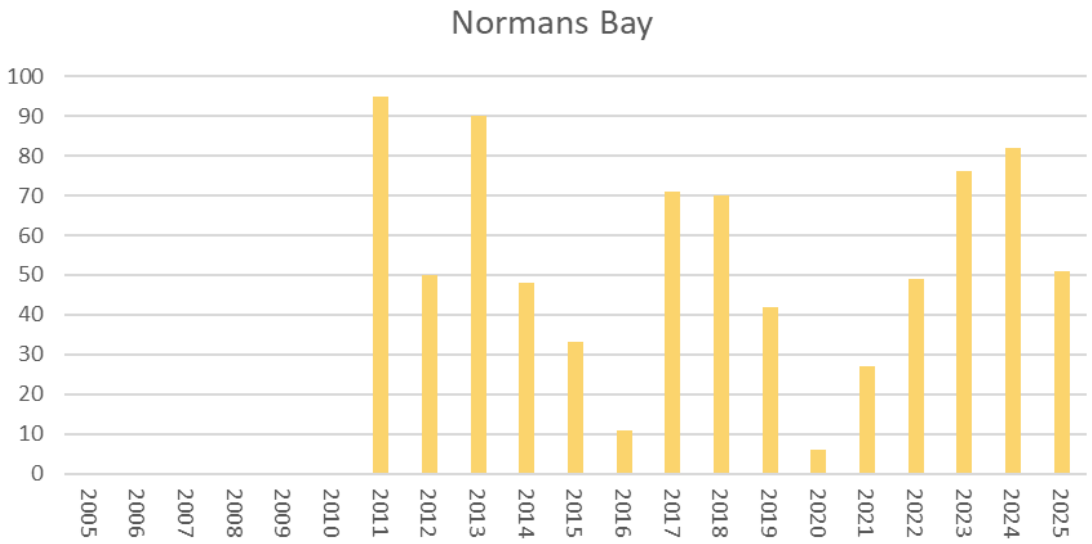


Figure 29: Annual diver numbers on Normans Bay since the dive trail launched in 2011.

13.0.6 As part of the research for this project an interview was conducted with Mark Beattie Edwards on 9th December 2025 and Dave Ronnan on the 1st December 2025.

13.1 Mark Beattie Edwards – Licensee

13.1.1 The NAS co-ordinate the dive trips to Normans Bay in conjunction with trips to the protected wreck sites of the *Holland No 5* dive trail and *Klein Hollandia*. Promotion is achieved through the NAS website and mailing lists, if the trips are not full then the boat skipper is asked to share the trip through his contact list.

13.1.2 In good visibility the site is visually impressive with 50+ cannons, however, it often has bad visibility which means the cannons all look identical and divers can become disoriented. The groundlines are essential so divers do not get lost.

13.1.3 Mark reports dive trail numbers and findings annually to Historic England but suggests the deadline of 30th November is too early as dive trips often still happen in October/early November and the NAS conference also falls in November, making it a very busy time to submit reports. The end of January would make a more convenient deadline, if there was scope for change. Whilst the 30th November is not a deadline for reporting per se, rather the end of the current licencing period, the reporting is needed to enable the next years licence to be issued. Moving the date to the end of December, or even, January, would ensure adequate time to reporting and for new licences to be issued to ensure a seamless transition between licences[19].

13.1.4 The trail needs regular maintenance, the first dive of the season is usually a maintenance dive to check ropes, clean lines, and reposition markers if needed. Subsequent dives require rapid

[19] Following the interview, discussion with Historic England, has confirmed that the 30th November is not a deadline and there is flexibility in reporting.

checks but less effort. The NAS uses a *"first team in cleans the trail"* model to prepare it for the divers.

13.1.5 The leaded ropes regularly fray or break and need replacing, sometimes 50 cm of rope disappears and must be bridged with new line. The cow tags used as markers survive well but the cable ties used to attach them are weak points. The tags can also foul quickly and require constant scrubbing to be legible.

13.1.6 Historic England provided maintenance grants in 2015, 2017, and 2022. The NAS avoid applying unless absolutely necessary as their feeling is the admin time required by them exceeds the grant value requested. They suggest Historic England creates a standing pot of funds for small annual purchases (rope, tags) without the need for formal applications. It should be noted that this interview took place before the introduction of the new grant system which may have eased some of the administrative bureaucracy.

13.1.7 Mark and the NAS have experimented with various underwater systems relating to dive trails and would be more than happy to join a knowledge hub to share their knowledge. The NAS are also keen that Historic England invest in research on seasonal buoying of protected wrecks. They believe the current practice where divers drop heavy shot lines directly onto wrecks, often repeatedly damages cannons and timbers. The issue is especially significant for metal wrecks such as *Holland No 5*. The NAS would like to run a pilot project testing non-damaging mooring systems for designated sites[20].

13.1.8 The NAS are keen to engage with new dive trails, and as such submitted a proposal for a dive trail at *Klein Hollandia*. Unfortunately, the NAS on this occasion found the Historic England feedback was too complex and they are currently not planning to continue with the project.

13.1.9 Mark suggests if Historic England could provide clear, streamlined, step-by-step guidance for new dive trail applications, including example templates, with the option to deliver trails in phases (e.g., year 1 virtual, year 2 physical), this would be more achievable and would increase the number of viable trail proposals and ensure national consistency.

13.2 Dave Ronnan – Skipper

13.2.1 Dave works closely with the NAS and facilitates a large portion of their dive trips. Apart from the NAS very few recreational dive clubs request Norman's Bay to go diving. Dave believes this is because:

- The site is shallow and silty (often unpopular with divers)
- Its protected status gives no opportunity of scalloping or collecting artefacts
- Visibility is poor except for rare ideal conditions (e.g., 10 m vis twice a year)

13.2.2 The site is usually dived as a second dive on NAS-organised day following a more popular wreck (e.g., *Klein Hollandia* or *Holland No 5*).

[20] It should be noted that Historic England have recently commissioned a review of mooring systems that is being undertaken by TrenDive (HE Project 9503)

13.2.3 The administration of the trips is handled by the NAS, Dave does not report diver names to Historic England directly. Instead, he sends dive log sheets (photos of names/addresses taken for boat safety) to Mark Beattie-Edwards, who submits them as the Principal Licensee.

13.2.4 The NAS carry out all the maintenance for the site; Dave's role is that of boat skipper. He notes divers often don't realise which wrecks are legally restricted or scheduled.

13.2.5 Diving on the site is only advertised through the NAS, Dave only circulates trips to his 400 – 500 person mailing list when asked, and always ensures people book directly with NAS. Diving on Normans Bay are not advertised elsewhere to his knowledge.

13.3 Site-Specific Recommendations – Normans Bay

13.3.1 There are no site-specific recommendations linked to Normans Bay, however, the trail would benefit from all the dive trail wide recommendations made in Section 17.0.

14.0 Thorness Bay

14.0.1 The Thorness Bay wreck lies off the coast of the Isle of Wight. The wreck is located in 21 m of water, but it is a dark site with reduced visibility, so is more suitable for experienced divers than some of the shallower dive trails.

14.0.2 In 2018, MSDS Marine and Pascoe Archaeology with funding from Historic England created a virtual and physical dive trail for the site[21]. The dive trail provides a simple interpretation slate to guide divers around the remains on the seabed. Visiting divers are encouraged to share photos and notes from their dives with Historic England to help them monitor the condition of the site.

14.0.3 The dive trail consists of:

- 12 Stations
- Dive slate map

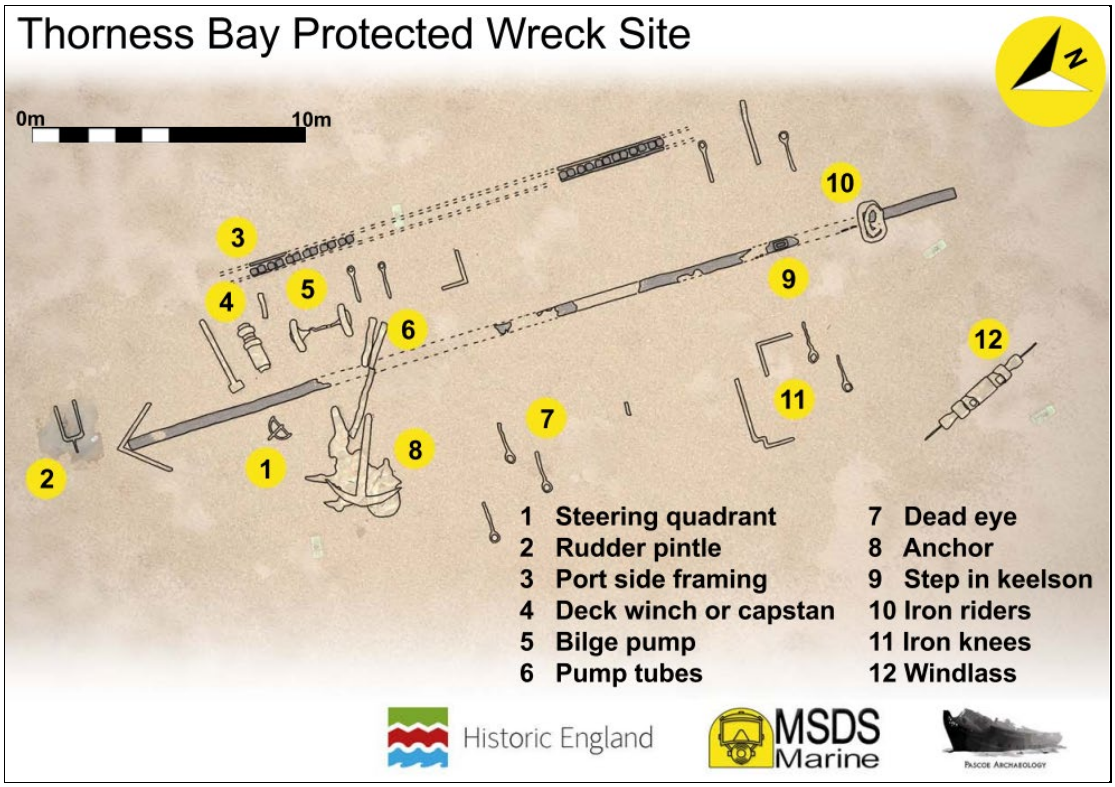


Figure 30: Thorness Bay Dive Trail guide. Credit MSDS Marine and Pascoe Archaeology

14.0.4 Figure 31 shows the number of dive trail users since the trail was launched on an annual basis. Since 2018 61 divers have visited Thorness Bay. This low number illustrates how difficult the site is to dive. As with all the diver numbers presented in this report, it is impossible to break down the number of divers visiting the dive trail and the number of divers diving on the site for other reasons such as archaeological survey or site maintenance.

[21] https://msdsmarine.com/projects/dive-trails/thornessbay/

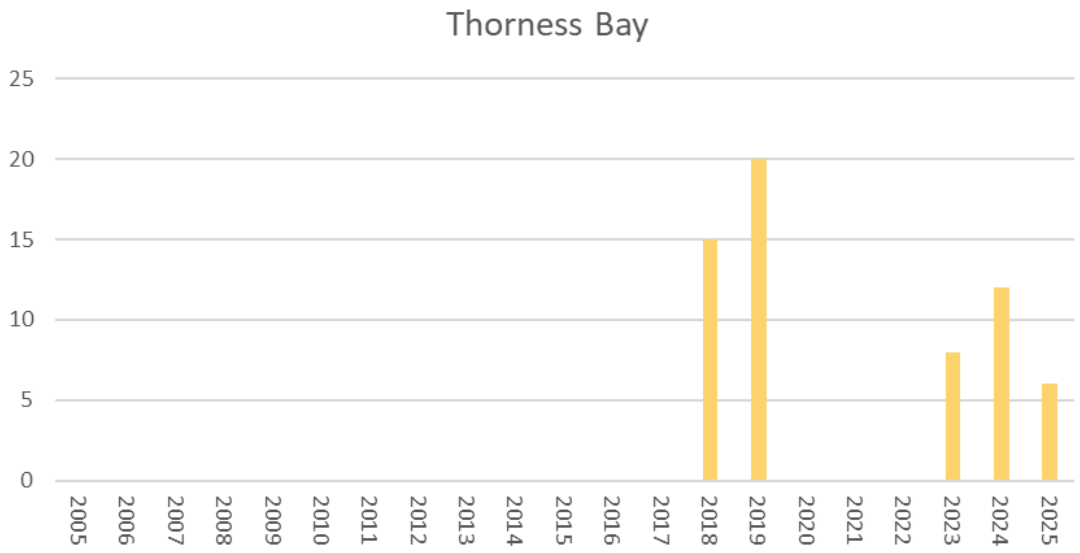


Figure 31: Annual diver numbers on Thorness Bay since the dive trail launched in 2011.

14.0.5 As part of the research for this project an interview was conducted with Garry McGinty on 19th December 2025.

14.1 Garry McGinty – Licensee

14.1.1 Thorness Bay is a highly dynamic, deepish wreck site affected by strong tides, with short slack water windows, shifting sediments, and extremely variable visibility. The wreck has no confirmed identity and no historical records, adding to its archaeological interest.

14.1.2 No new physical infrastructure has been added; the original trail materials remain in place and functional.

14.1.3 Finding the site relies on visiting divers placing their shot lines accurately, often relying on chart plotters for positioning. Once underwater good compass skills and distance estimation are needed.

14.1.4 There is no formal maintenance programme in place, every dive involves active clearance of weed, drifting ropes, lobster pots, and debris to prevent damage. Divers operate strictly under a “look but don’t touch” ethic, only intervening to remove modern hazards. All work is undertaken by volunteers, using club equipment and limited funds.

14.1.5 The Thorness Bay wreck is not signposted onshore due to its location near a holiday park and concerns about encouraging uncontrolled access. Promotion is intentionally low-key; the site is difficult, hazardous, and unsuitable for casual diving.

14.1.6 Garry supports promotion of existing digital interpretation (3D models, trail information), rather than encouraging increasing physical visits, although qualified experienced divers are always welcome.

14.2 Site-Specific Recommendations – Thorness Bay

Thorness Bay Recommendation 1: Promote Research

14.2.1 Despite extensive research, the wreck remains unidentified; this uncertainty enhances its research value rather than diminishing it. Further research, and identification of the wreck, would enhance the dive trail and have the added benefit of promoting the site further.

14.2.2 Historic England should ensure the research potential of the site is achieved through encouraging multidisciplinary investigation (archival, archaeological, oral history) and highlighting Thorness Bay as an example of a site where mystery drives engagement

15.0 The Needles and Alum Bay

15.0.1 The dive trails on the Needles and Alum Bay were installed by the Maritime Archaeology Trust (at the time Hampshire and White Trust for Maritime Archaeology) with funding from Historic England and Leader+. Aspects of the project received additional funding from the Local Heritage Initiative (LHI) and English Nature.

15.0.2 The Needles protected wreck site is located off the Needles on the Isle of Wight in 7 m of water. The second site is not designated and located a short distance away in shallow water in Alum Bay.

15.0.3 The project was started in 1999 but took many diving seasons to install, due to bad weather and the Needles being such an exposed dive site. From 1999 to 2004, the dive trail was gradually installed. By 2004, not all the stations were in place, but the trail was tested by volunteer divers using under water booklets including a map of the site, Figure 32. The trail consisted of:

- 6 numbered stations
- Ground line linking the stations
- An underwater booklet

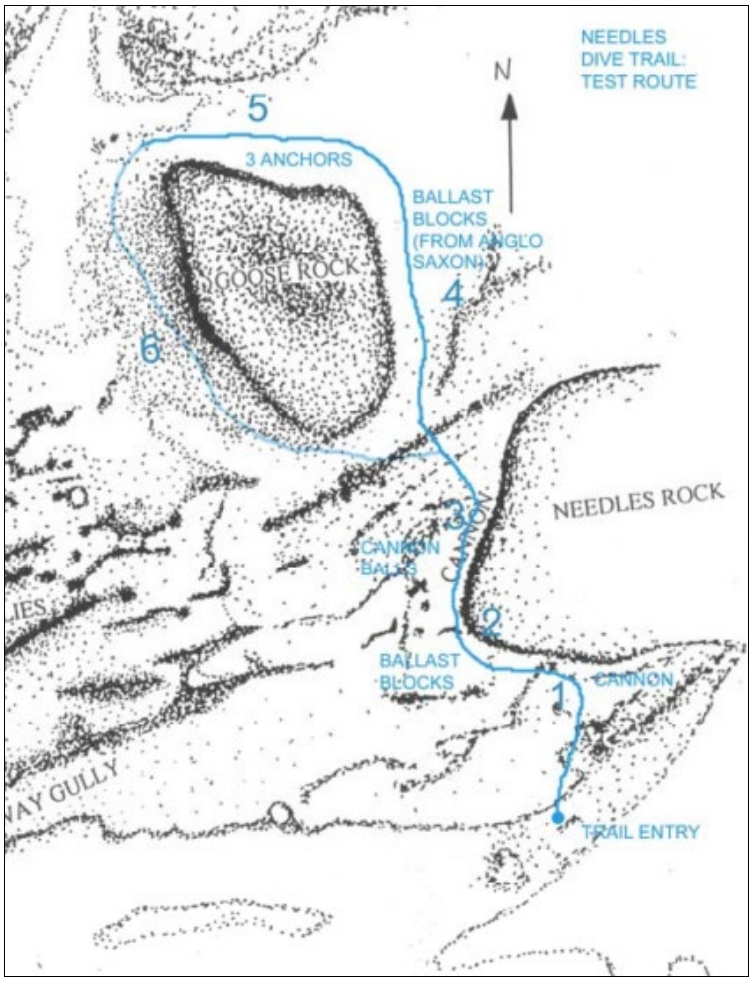


Figure 32: The Needles Dive Trail Map. Credit: Maritime Archaeology Trust

15.0.4 The Alum Bay wreck is located to the northwest of the Needles in a sheltered bay, in 7 m of water. Alum Bay is included in the South Wight Marine Special Area of Conservation, but the wreck is not designated, so can be dived by anyone with no need for permission.

15.0.5 The concept of laying a Dive Trail in here was first explored in 2002 during the SolMAP project. During the 2003 and 2004 seasons, as part of the Leader+, LHI and Historic England funded project, further diving was undertaken to establish and test a dive trail route and booklet.

15.0.6 Between 2002 and 2004 various types of marker stations were deployed and trialled, Figure 33.

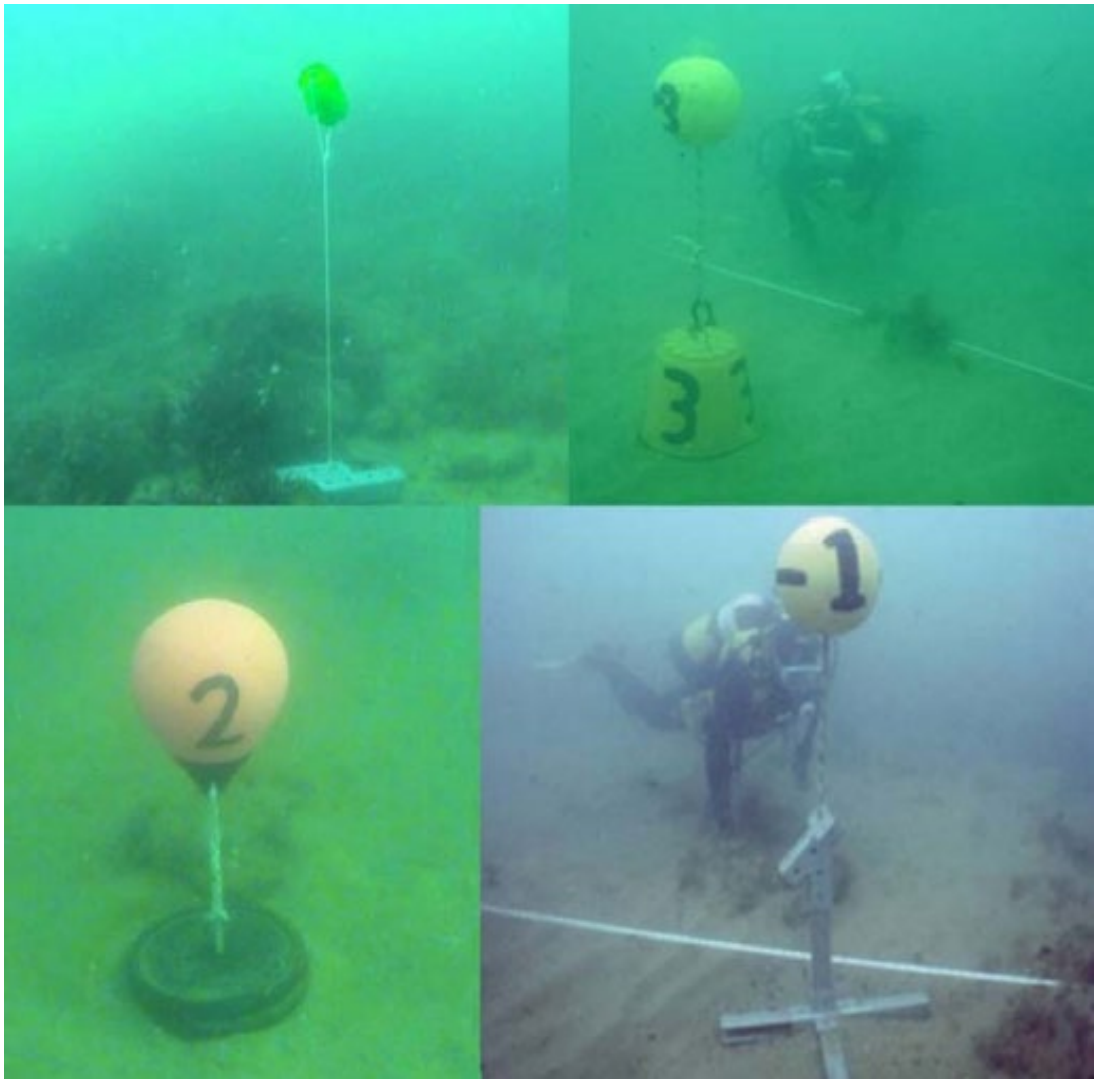


Figure 33: Alum Bay trialled marker stations. Credit: Maritime Archaeology Trust

15.0.7 The Alum Bay trial consisted of:

- 11 Stations
- Station markers
- Blue plastic covered steel cable, fixed along a section of the reef. In poor visibility acted as an extra guide to divers who should pass to the south of the line

15.0.8 The route for the trail on Aum Bay was dictated by a combination of the natural geology and archaeological features. The first version of the trail had various issues, feedback from divers included confusion over the route, difficult to use booklets and the length of the trail. The map of the final version of the trail can be viewed below in Figure 34.

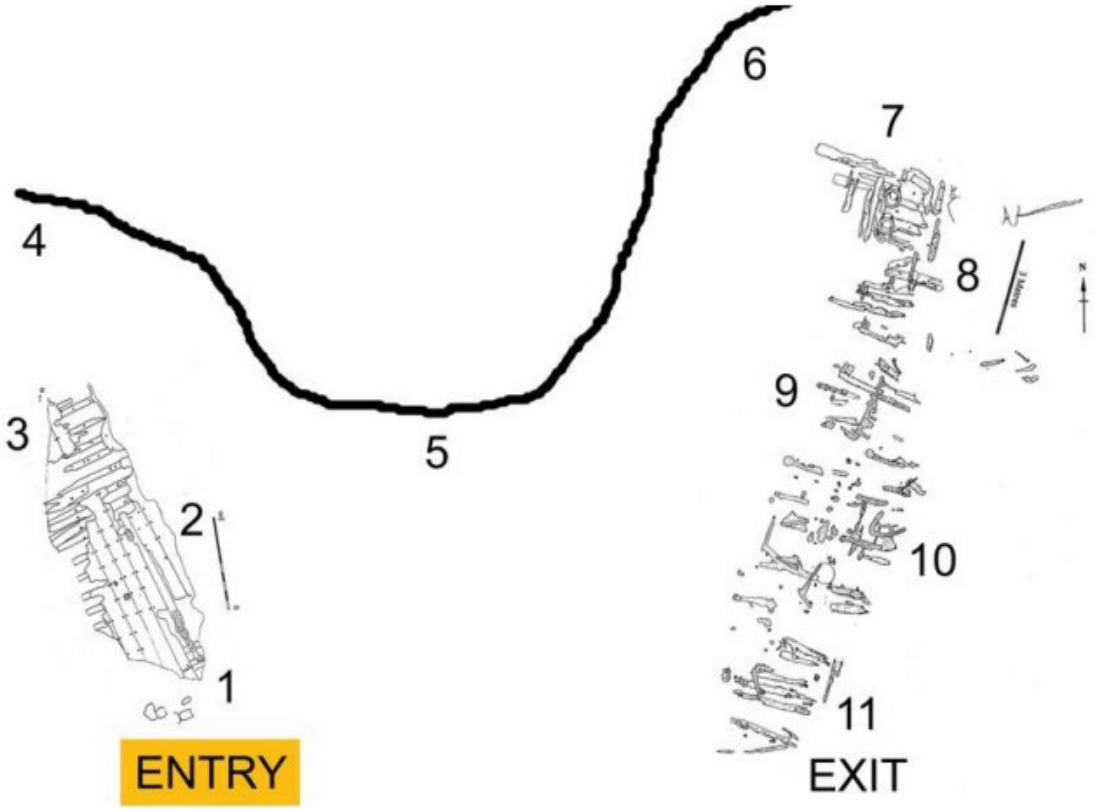


Figure 34: Alum Bay dive trail map. Credit: Maritime Archaeology Trust

15.0.9 The project took an experimental approach to methods of dive trail design, and the final report includes a lot of valuable information that would be useful to share with anyone looking to design a trail in future[22].

15.0.10 The Needles and Alum Bay trails were delivered as a full experience day including:

- An in-person presentation delivered by HWTMA staff at the Underwater Archaeology Centre at Fort Victoria on the Isle of Wight
- Package literature including copies of annual reports and other local publications
- A visit to the Underwater Archaeology Centre at Fort Victoria
- An in person dive briefing
- Diving
- Boat trip option for non-divers

15.0.11 As the seabed environment in the area is dynamic, the project pre-empted possible problems and purchased spare items including trail station marker buoys, station weights, chain for markers and plastic covered cable to enable rapid maintenance as required. The trails were

[22] Satchell, J et al 2005, Needles and Alum Bay Dive Trail Project Report May 2005, unpublished report for HWTMA.

lifted at the end of each diving season to help prevent damage and redeployed at the start of each season.

15.0.12 An important part of the project was the development of a marketing strategy and associated publicity materials. The project included extensive advertising including:

- Promotional leaflets
- Posters and information panels
- CD/DVD's
- Attendance at events including dive shows
- Press launch
- Display boards at the Underwater Archaeology Centre
- Display boards at partner attractions and exhibitions
- Copy submitted to diving publications
- Promotional material distributed to dive shops, centres and schools
- Targeted advertising by email to groups including dive clubs and local community groups

15.0.13 As part of the research for this project an interview was conducted with Julie Satchell on the 15th January 2026. Julie was the Project Manager for the Needles and Alum Bay dive trails between 1999 - 2007.

15.1 Julie Satchell – Maritime Archaeology Trust

15.1.1 The dive trails were an interesting project and the trial and error of what worked well and what could have been even better if approached differently from the start is captured in the project report.

15.1.2 The Needles didn't really work as a paid for trail due to being such a highly dynamic site to dive and a very unusual underwater landscape. It is difficult to get weather windows for the Needles coinciding with tidal times and as such this trail was discontinued in 2004.

15.1.3 The Alum Bay site had the benefit of being easy to dive at most states of the tide and is only 6 m deep. This trail continued to run until 2007 with divers using a local charter vessel and MAT undertaking maintenance. Eventually the additional cost for the divers to pay on top of their hard boat cost and the time required for MAT to maintain the trail was no longer viable.

15.1.4 One thing that was very successful were the underwater booklets, they were made with very thick laminate with spiral binding. They stood up to multiple use and were a lot better than laminated sheets which would last for a single dive.

15.1.5 Some of the underwater stations are still on the seabed too, so the longevity testing of different designs and materials was hugely successful and is all documented in the report.

15.2 Site-Specific Recommendations – The Needles and Alum Bay

15.2.1 Due to the sites being no longer in operation there are no site-specific recommendations linked to the Needles and Alum Bay. However, lessons learnt from the trail can be used to support all the made in Section 17.0, especially those related to knowledge sharing.

16.0 User Analysis

16.0.1 In addition to undertaking interviews with people involved in the creation of dive trails, the project team sought views from the general diving public who may have visited protected wreck dive trails and charter boat skippers who may have played a role in facilitating diver access.

16.0.2 The survey was hosted on Microsoft Forms and designed to be very short, comprising just a short number of questions, to allow an understanding of:

- The awareness of dive trails amongst the recreational dive community and charter boat skippers
- How visiting divers and charter boat skippers value the trails
- How dive trails impact recreational divers with the interaction with and understanding of the historic environment

16.0.3 The survey was promoted on social media, through the dive training agencies and through the project team (both MSDS Marine and Historic England) existing networks and was open from 26th November to 20th January 2026. The survey was completed by 350 divers and 10 charter boat skippers.

16.1 Divers

Awareness

16.1.1 Divers were asked if they were aware of the dive trails that exist on England's protected wreck sites. Just 44% (154) divers were aware of the trails, Figure 35. The survey was designed so that divers who answered no to this question (196) were not asked greater depth questions about their knowledge of and experiences of diving on dive trails.

16.1.2 The results indicate that awareness is mixed, with a substantial proportion of respondents reporting that they are not aware of existing diver trails, suggesting a need for improved promotion and communication.

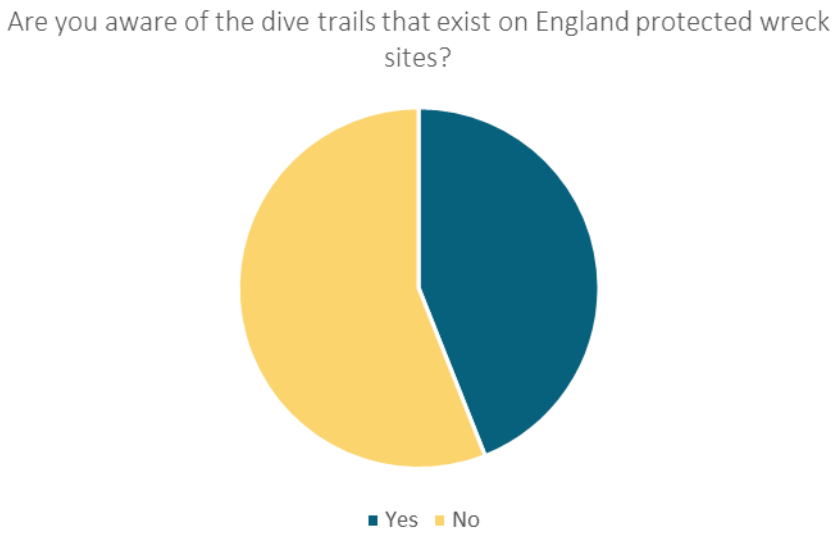


Figure 35: Responses to the question "Are you aware of the dive trails that exist on England's protected wreck sites?". (n = 350)

16.1.3 The 154 respondents who were aware of the trails were asked which of the following dive trails they were aware of. It should be noted that the Needles trail was excluded from this question as a possible response due to being outside the original scope provided by Historic England. As such no figures on awareness of the Needles trail are available.

16.1.4 Awareness varied considerably between sites, with the *Coronation* and HMS *Colossus* diver trails being the most widely known, while awareness of trails such as Thorness Bay and *Hazardous* is comparatively low.

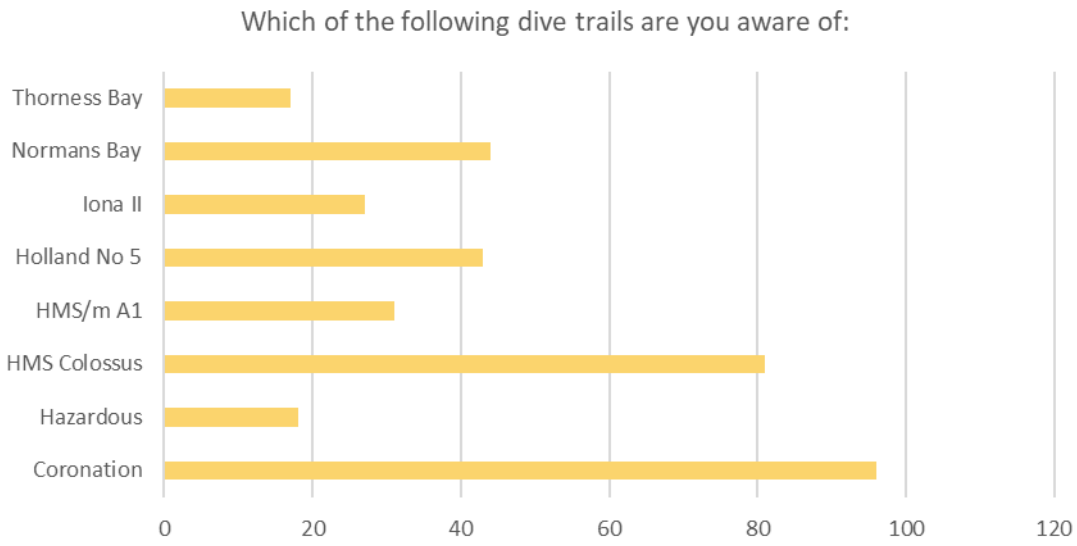


Figure 36: Awareness of protected wreck site diver trails among respondents. (n = 357)

16.1.5 The 154 respondents who were aware of the trails were asked if they had ever dived on a Protected Wreck dive trail in England. Nearly 80% of those who had heard of a trail have dived on one (123 individuals).

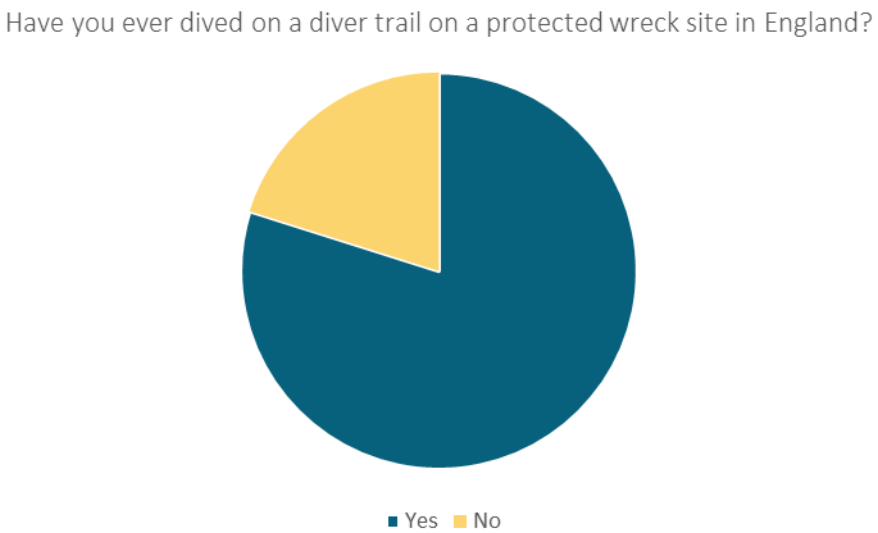


Figure 37: Responses to the question "Have you ever dived on a diver trail on a protected wreck site in England?" showing that the majority of respondents (79.9%) have previously dived a protected wreck diver trail, with a smaller proportion (20.1%) indicating they have not (n = 154)

Access Behaviour

16.1.6 The 123 individuals who had dived on a protected wreck site were asked to select the trails they had dived on, Figure 38. On average respondents had dived just under 2 (1.62) dive trails each.

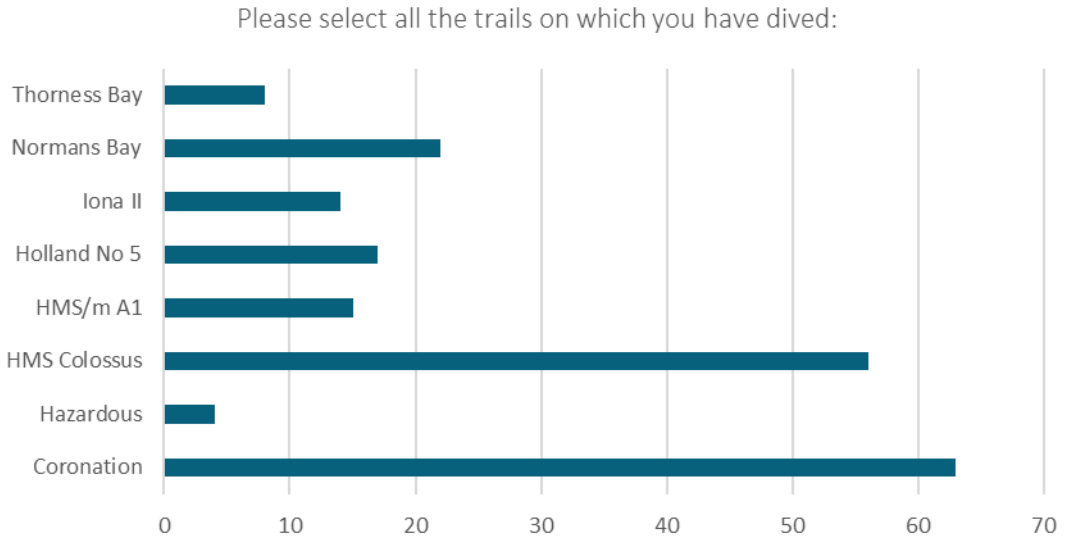


Figure 38: Chart showing the dive trails respondents had visited (n=199)

16.1.7 This information can be further analysed to understand repeat engagement. Over half of users (55%) had dived just one trail, yet 45% go on to dive two or more which provides strong evidence of repeat engagement. Nearly 20% accessed three or more trails and this can be seen as a strong indicator of the success of the trails for a heritage engagement programme rather than one off novelty schemes. This highlights the need for a co-ordinated approach to dive trail promotion.

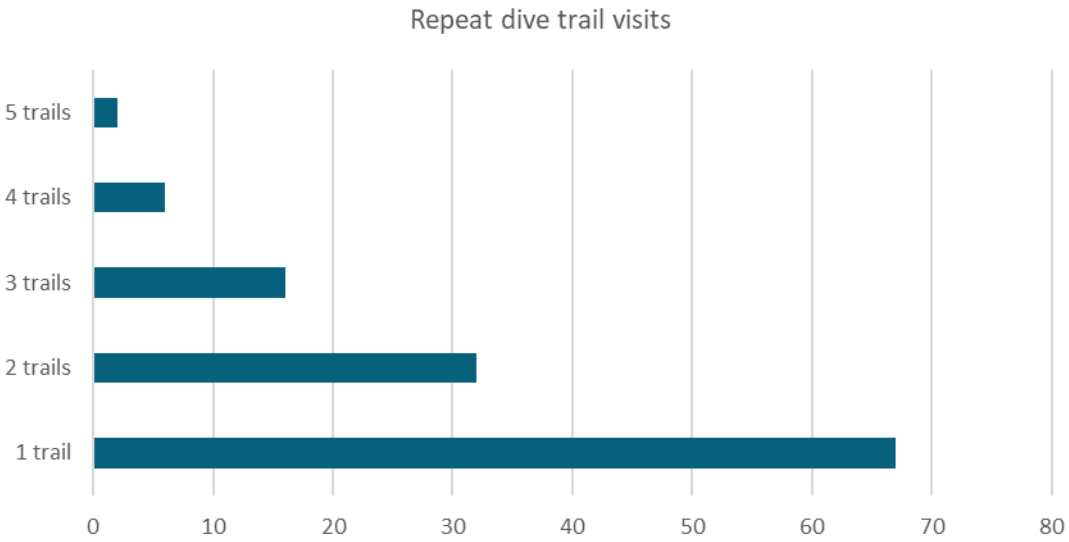


Figure 39: Chart showing the number of visits each respondent has made to dive trails (n=123)

Site	Respondents selecting the site	Total follow-on selections	Average additional sites per selector	Follow on rate (2+ sites)
Normans Bay	22	53	2.41	90.9%
Holland No 5	17	50	2.94	100%
Coronation	63	50	0.79	41.3%
HMS *Colossus*	56	49	0.88	41.1%
HMS *A1*	15	41	2.73	93.3%
Iona II	14	28	2.00	71.4%
Hazardous	4	12	3.00	75.0%
Thorness Bay	8	5	0.63	25.0%

Table 5: Chart presenting the breakdown of initial site visits and the follow on visits they generated.

16.1.8 Sites such as Normans Bay, *Holland No 5* and the *Coronation* and *Colossus* can potentially be seen as hubs that attract people into engaging with dive trail schemes and provide a point for them to then start to access other sites within the dive trail network. This pattern suggests the trails are not only acting as an entry point to marine heritage but are also fostering sustained and deepening engagement with multiple designated sites.

16.1.9 Analysis of co-dive behaviour shows that not all protected wreck sites perform the same role within the dive trail network. Some sites act as high-reach hubs, attracting large numbers of first-time or single-site visits (notably *Coronation* and HMS *Colossus*), while others function as strong gateways that actively drive divers on to explore multiple additional sites. In particular, Normans Bay, *Holland No 5* and HMS *A1* show the highest levels of follow-on activity, with over 90% of their divers also visiting at least one other protected wreck site. This can likely be attributed to the work of the Nautical Archaeology Society and their protected wreck site days in promoting the wider dive trail scheme to visitors. The strongest movement corridors in the network link *Holland No.5* with Normans Bay and *Coronation* with HMS *Colossus*, indicating that these pairings form the backbone of multi-site engagement. This pattern demonstrates that the dive trail model is not simply generating isolated visits but is creating a connected heritage landscape in which certain sites actively stimulate wider exploration of and appreciation of the protected wreck network.

Experiences

16.1.10 Respondents were asked if visiting a dive trail enhanced their experience of visiting the wreck. Of the 123 divers who had visited a dive trail, 108 (89%) believed it had enhanced their visit with a further 8 (7%) thinking it might have done.

16.1.11 Respondents who had visited a trail were asked to rate the following statements from Disagree Strongly to Agree Strongly:

- The dive trail enhanced my understanding of the features on the wreck
- The dive trail helped me navigate the wreck site
- The dive trail enhanced my understanding of why the wreck is important
- The dive trail enhanced my understanding of the history of the wreck site
- The dive trail enhanced my understanding of the marine life on the wreck site

16.1.12 A visual breakdown of responses is shown in Figure 40.

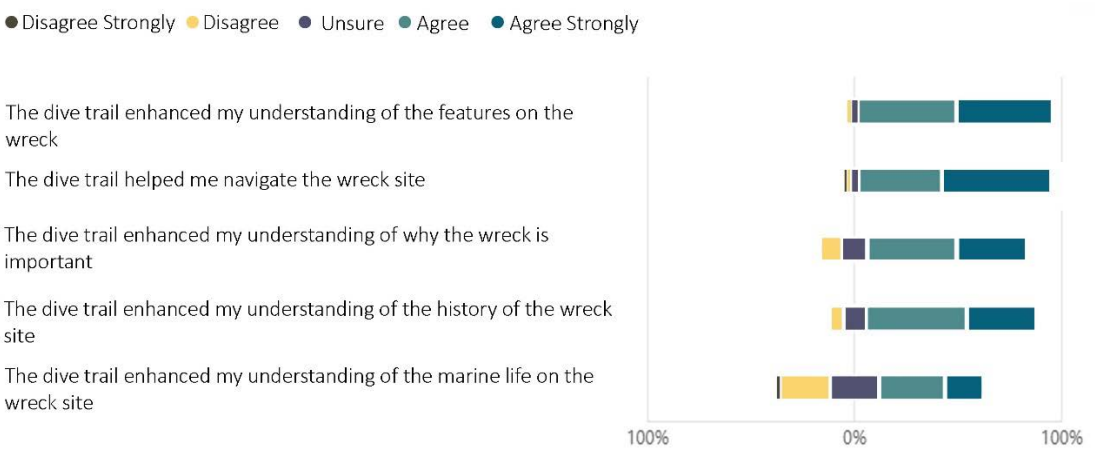


Figure 40: A visual representation of ratings given to a number of statements surrounding dive trails enhancing understanding in a number of key areas.

16.1.13 Dive trails have a clear and proven role in enhancing access by visiting divers. Key headlines include:

- 94.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the dive trail they visited enhanced their understanding of the features they saw during their visit.
- 93.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the dive trail they visited helped them navigate during the visit.
- 77.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the dive trail they visited enhanced their understanding of why the wreck is important.
- 82.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the dive trail they visited enhanced their understanding of the history of the wreck.
- 50.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the dive trail they visited enhanced their understanding of the marine life on the wreck.

16.1.14 An overwhelming majority of respondents, 93% (115), would recommend a dive trail to another diver. Only a small number, 3% (4) said they would not recommend a dive trail.

16.1.15 User feedback demonstrates that the dive trails are performing strongly in their core functions of interpretation and safe access. An overwhelming majority of respondents (94.3%) agreed that the trails enhanced their understanding of the features they encountered, while 93.5% reported that the trails supported effective navigation around the wreck, confirming their value as both interpretive and practical tools underwater. High levels of agreement were also recorded for heritage outcomes, with 82.9% stating that the trails improved their understanding of the wreck's history and 77.2% their understanding of its wider significance. By contrast, understanding of marine life was enhanced for a smaller but still substantial proportion of users (50.4%), indicating a clear opportunity for future trail development to strengthen the integration of natural and cultural heritage interpretation. Together, these results show that dive trails are successfully delivering in terms of increasing understanding, while also highlighting where future management and content development can further broaden the visitor experience.

Maintenance of Trails

16.1.16 Whilst the focus of the user survey was to enable an understanding of divers engagement with trails in terms of access, the opportunity was taken to ask additional questions relating to

maintenance. 25% (30) of respondents who had visited a trail had become involved with maintenance of a trail in some form.

16.1.17 Thirty (30) free-text responses from respondents who have played a role in maintenance revealed a number of key themes and issues raised in relation to their work undertaking maintenance. These are presented in Table 6.

Theme	Issue	Impact
Maintenance and upkeep is labour intensive	This is by far the most common reoccurring theme. Many respondents describe the regular cleaning of markers, replacing lines and buoys and being involved in multiple dives over several days.	Dive trails cannot be considered as 'install and forget' assets. They need to be viewed as actively maintained heritage infrastructure that requires time, equipment and repeat visits.
A small number of highly committed people do most of the work	The language used by respondents (such as 'many hours', 'several dives' and 'over days') suggests maintenance sits with dedicated individuals or small teams, not casual volunteers.	The dive trail programme relies on specialist, skilled custodians, not just casual divers — this strengthens the case for future training, support, recognition and governance.
Physical trail components are critical	Markers, buoys and lines are what divers with interact with on the seabed.	When these fail, the trail fails — navigation, safety and interpretation all depend on these components being in place and readable.
A number of sites are mentioned more than others notably *Coronation* and *Colossus*	This suggests that some sites require more maintenance than others. Interestingly they are also the most visited sites so maintenance can perhaps be seen as both due to the type of trail infrastructure, seabed environment and heavy use.	Not all sites require the same level of ongoing support. Site needs should be assessed, and appropriate budgets and support should be put in place.
Maintenance is tightly linked to heritage care	Respondents do not view themselves as simply fixing signs. They are helping improve how divers move around the wreck, protecting fragile features and ensuing visitors see the right things in the right way.	This connects directly to site protection and visitor management, not just logistics and supports the need to actively maintain infrastructure as well as support the specialist divers volunteering their time to support dive trails.

Table 6: Key themes identified in relation to site maintenance within free text responses from divers.

16.1.18 Thirty (30) free-text responses from respondents who have played a role in maintenance show that trail upkeep is a time-intensive and technically demanding activity centred on the cleaning, repair and replacement of markers, lines and buoys. Contributors frequently refer to multiple dives over several days, indicating that maintenance is undertaken by a relatively small number of highly committed and skilled individuals rather than casual volunteers.

16.1.19 References to sites such as *Coronation* and *Colossus* highlight that high-profile trails experience particularly heavy maintenance demand. These findings underline that dive trails should be understood and resourced as active heritage management infrastructure, requiring ongoing support, planning and investment rather than one-off installation.

16.1.20 Respondents who had been involved with maintenance were asked how Historic England could support dive trails to run to their best ability in future. It should be noted that these respondents are not the key individuals undertaking the work whose were interviewed and reported on in Sections 6.0 to 15.0 above.

16.1.21 Twenty-eight (28) free-text responses were received and revealed a number of key themes and issues raised. These are presented in Table 7.

Theme	Issue	Impact
Funding	This is by far the most dominant theme. Respondents repeatedly mention funding, covering costs, resource needed to undertake maintenance and them filling the role of paying custodians.	Volunteers are not saying they do not want to help, rather they are saying the work cannot be sustained without financial backing. Dive trails are being run like professional heritage assets but not funded in the same way.
Support for custodians and site teams	Many respondents specifically refer to custodians, local teams and divers doing the work. They are asking for recognition, support and backing to carry out maintenance including repairs and upgrades.	The current dive trail model depends on trained, accountable site custodians and support from within the diving community, and respondents want Historic England to formally support and enable them, not just approve licences. It should be noted that this recognition exists in the form of the affiliated volunteer scheme, however, the responses here should provide evidence on continuing this scheme and ensuring that all divers are aware of it.

Theme	Issue	Impact
Maintenance of physical trail infrastructure	The seabed is a highly dynamic environment, and any trail infrastructure requires regular upkeep and maintenance.	Historic England should plan for regular maintenance cycles including the replacement of work components with a budget that is easily accessed.
Promotion and visibility	Several responses mention the need to keep dive trails in the public eye and ensure wider recognition and awareness.	Respondents would like Historic England to not just regulate dive trails and support their initial creation, rather they would like them to actively champion them, helping bring in divers, clubs and visitors. In turn this supports protection and stewardship.
A stronger role for government	Some responses explicitly refer to the government, national responsibility and strategic support.	There is a need to frame dive trails as national heritage infrastructure not as an optional extra.

Table 7: Key themes for future dive trail support identified within free text responses from divers involved in maintenance.

16.1.22 The responses to the question of what support is needed from Historic England show a strong and consistent call for greater resourcing of the dive trail programme. Contributors most frequently highlight the need for funding to support custodians and site teams, particularly for the ongoing maintenance of trail infrastructure such as markers and routes. Respondents also emphasise the importance of Historic England playing a more active role in promoting dive trails and keeping protected wrecks in the public eye. Collectively, these responses indicate that the dive trails network is widely viewed as valuable national heritage infrastructure that requires sustained financial, organisational and strategic support if it is to operate at its best.

Encouraging new visitors

16.1.23 The respondents were not aware of dive trails and those who were aware of them but who have never dived on one were asked if they would like the opportunity to dive on one, Figure 41. There are clear opportunities to convert the 98% who would like to, or might like to, dive a trail into future visitors.

16.1.24 The same group were then asked why they have not done this to date, Figure 42. The majority of respondents, 71% (172), simply did not know how to access a dive trail. It was also felt by 19% (17) that it's too difficult to arrange. 7% (7) people thought cost was an issue. It should be noted that no dive trails charge for access, however, as with all diving the costs of equipment and vessels can be prohibitive. Thirty six (36) free-text responses were received to this question.

16.1.25 Responses show that the principal barrier to greater uptake of the dive trails is not lack of interest or cost, but lack of awareness and understanding. By far the most common response was "I do not know how to", supported by numerous comments indicating that divers and clubs were unaware that protected wreck dive trails exist or how they can be accessed. Logistical

factors such as distance, time and weather were secondary, while cost was cited relatively rarely. These results indicate that there is substantial latent demand for the dive trail programme, and that improved communication, promotion and clear access routes through clubs and charter operators could unlock significantly higher participation.

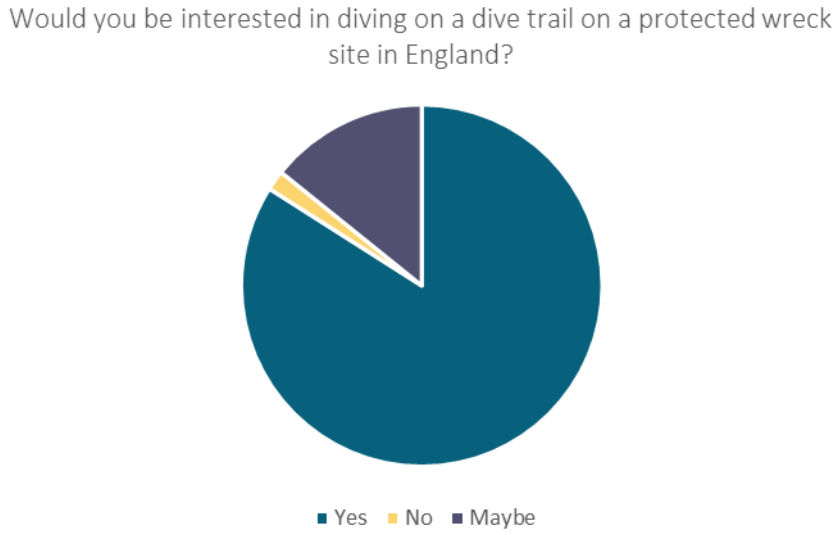


Figure 41: Responses to the question "Would you be interested in diving on a dive trail on a protected wreck site in England?" showing that that only 2% of respondents would not like to (n=225)

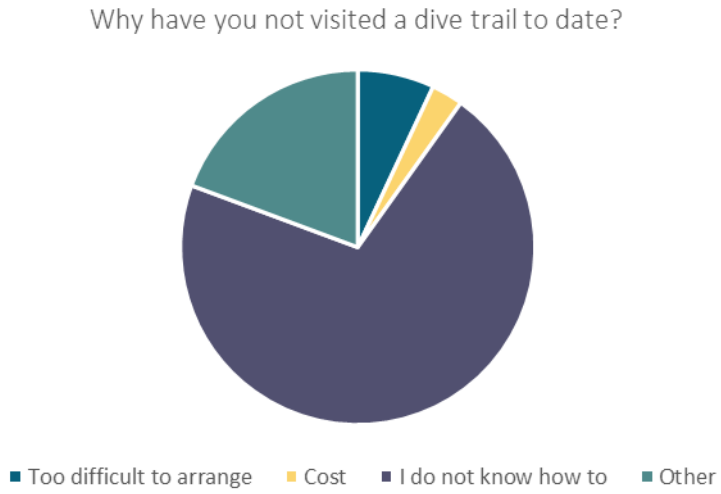


Figure 42: Responses to the question "Why have you not visited a dive trail to date?" showing that that the majority of respondents (84%) do not know how to (n=243)

Additional Information

16.1.26 A free text field for all divers at the end of the survey encouraged respondents to provide any further thoughts on dive trails and their experiences with them. Ninety (90) responses were received and demonstrate that the dive trail programme generates a strong sense of personal connection, stewardship and pride among participants. Respondents repeatedly expressed appreciation for the effort of those who maintain the trails, alongside concern for the protection and long-term condition of the wrecks themselves. Many also call for the expansion of the scheme to additional sites, indicating clear demand for wider coverage. Collectively,

these responses show that dive trails are not simply a way to navigate the sites, but a mechanism for building an engaged community of heritage advocates who value, respect and actively support the UK's underwater cultural heritage.

16.2 Skippers

16.2.1 Dive charter boats are increasingly diminishing across England and the wider UK. This was recognised in 2018 by BSAC through the launch of the Save Our Skippers (SoS) campaign[23]. Most recently the issue was discussed in an article from diver charter skipper Dave Wendes in an interview with Jezz Davies published in the NAS Quarterly Newsletter[24]. Dave believes the issue is being driven by a change of diving practices with fewer young people diving in the UK and increasing costs for skippers against a background of uncertainty in diving exacerbated by weather. Diver charter boats, and the highly skilled skippers who operate them, are a critical part of the supply chain that enables diver to access dive trails as increasingly clubs stop operating their own boats.

16.2.2 There is no easily accessible way to quantify the number of commercial dive boats operating in England however the experience of MSDS Marine suggests it is currently at the lowest level in the last twenty years. Ten individuals responded to the survey as a dive charter skipper. Of these, 50% (5) had previously taken visiting divers to a dive trail.

Access Behaviour

16.2.3 The five skippers who had taken to a dive trail previously were asked how often they took visiting divers to dive on a dive trail. 80% of responses (4) indicated they took divers to a site just once a year. The other respondent (20%) took divers out once a month on average.

16.2.4 The five skippers who had not taken a diver to a dive trail were asked to select all the reasons why not. All stated that this was due to no dive trails being operational within the area they operate.

Opportunities

16.2.5 All skippers were asked if they thought dive trail could be a new way for them to attract divers and offer new opportunities to the recreational diving community, Figure 43. 70% (7) of respondents believe that dive trails do, or may, provide opportunities. It is widely recognised that dive trails have a significant economic benefit to the local economy[25] and this should be promoted by Historic England and others involved in the creation and operation of dive trails

[23] https://www.bsac.com/news-and-blog/sos-support-uk-charter-boats-with-bsac/
[24] Wendes, D. 2025 *Where have all the dive boat skippers gone?*, in NAS Quarterly Autumn 2025
[25] Beattie-Edwards, M 2014 *The Local Economic Benefit of a Protected Wreck,* IN Historic England Research News 2014

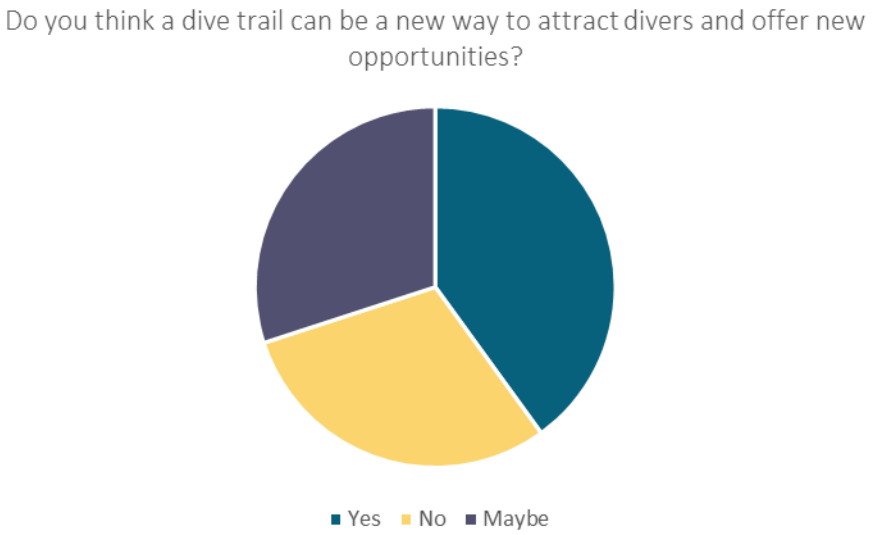


Figure 43: Responses to the question "Do you think a dive trail can be a new way to attract divers and offer new opportunities?" showing that that the majority of respondents (70%) think dive trails do, or may, provide opportunities.

Additional Information

16.2.6 A free text field for all skippers at the end of the survey encouraged respondents to provide any further thoughts on dive trails and their experiences with them. Just three responses were received, and their themes are given here in full.

16.2.7 Respondent 1 highlighted the value that structured dive trail experiences, such as those chartered and hosted by the NAS as part of their protected wreck day programme, adds. They noted that these enhance both confidence and the overall quality of the visit. However, they also indicated that they would be unlikely to undertake a dive trail visit independently on their own trips, reflecting the importance of organised frameworks, licensing and expert guidance in enabling effective engagement with protected wreck site dive trails.

16.2.8 Respondent 2 warned that UK recreational diving is currently in decline, driven by a combination of shrinking club membership and increasing regulatory pressures on charter vessels. They noted that established dive clubs with active memberships are becoming fewer, and that recent legal requirements aimed specifically at dive boats are likely to accelerate the loss of charter operators. This trend is expected to lead to a significant reduction in the number of dive charters operating around the UK, with implications for access to offshore wrecks and the long-term sustainability of programmes such as the dive trails.

16.2.9 Respondent 3 expressed frustration that, despite a high concentration of protected wreck sites in the Dover Straits, they have never been approached by Historic England or any other organisation to help develop a dive trail at this location. They questioned the value of designation in the absence of active engagement, interpretation or management, arguing that protection without practical action to enable access, monitoring and public understanding risks failing to deliver meaningful heritage benefit.

17.0 Recommendations

17.0.1 In addition to the site-specific recommendations made above a number of overarching recommendations for both existing dive trails and the future development of them are made below.

17.0.2 In 2014 Mark Beattie Edwards presented a paper summarising dive trails on England's protected wreck sites at the 2014 CIfA conference, this was subsequently published in *Bridging the Gap in Maritime Archaeology: Working with Professional and Public Communities* in 2019[26]. Beattie-Edwards stated that *"licensed public access must remain a cornerstone of any associated heritage management strategy, a strategy that must receive long-term commitment from both the trail organisers and the heritage agencies."*. This review agrees with this statement and all the following recommendations should be underpinned by this principle.

17.1 Recommendation 1: Creation of a knowledge sharing network and resource hub

Organisations and stakeholders involved:

- Historic England
- Protected Wreck Association
- Dive Trail practitioners

17.1.1 Over the past twenty years, a substantial body of experience has been developed in relation to dive trail planning, installation, maintenance and promotion. However, much of this expertise remains informal and dispersed, with individual dive trail creators often operating in relative isolation and limited structured exchange between teams. This creates inefficiencies, duplication of effort and unnecessary risk, as lessons learned at one site are not consistently shared across the wider programme.

17.1.2 It is therefore recommended that Historic England support the creation of a formal Knowledge-Sharing Network and Resource Hub for dive trail practitioners.

17.1.3 Historic England should recognise and strengthen the Protected Wreck Association as the primary forum for this activity. The Association already convenes the appropriate audience and is increasingly effective in facilitating collaboration. With formal support, it could serve as the central platform for:

- Sharing lessons learned and case studies
- Standardising approaches and technical guidance
- Discussing maintenance challenges and solutions
- Coordinating events and practitioner engagement
- Hosting a dedicated WhatsApp community for rapid information exchange

17.1.4 While established digital platforms such as Knowledge Hub could be considered, experience suggests that an accessible, practitioner-led solution, such as a moderated WhatsApp channel

[26] Beattie-Edwards, M *Experience is Everything: England's Protected Wreck Diver Trails* in Bell, K et al 2019 *Bridging the Gap in Maritime Archaeology: Working with Professional and Public Communities* Archaeopress

within the Protected Wreck Association community area, is more likely to achieve sustained, day-to-day engagement and rapid problem-solving.

17.1.5 In addition, a curated resource repository should be developed, either hosted on the Historic England website or within the Protected Wreck Association members' area. This should include:

- All reports relating to dive trails
- Guidance on grant applications and project design
- Templates and examples of good practice
- Experimental approaches (e.g. seasonal moorings, infrastructure adaptations)
- Documentation of both successes and challenges

17.1.6 An annual online dive trail stakeholder meeting should also be established to facilitate structured discussion of current issues, innovation, and shared learning. This would ensure Historic England remains informed of operational realities while reducing the need for individual licence teams to independently develop solutions to common challenges.

17.1.7 Encouraging closer collaboration between dive trail practitioners will deliver tangible long-term benefits. Shared procurement of seabed infrastructure, bulk ordering, coordinated maintenance strategies and collaborative grant applications could reduce costs and improve value for money. More importantly, building a coherent dive trail community will enhance resilience, safeguard institutional memory and ensure that future investment is informed by two decades of accumulated experience.

17.1.8 The creation of a supported knowledge-sharing network will therefore strengthen governance, improve efficiency and underpin the sustainable development of the dive trail programme.

17.2 Recommendation 2: Ongoing support for dive trails

Organisations and stakeholders involved:

- Historic England

17.2.1 It is recommended that dive trails are formally recognised, planned and resourced as active heritage management infrastructure, rather than as one-off interpretation projects. Dive trails cannot simply be installed and left to function independently; they require structured, ongoing investment, monitoring, feedback and adaptive management to remain safe, engaging and sustainable. Whilst the focus of this report is the physical dive trails, those we spoke to echoed this concern in relation to the virtual dive trails.

17.2.2 The evidence demonstrates that maintenance demands vary significantly between sites. Those experiencing the highest levels of visitor use are often the most successful and popular trails yet also tend to require the greatest levels of upkeep due to infrastructure type, seabed conditions and cumulative diver impact. A uniform funding model is therefore inappropriate. Instead, a site-specific needs assessment framework should be implemented to determine appropriate levels of financial support, maintenance frequency and management oversight.

17.2.3 A dive trail without continuous upkeep quickly becomes ineffective. Each site has different needs for maintenance, on some sites signs require cleaning before every time and on others an annual clean suffices. Annual, easily accessible grant funding should be allocated specifically for seabed infrastructure maintenance, weed clearance, replacement of interpretation

materials and minor repairs. These costs should be anticipated and budgeted for at the outset of any new dive trail development, ensuring that long-term sustainability is embedded in project design rather than treated as a reactive expense. Maintenance is constant, inevitable and often self-funded by the volunteers maintaining the dive trails. A micro-grant scheme should be available for easy to access funding for amounts under £1,000 to enable rapid delivery of funding to areas they can make the most difference.

17.2.4 All the dive trails have different needs, of the 7 currently active trails, only 4 have physical infrastructure on the seabed. This means that printing maps or replacing tags doesn't have to be a huge fund to make a massive difference to Licensee's.

17.2.5 Crucially, the success of the dive trail programme depends on the contribution of specialist, skilled custodians, not simply casual recreational divers. Ongoing support must therefore extend beyond financial assistance to include structured practitioner training, recognition mechanisms, governance support and opportunities for knowledge sharing. Strengthening this professionalised volunteer base will enhance resilience, ensure consistency of standards and safeguard the long-term integrity of the trails.

17.2.6 The survey of the diving community that was undertaken for this report could be adapted and repeated annually. This would enable Historic England to easily monitor the impact of recommendations made in this report. In addition, asking divers who have visited a dive trail for feedback on what worked well and what requires improvement would highlight any changes, or maintenance, that need to be made on individual trails.

17.2.7 A structured programme of ongoing support, incorporating annual funding, tiered site assessment, practitioner development and long-term planning, will protect existing investment, maintain visitor confidence, and ensure dive trails continue to function as effective tools for underwater heritage conservation and public engagement.

17.3 Recommendation 3: Establish a public protected wreck dive trails portal

Organisations and stakeholders involved:

- Historic England
- Dive Trail practitioners
- Dive boat skippers

17.3.1 It is recommended that a central, publicly accessible protected wreck dive trails portal be established to showcase all dive trails in one clear, easy-to-find location.

17.3.2 At present, information relating to dive trails is dispersed across multiple websites, reports and local platforms although there is an existing dive trail area on the Historic England that fulfils some, but not all, of the proposed functionality below[27].

17.3.3 Maritime content can be difficult to locate within larger websites, such as the Historic England website, limiting visibility and reducing public awareness. This fragmentation creates unnecessary barriers for divers and interested members of the public seeking reliable and up-to-date information. Whilst it is appreciated that changes to the Historic England website may

[27] https://historicengland.org.uk/campaigns/visit/protected-wrecks/dive-trails/

be difficult to implement, anything that can be done to improve the visibility of the dive trails from the main landing page would be very significant.

17.3.4 An improved dive trails portal would significantly improve accessibility and engagement. At the time of writing this report, Historic England are about to launch an updated guide to accessing England's protected wreck sites. This should feature on the page to keep resources in one place. In addition, the forthcoming 'How to Dive a Dive Trail' fact sheet could be a downloadable item on the page, or help inform some of the content.

17.3.5 The improved hub should include:

- A clear overview of each dive trail site, including those that are not currently listed
- Direct links to each site's dedicated webpage or licence information ensuring that it reaches the relevant area of the linked site that deals with dive trail access (for example at present the *Colossus* link goes to the virtual trail page)
- Booking and licensing guidance where relevant – this could be through a bullet pointed list under each site to make it very clear how to dive on a trail
- Virtual dives, 360 tours and other educational resources – currently virtual trails are listed on a separate page but where virtual trails exist on sites that have a physical trail this should be indicated
- Maintenance updates and safety guidance
- Responsible diving and conservation messaging
- Targeted information for dive boat skippers

17.3.6 The platform should be visually engaging, intuitive to navigate and optimised for search engines to ensure it appears prominently in online searches for protected wreck site dive trails. QR codes on onshore signage and promotional materials could link directly to this central portal, reinforcing consistent messaging.

17.3.7 By consolidating the information on a single, recognisable national portal, Historic England would dramatically improve visibility, simplify user journeys and strengthen the identity of dive trails as a coherent offer. An improved central hub would also support promotion, community engagement and long-term sustainability by making underwater heritage more accessible to both divers and the wider public.

17.3.8 Consideration should be given to a dive trail visit scheme underpinned through the hub with logbook stamps developed for each site and divers encouraged to collect a full set by visiting all the trails on offer.

17.4 Recommendation 4: Co-ordinated central promotion

Organisations and stakeholders involved:

- Historic England
- Dive Trail practitioners

17.4.1 Historic England should implement a centrally co-ordinated, annual promotional strategy for all Historic England dive trails, rather than relying on site-specific or ad hoc promotion. Evidence across multiple sites, including the *Hazardous, Colossus* and *Holland No 5* dive trails, demonstrates that awareness is inconsistent, seasonal timing is often too late, and promotional activity is fragmented. Divers typically plan trips 6–12 months in advance, meaning that

communication must begin early in the calendar year (ideally January) and be delivered consistently each winter as part of a recurring campaign.

17.4.2 A centralised approach would ensure:

- Consistency of messaging across all dive trails
- Efficient use of communications resources through a single annual campaign
- Improved brand recognition of Historic England dive trails as a collective offer
- Better alignment with dive planning cycles

17.4.3 The strategy should include the production of a digital and printed leaflet covering all dive trails. This should incorporate QR codes linking directly to the centralised hub, ensuring information remains current without reprinting materials. Distribution should be led by Historic England and should extend beyond heritage channels to include the IMASS Shipwreck Conference, dive shows, dive shops, training agencies, tourism centres, outdoor visitor sites, and relevant museums. Targeted social media advertising and direct engagement with dive training organisations would further broaden reach.

17.4.4 Promotion should be undertaken in partnership with the Protected Wreck Association with coordinated online messaging and integration into the Association's annual survey. Adding dive trail-specific questions would provide valuable data on volunteer engagement, visitor numbers, and planning behaviours, creating a feedback loop to inform future communications.

17.4.5 Targeted promotion to university dive clubs and university archaeology departments would help ensure that protected wreck sites and dive trails form an active role in ongoing student development and that a younger generation are brought into existing teams.

17.4.6 Crucially, all promotional activity must be delivered in liaison with dive trail practitioners, including licensees, charter operators and local tourism bodies — to ensure that trail condition, access arrangements and practical information are accurate and up to date.

17.4.7 A centrally managed, annually scheduled promotional campaign, including Historic England attending the dive show, would address current awareness gaps, reverse declining visitor numbers where observed, and maximise the impact of investment in trail refreshes. It would also position Historic England's dive trails as a coherent national offer, strengthening both public engagement and long-term sustainability.

17.5 Recommendation 5: Establish an annual dive trail photography competition

Organisations and stakeholders involved:

- Historic England
- Protected Wreck Association
- Existing photographic competition organisers
- Dive Trail practitioners

17.5.1 In conjunction with Recommendation 4, it is recommended that Historic England establish an annual Dive Trail Photography Competition, aligned with a targeted advertising campaign, to raise the profile of dive trails within the diving community and beyond.

17.5.2 Embedding a dedicated Dive Trail category within an existing photography competition, such as the HistoryHit Awards[28] (already supported by Historic England), British Society of Underwater Photography Awards[29] or the Underwater Photographer of the Year Awards[30] would provide a cost-effective and high-profile mechanism to achieve this.

17.5.3 The competition should:

- Celebrate underwater heritage and responsible diving practice
- Encourage divers to share high-quality imagery from dive trail sites
- Be promoted through social media, dive networks and partner organisations
- Culminate in online and/or physical exhibitions showcasing shortlisted entries

17.5.4 This initiative would revitalise community engagement through creative participation and collaborative storytelling, building pride and enthusiasm within the dive trail community. Co-branding diver-led exhibitions, talks or events would further amplify reach and visibility.

17.5.5 To ensure a tangible legacy value, it is recommended that the dive trail associated with the winning photograph become the focus of a small, funded outreach project in the following year. This could include school visits, museum talks, pop-up exhibitions or community presentations near the site location. Delivery could be facilitated through the existing archaeological diving contract, ensuring professional coordination and integration with wider heritage engagement objectives.

17.5.6 Over time, the competition would establish a recognisable annual fixture, strengthen diver engagement, broaden public awareness beyond the diving community, and provide a positive, proactive narrative around underwater heritage. It would also position Historic England as an enabling partner, championing community creativity while reinforcing heritage protection and responsible access messages.

17.5.7 Opportunities could also be taken to enhance this through encouraging the use of competitions to generate blogs and published dive trail visit reviews.

17.6 Recommendation 6: Onshore signage for dive trails

Organisations and stakeholders involved:

- Historic England

17.6.1 It is recommended that Historic England undertake a strategic review of all public-facing coastal interpretive signage associated with dive trail and protected wreck sites, with a view to refurbishing, updating or installing panels where appropriate.

17.6.2 Interviewees consistently emphasised the value of visible, accessible onshore interpretation, particularly signage incorporating QR codes linking directly to up-to-date digital content. Such signage not only raises the profile of the dive trails to potential visitors but crucially broadens engagement beyond the diving community to include walkers, tourists and local residents. Coastal interpretation therefore represents an important opportunity to widen public

[28] https://photographer.historyhit.com/
[29] https://bsoup.org.uk/
[30] https://underwaterphotographeroftheyear.com/

awareness of underwater heritage and dive trails and strengthen understanding of protected wreck site status.

17.6.3 Historic England should:

- Audit existing coastal interpretive panels at all dive trail locations.
- Assess condition, visibility, accuracy of information and accessibility.
- Refurbish outdated or damaged panels.
- Install new signage at priority access points where gaps are identified.
- Incorporate QR codes linking to dynamic web content, ensuring information remains current without repeated reprinting

17.6.4 Collaboration with local stakeholders will be essential. In many coastal locations, interpretive infrastructure already exists in the form of wildlife, environmental or landscape signage. Working in partnership with wildlife organisations, harbour authorities and local councils may allow for the creation of joint interpretive panels, enabling cost-sharing while presenting a more holistic narrative of natural and cultural heritage. Integrated signage could strengthen messaging around responsible access, conservation and stewardship, while improving value for money.

17.6.5 By enhancing coastal interpretation, Historic England would increase visibility of dive trails, improve public understanding of protected wrecks, and ensure that underwater heritage is recognised as part of the wider coastal landscape.

17.7 Recommendation 7: Develop a partnership working approach across all dive trails

Organisations and stakeholders involved:

- Historic England
- Partner organisations

17.7.1 It is recommended that Historic England adopt a proactive partnership approach with marine ecological and environmental organisations to broaden engagement, share resources and enhance the visibility and appeal of dive trails.

17.7.2 Historically, collaboration between heritage and environmental bodies, such as joint working at the *Hazardous* and Alum Bay sites with marine conservation organisations, has demonstrated that combining protected wreck site dive trails with marine ecology provides a compelling and successful engagement model. Divers are frequently motivated by both archaeological and ecological interests, and integrated messaging can significantly widen appeal while reinforcing responsible site use.

17.7.3 Historic England should therefore actively engage with marine ecological organisations, for example Natural England, Marine Wildlife Trusts and Seasearch, to:

- Promote dive trail sites to new and overlapping audience
- Develop joint interpretation highlighting both cultural and natural heritage values
- Co-brand outreach campaigns and events
- Share promotional costs and communications resources

- Encourage collaborative data collection where appropriate (e.g. biodiversity observations alongside site condition monitoring)

17.7.4 Such partnership working would strengthen the narrative that protected wreck sites are part of a wider marine ecosystem and offer specific opportunities to expand biodiversity, not simply isolated heritage assets. It would also provide opportunities to integrate responsible diving guidance across both ecological and archaeological interests. By formalising relationships with marine conservation organisations, Historic England can increase reach, improve value for money through shared promotion, and position dive trails as multidisciplinary sites of interest. This collaborative approach would support long-term sustainability, diversify audiences and reinforce stewardship across both the cultural and natural marine environment.

17.8 Recommendation 8: Ensure sustainable maintenance models exist before approval of new trails

Organisations and stakeholders involved:

- Historic England

17.8.1 It is recommended that Historic England require clear, sustainable maintenance models to be in place prior to the approval of any new dive trail proposals, ensuring that long-term stewardship is embedded from the outset rather than addressed retrospectively.

17.8.2 Experience across existing sites demonstrates that dive trail infrastructure is subject to wear from environmental conditions, visitor use and seasonal pressures. Without forward planning, projects risk becoming reliant on reactive repairs, volunteer goodwill or unplanned funding requests. To avoid this, all new trail applications should include a proportionate maintenance plan, identify funding pathways and named responsible parties. Recommendation 1, the creation of a knowledge sharing hub, would support the development of new trails that have learnt from prior experience.

17.8.3 By embedding maintenance planning within approval processes and providing clear technical guidance, Historic England can safeguard investment, reduce long-term costs and ensure that future dive trails are both ambitious and sustainable.

17.9 Recommendation 9: Continue to recognise and support diversity within dive trails

Organisations and stakeholders involved:

- Historic England

17.9.1 Historic England has made positive progress in recognising and supporting diversity within dive trails, and it is recommended that this approach is maintained and further developed. New opportunities to recognise and celebrate the diversity could include a distinct category of ‘Advanced’ Dive Trail sites within its national dive trail framework.

17.9.2 Sites such as Thorness Bay demonstrate that not all dive trails are suited to broad public access. Thorness Bay is technically demanding, characterised by strong tidal streams, short slack water windows and very poor visibility. Whilst it is not appropriate for mass participation, it remains archaeologically significant and exceptionally well preserved. Applying standard visitor-growth

or accessibility expectations to such sites risks creating unrealistic benchmarks and potentially unsafe pressures.

17.9.3 Historic England should therefore:

- Explicitly define and adopt a “advanced” classification for some dive trails
- Continue to avoid applying visitor-number or accessibility targets to technically demanding sites
- Assess success on the basis of protection, research contribution and stewardship rather than footfall
- Clearly differentiate between general-access and advanced-access dive trails in all public-facing materials
- Include strong, transparent messaging about skill requirements, tidal hazards and environmental constraints

17.9.4 Recognising advanced sites formally would allow Historic England to demonstrate a proportionate and risk-aware management approach. It would also reinforce the principle that responsible access sometimes means restraint, not expansion. Thorness Bay could serve as a model of best practice in managing challenging environments, showing that heritage value does not always correlate with visitor volume, and that specialist access is a valid and positive outcome.

17.9.5 By embedding this differentiation, Historic England can support realistic expectations and ensure that the dive trail programme accommodates the full diversity of underwater heritage environments and skills of the diving community at all levels including for advanced divers. This could potentially increase the appeal of the dive trails to divers who are keen to visit deeper, more complex sites through their diving.

17.10 Recommendation 10: Undertake a review of reporting

Organisations and stakeholders involved:

- Historic England

17.10.1 It is recommended that Historic England review the current reporting systems in relation to dive trails. During the compilation of this report, it became apparent that current systems for reporting divers who have accessed a site under a licence does not always accurately reflect the number of divers who have visited a dive trail. Improved reporting, separating out dive trail visitors from dives undertaken for survey or monitoring for example, would allow dive trail usage to be better understood in future and ensure the dive trail scheme continues to flourish.

17.10.2 In addition, there could be an opportunity to look at the deadline for protected wreck licence returns in relation to dive trails. Conversations with stakeholders has suggested there may be benefits to moving the deadline and that some would wish to see diver numbers reported annually rather than at three set points in the year. Changes could allow completion of the full dive season before reporting is required. Dive trail practitioners would therefore be able to submit returns that accurately reflect the entirety of seasonal activity, including visitor numbers, maintenance requirements, site condition observations and any incidents or management issues arising during peak use whilst ensuring there is no break between one

license ending and the next starting, ensuring that any suitable conditions over the winter period are maximised.

17.10.3 Licensing arrangements were changed considerably in 2015 and there may not be another opportunity to make further changes, however a discussion directly with Licensees may enable a lot of the issues to be addressed. It could be that a review reveals that the current arrangements work well for the majority and that no change is needed beyond communicating to stakeholders that whilst a licence traditionally finishes at the end of November this is not the same as the reporting deadline and that there is flexibility and understanding from Historic England in this.

17.11 Recommendation 11: Undertake a study on the impact of mooring

Organisations and stakeholders involved:

- Historic England
- Research Partner

17.11.1 It is recommended that Historic England commission and support a focused study into the impact of current mooring and shot-line practices on protected wreck sites, with particular consideration given to seasonal buoying solutions[31].

17.11.2 The Nautical Archaeology Society (NAS) has raised concerns regarding the cumulative impact of divers deploying heavy shot lines directly onto wreck structures. Repeated placement of shot weights onto vulnerable features, including cannons, exposed timbers and fragile metal hulls, has the potential to cause avoidable mechanical damage over time. While such practices are often undertaken with care, the absence of controlled mooring infrastructure may unintentionally increase risk to sensitive fabric, particularly on frequently visited sites.

17.11.3 Historic England should therefore support a structured pilot project to test and evaluate non-damaging mooring systems at selected designated sites. This could include:

- Seasonal installation of fixed or semi-fixed buoyed moorings positioned to avoid sensitive features
- Testing of alternative anchoring or mid-water attachment systems
- Monitoring of seabed and structural impacts before and after installation
- Assessment of diver behaviour, ease of use and safety implications

17.11.4 The study should gather both quantitative condition data and qualitative feedback from custodians, charter skippers and visiting divers. A comparative analysis between sites using traditional shot-line methods and those employing seasonal buoying would provide a robust evidence base to inform future policy.

17.11.5 If successful, seasonal buoying could reduce cumulative impact, improve diver access and safety, and provide clearer guidance on best practice. It may also reduce maintenance pressures associated with damage to exposed archaeological features. Undertaking this research would demonstrate proactive stewardship, strengthen collaboration with the diving community, and ensure that access arrangements for protected wrecks are aligned with long-

[31] It is our understanding that a current desk-based review of moorings is now underway by TrenDive funded by Historic England.

term conservation objectives. Consideration should be given to working with a University to develop a research project in this area.

17.12 Recommendation 12: Commission research and practical trials to develop standardised, best-practice approaches for seabed signage used in dive trails

- Historic England
- Research Partner

17.12.1 Feedback from practitioners highlights that the development of underwater signage is currently fragmented, with individual dive trail teams independently designing and testing solutions. This has resulted in a wide variety of materials, attachment methods and signage styles being used across sites, often developed through trial and error. Historic England should lead in developing clearer central guidance and feeding this into the knowledge hub suggested in Recommendation 1.

17.12.2 Historic England is well placed to provide leadership in this area by coordinating a programme of design trials and technical evaluation and ensuring that the results of trials independently taking place, such as those on *Hazardous*, are shared widely. This could include testing different materials, manufacturing techniques and attachment systems to determine the most effective solutions for durability, legibility, environmental compatibility and cost.

17.12.3 Areas of investigation could include:

- Materials suitable for long-term seabed deployment (e.g. marine-grade stainless steel, engraved plates, composite materials)
- Manufacturing methods such as laser-cut or engraved signage
- Fixing and mounting approaches that minimise seabed disturbance and movement
- Methods to reduce wear from currents, sediment movement and diver interaction
- Legibility, designs and accessibility standards for underwater interpretation
- Maintenance and replacement strategies

17.12.4 The outcomes of these trials should then be incorporated into a central technical guidance resource for dive trail practitioners, ultimately saving time and resources while improving consistency across sites.

17.12.5 Developing best practice for seabed signage would strengthen interpretation quality, improve durability of infrastructure, and ensure that volunteers are supported with clear, expert-led guidance when delivering underwater heritage interpretation.