Historic England

Historic Wreck Sites at Risk

A Risk Management Toolkit

Summary

A potential cause of harm to an archaeological site or monument is known as a hazard. The effects of a hazard upon archaeological deposits equate to a measure of risk and so 'risk' in this context therefore means uncertainty of outcome. Where assessed, an Historic Wreck Site will be considered to be at high risk if there is a significant likelihood of loss or further loss of historical, archaeological or artistic significance from it within the foreseeable future.

Historic England recognises that natural processes, such as erosion, cannot always be prevented. Historic Wreck Sites that are subject to such forces will not be considered at risk if they are subject to a planned programme of managed change, recording and investigation.

This document, comprising an update to a Risk Management Handbook published in 2008, describes a methodology to be adopted by Historic England, contract archaeologists, Licensees and others engaged in the risk assessment and risk management of England's Historic Wreck Sites.

The document also forms part of a wider initiative to assess the state of all designated historic assets and to understand their current management patterns, their likely future trajectory and how that can be influenced to ensure that their significance is maintained for both present and future generations.

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Front cover:
Historic England archaeologist undertaking ultrasonic thickness measurements on the hull of the Protected submarine A1 in the Solent.

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Introduction

‘Today, shipwrecks and underwater ruins are coming under increasing threat. While professional equipment and a high-level of training are necessary to undertake underwater excavations, this heritage is no longer beyond the reach of treasure hunters. In addition to dispersal, recovered objects also face the risk of destruction owing to the lack of conservation.’

Source: UNESCO, Underwater Cultural Heritage

England’s protected wrecks, consisting of late Middle Bronze Age cargoes to early 20th Century submarines, survive in a range of environments and to varying degrees. Quantification of a wreck’s survival is a point-in-time measurement of the current state or condition of the wreck relative to some former state and reflects the cumulative effects of all the natural and human processes that have operated upon it.

If survival is taken to provide a measure of how a wreck site has fared to date, then risk must be regarded as the measure of how a wreck site is likely to fare in the future. Therefore, the principle that risk concerns the chance or possibility of future danger loss or other adverse consequences as a result of natural processes or the intentional or unintentional actions of individuals or groups applies. Expressed as a simple formula, risk can be defined as ‘probability x consequence’. Accordingly, Figure 1 shows a general and highly simplistic model of risk management to provide a background for the risk assessment methodology proposed within this document.

For Historic England, managing risk involves foreseeing areas of uncertainty and planning appropriate countermeasures consistent with our intention to study and assess the risks to historic assets and to devise appropriate responses By quantifying and analysing the condition of historic wreck sites we will be able to identify elements that are at risk and determine priorities for future actions.

Three broad factors have been considered when assessing the risk to the historic wreck sites:

Condition: the current condition of the wreck, whether in optimal condition, generally satisfactory, generally unsatisfactory or having extensive problems

Vulnerability: an assessment of the natural and anthropogenic influences on the site

Trajectory: an assessment of the management regime and whether the monument condition is improving, remaining stable or experiencing unmanaged or inappropriate decline.

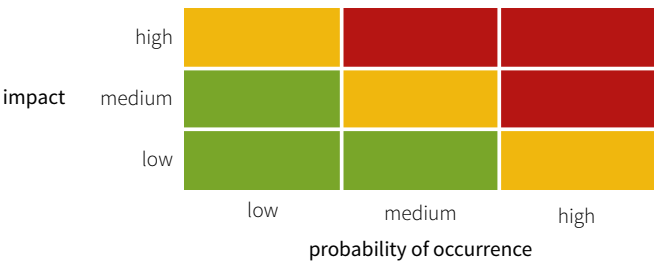

Figure 1
Schematic representation of risk in relation to impact (consequence) and the probability of occurrence. Low risk is zoned green; medium risk is zoned yellow; and high risk is zoned red.

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Historic England recognises that natural processes, such as erosion, cannot always be prevented. Protected Wreck Sites that are subject to such forces will not be considered at risk if they are subject to a planned programme of managed change, recording and investigation.

England's historic environment is particularly rich and varied; it is our legacy to the future. If we are to pass on this fragile heritage to future generations, the current level of risk to Protected Wreck Sites must be especially reduced. Historic England believes that no wreck site legally protected in the public interest should be at high risk.

This toolkit therefore describes a methodology to be adopted by Historic England, contract archaeologists, Licensees and others engaged in the risk assessment and risk management of England's historic wreck sites. This document also forms part of a wider programme to assess the state of all designated historic assets and to understand their current management patterns, their likely future trajectory and how that can be influenced to ensure that their significance is maintained for both present and future generations.

1 Condition Assessment

The assessment of risk to historic wreck sites (as interpreted here) is based primarily on current fabric condition and on change over time (observed and anticipated 'condition trend'). Such assessment is achieved using two criteria: a 'decision-tree' approach and a 'sieve' method, which uses factorization of recorded attributes. The 'decision-tree' method is illustrated in section 6. The 'sieve' method may be generated from data entered onto a risk assessment recording form (most likely created in MS Access).

For each wreck site, information is gauged against a set of standard terms within 34 data fields. This enables assessment within a necessarily subjective process in a systematic, controlled and supportable manner.

Each wreck record can be displayed through a series of eight tabs, which group the fields together under the following headings:

- location
- type
- local factors
- condition (fabric)
- condition (amenity value)
- management
- risk assessment
- notes

The recording fields are listed in Table 1 in the order in which they should appear on a recording database; and the category band definitions and coding scheme for each attribute are provided in section 5, with explanatory text as appropriate.

The assessment of risk to an historic wreck site is also reflected by an assessment of its percentage survival (relative to its former state). Ideally, survival should be measured with reference to the original characteristics of a vessel prior to its loss, but in practical archaeological terms this is usually impossible to determine in all but a few cases. For example the galley frigate *Royal Anne* foundered in a storm in 1721 en route from Spithead to Barbados (Camidge *et al* 2006, 38). It may reasonably be assumed that she was fully armed and laden for such a voyage and yet none of the vessels' hull survives; rather the site only comprises a general distribution of artefacts. Contemporary salvage of the *Royal Anne* and modern recovery of objects means that there has been a high percentage of material loss from the site. The site can be considered to be at risk because further loss of material cannot be sustained.

This is to be contrasted with the Holland No. 5 submarine, which lies off East Sussex. Here, the submarine foundered while under tow in 1912 and diver survey indicates that the vessel is virtually complete and sealed (McCartney and Beattie-Edwards 2007). It is therefore likely that all internal fittings are in place and in a good condition. The percentage material loss to the Holland No. 5 is therefore very low because <80% of the vessel survives, despite the theft of the boats' bow cap in 2010.

2 Measuring Vulnerability

Our heritage is valuable but vulnerable and all archaeological sites and monuments are at risk from a wide range of agencies, both natural and human. To a certain extent the degree of risk to individual wreck sites can be predicted or modelled, particularly as risk can broadly be equated with the concept of 'vulnerability'. For the purposes of this document vulnerability is defined as a damaging process either already at work or likely to occur.

The principal vulnerability (ie the principal damaging process) is recorded for each wreck site using a coding system adapted from English Heritage's former Monument Protection Programme. These codes are grouped into the following five generic categories:

- inshore fisheries
- natural processes
- socio-economic activity
- other causes of damage
- no known threat

These categories provide a systematic quantification of the historic and archaeological resource, and by setting benchmarks for the monitoring of future change.

It is also important to note that research has indicated that recorded benthic species and biological habitats act as proxies to provide information on prevailing abiotic environmental conditions at wreck sites. The recording of such data is encouraged so as to compliment archaeological information and to inform risk management. See section 9 Where to Get Advice for more advice on Benthic ecological surveys.

3 Recording fields

The following Recording fields are intended to assist an assessor into making objective judgments relating to the condition of a wreck site. This procedure will enable an impartial assessment of the risk of loss or further loss of the special historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest of the site.

field number	field name	comment
location		
1	wreck (or site) name	default: unknown
2	SI number	text (where applicable)
3	NRHE or UKHO UID	number
4	HE territory	Select from List 1
5	latitude (WGS84)	number
6	longitude (WGS84)	number
7	restricted area (size)	number
8	principal land use	select from List 2
type		
9	class listing	use Maritime Craft Thesaurus
10	period	select from List 3
11	status	select from List 4
setting		
12	licensee	text
13	nominated archaeologist	text
14	principal ownership category	select from List 5
15	seabed owner	select from List 6
16	navigational administrative responsibility	default: Nil
17	environmental designations	select from List 7
18	seabed sediment	select from List 8
19	energy	high, medium or low (H, M or L)

Table 1
Recording fields.

field number	field name	comment
condition (fabric)		
20	survival	select from List 9
21	fabric (overall condition)	select from List 10
22	fabric (condition trend)	select from List 11
23	fabric (principal vulnerability)	select from List 12
condition (amenity value)		
24	amenity value quality: visibility	select from List 13
25	amenity value quality: physical accessibility	select from List 14
26	amenity value quality: intellectual accessibility	select from List 15
management		
27	management action	select from List 16
28	management prescription	select from List 17
risk assessment		
29	data source	select from List 18
30	date of last visit	dd/mm/yyyy
31	risk assessment date	dd/mm/yyyy
32	compiler	text
33	risk: field assessment	high, medium or low (H, M or L)
notes		
34	notes	text

4 Recording Definitions and Codes

List 1 Historic England region

Select **one** of the following regions:

East Midlands
East of England
London
North East
North West
South East
South West
West Midlands
Yorkshire & the Humber

Figure 2
Historic England regions.

List 2 Principal land use

Select **one** of the following codes:

Coastland 1	marine
Coastland 2	inter-tidal
Coastland 3	above high water
Coastland 4	saltmarsh
Coastland 5	cliff and related features
Coastland 6	other

Source:
http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/oasis/lists/wordlists.cfm#landuse

List 3 Period

Select **one** of the following to reflect the principal period of use or period of loss, where known:

period	minimum date	maximum date
uncertain	-	-
early prehistoric	-500000	-4000
late prehistoric	-4000	43
Roman	43	410
early medieval	410	1066
medieval	1066	1540
post-medieval	1540	1901
Tudor	1540	1603
Stuart	1603	1714
Hanover	1714	1837
Victorian	1837	1901
modern	1901	3000
pre-WWI	1901	1913
WWI	1914	1918
inter-war	1919	1938
WWII	1939	1945
post-WWII	1945	3000

List 4 Status

Select **one** of the following to reflect the legal status of the wreck site:

A	Protection of Wrecks Act 1973
B	Ancient Monuments & Archaeological Areas Act 1979
C	Protection of Military Remains Act 1986
D	non-designated wreck site
E	unknown

List 5 Principal ownership category

Select **one** of the following to reflect the principal ownership of the wreck:

A	private (individual)
B	private (trust or company)
C	Crown / MoD
D	Government or agency
E	other (select this if you do not know or qualify nature of ownership in notes field)

List 6 Seabed owner

Select **one** of the following to reflect the ownership of the seabed or to identify an organization with powers to control local seabed activities:

A	Crown Estate
B	Private ownership
C	Public ownership
D	other (qualify in notes field)
E	unknown

List 7 Environmental designations

Select **one** of the following to reflect the co-location of the site:

A	MCZ – Marine Conservation Zone
B	RAMSAR – wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention
C	SAC – areas that have been given special protection under the European Union's Habitats Directive
D	SPA – strictly protected sites classified in accordance with Article 4 of the EC Directive on the conservation of wild birds
E	SSSI – the country's very best wildlife and geological sites
F	MNR – Marine Nature Reserve
G	OTHER (qualify in notes field)
H	NONE no environmental designation

List 8 Seabed sediment

Select **one or more** of the following to reflect the principal seabed sediment*:

S	sand
cS	clayey sand
mS	muddy sand
zS	silty sand
sC	sandy clay
sM	sandy mud
sZ	sandy silt
C	clay
M	mud
Z	silt
G	gravel
mG	muddy gravel
msG	muddy sandy gravel
sG	sandy gravel
gM	gravelly mud
gmS	gravelly muddy sand
gS	gravelly sand
(g)M	slightly gravelly mud
(g)sM	slightly gravelly sandy mud
(g)mS	slightly gravelly muddy sand
(g)S	slightly gravelly sand
OT	other (qualify in notes field)

* Sediment particle size analysis (PSA) should be used to objectively determine sediment type

List 9 Survival

Select **one** of the following codes to reflect the percentage material loss (PML), and therefore survival, of the wreck site:

very good	PML <20%	(survival >80%)
good	PML 2l-40%	(survival 6l-80%)
medium	PML 4l-60%	(survival 4l-60%)
poor	PML 6l-80%	(survival 2l-40%)
very poor	PML >80%	(survival <20%)
unknown	-	-

List 10 Fabric (overall condition)

Select **one** of the following codes:

A	Optimal ie the best we can realistically expect to achieve: there is very little or no erosion, deterioration or other damage
B	Generally satisfactory but with minor localised problems: there may be some localised erosion or deterioration, typically affecting up to 15% of the monument. It does not constitute serious damage and is an acceptable feature of the monument. No management action is required provided it does not greatly exceed its current extent
C	Generally satisfactory but with significant localised problems: more significant damage is apparent. The damage is localised but may affect up to 25% of the monument
D	Generally unsatisfactory with major localised problems: severe localised damage, such as part collapse of a structure, erosion, deterioration and/or unauthorized activity
E	Extensive significant problems: there is widespread damage which may affect 50% or more of the monument. The damage could be caused by one or more factors, such as erosion and deterioration affecting structures, leading to severe structural problems and/or collapse
F	Unknown. This code might apply in cases where it has not yet been possible to visit the site to ascertain condition, or when the site has been buried by sediment, or when assessment has been made using geophysical survey or other evidence requiring field verification

List 11 Fabric (condition trend)

Condition trend is an assessment of the frequency duration and scale of damage factors noted in the previous section.

Note: If overall condition is unknown (F), you cannot assess trend, so select D.

Select **one** of the following codes:

A	Improving: there is a visible improvement in the condition of the monument since the last inspection, typically as a result of ongoing management intervention
B	Declining: the condition of the monument is deteriorating as a result of ongoing damage, causing loss of fabric which might be gradual or rapid
C	Stable: the monument shows no sign of active deterioration either recent or midterm. The condition of a monument with localised problems such as erosion is stable, provided the damage remains constant
D	Unknown: it is not possible to assess the trend in condition of the fabric as a field assessment has not been made recently or is not known. More detailed evaluation may be required to make an assessment on condition trend

List 12 Fabric (principal vulnerability)

Select **one or more** of the following codes that apply to reflect the principal threat(s) to the site:

ANGL	recreational angling
BAIT	bait-digging (may have potentially damaging impacts on historic environment interests)
FISH	fishing ground
POT	potting (is a selective fishing method. A lobster pot and a crab pot are the same, but for the bait)
SHELL	an area of seabed for which shellfishery rights are granted by a Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA) to a particular body/co-operative
TRAWL	trawling
BIO	biological decay
C_ERO	coastal erosion
CLIM	climate change (qualify in notes field)
ECOL	benthic ecology
MECH	mechanical degradation
S_ERO	seabed erosion
NAT	natural decline
ACC	authorized access
ANCH	anchorage
DEV	development (eg offshore renewable power generation infrastructure)
DIVE	unlicensed / un-authorized diving
DUMP	dumping ground
DRED	capital or maintenance dredging
LICE	licensed aggregate extraction area
LINE	pipeline/cable route
MIL	military practice area
SALV	clearance / salvage operations
TRANS	transportation route
NKT	no known threat
OTH	other (qualify in notes field)

List 13 Amenity value quality (visibility)

Select **one** of the following codes:

A	substantial above-bed structural remains that are highly visible and 'legible' without further information
B	limited above-bed structural remains and finds scatter with limited visibility and only 'legible' with further interpretative information
C	not visible: only buried remains survive
D	unknown

List 14 Amenity value quality (physical accessibility)

Select **one** of the following codes:

A	Full: no restrictions on access and no impediments to appreciation of the wreck
B	Restricted: access permitted but interference and entry prohibited
C	Restricted: access subject to licence or other authorization
D	Nil: access prohibited
E	unknown

List 15 Amenity value quality (intellectual accessibility)

Select **one** of the following codes:

A	Developed interpretative scheme on, or close to, site comprising at least two or more of following elements: interpretation / information board, leaflet, display/ exhibition, guided tour, audio tour, guidebook and reconstruction.
B	Limited interpretation on or close to site with only one element: eg interpretation/information board, leaflet, display/exhibition, guided tour, audio tour, guidebook and reconstruction
C	no interpretation
D	unknown

List 16 Management action

Select **one** of the following codes:

A	no action required (routine monitoring by the licensee / archaeological contractor)
B	action implemented
C	action identified / agreed but not implemented
D	action to be identified / agreed

List 17 Management prescription

Select **one or more** of the following codes that apply:

A	formal management agreement
B	Marine Heritage Partnership Agreement
C	HE Grant Assistance/Commission.
D	Local Heritage Initiative
E	management agreement/grant funded by Local Authority or other body eg Natural England (qualify in notes field)
F	other grant scheme (eg HLF/partnership funding) or development proposal with explicit consideration of (and beneficial to) historic environment of the wreck site (qualify in notes field)
G	HE to influence local plan policies/liaise with local authority planners
H	HE to liaise with owner/other stakeholders concerned to improve management regime
I	refer to DCMS to review/consider de-designation
J	refer to DCMS to review/consider extension or reduction of restricted area
K	condition survey required.
L	more regular condition monitoring eg increase inspections and monitoring (qualify in notes field)
M	no management prescription required
N	other (qualify in notes field)

List 18 Data source

Select **one** of the following codes:

AS	aerial survey
CA	County Archaeologist
CON	contractor (archaeological)
GEO	geophysical / AUV survey
HARPO	Heritage at Risk Projects Officer
IAM	Inspector of Ancient Monuments
LAC	Local Authority curator
LIC	Licensee
MCA	Maritime and Coastguard Agency (Civil Hydrography Programme)
NOM	nominated archaeologist
OT	other (qualify in notes field)

5 Risk Assessment Methods

The degree of risk to the surviving fabric of an historic wreck site can be assessed using one of two decision support methods. The first method is the 'sieve' method which has been developed for scoring risk and is based on familiarization and completion of the category band definitions and codes presented in the previous Section. The method entails computer-based factorization and analysis of four principal attributes: visibility, fabric condition, fabric condition trend and fabric vulnerability. Provided the relevant data for each of the scored fields in Section 4 is entered on a digital Risk Assessment Recording Form, computer generation of the risk assessment can be automated by requesting the relevant Report.

A second approach, the 'decision-tree' (*see* Figure 3), is based on the known circumstances of the site at the time of the last assessment, knowledge of case-history and predictions for the foreseeable future. By working through the stages in the decision-tree, wreck sites are assessed as being in one of three risk bands: high, medium or low. This outcome is then entered in the relevant field on the Risk Assessment Recording Form.

This approach to risk assessment is dependent on a series of broad assumptions about the relationship between the site's current use and risk, as defined within the decision-tree. Its principal purpose is to act as an aid to professional judgment and to ensure uniformity of decision making amongst assessors. The method is, however, considered to be as objective as possible within the constraints of the reliability of readily accessible information and forecasting. It can be used for either field-based or desk-based assessments. In particular, the method is quick to use and the user rapidly becomes familiar with the questions in the decision-tree to the point where almost immediate and reliable ascription to a risk-band becomes possible.

Finally, once a wreck's risk band has been determined from either the 'sieve' or 'decision-tree' method, attention will be given (in the first instance) to those sites deemed to be at high risk. The target will be to reduce these on a year by year basis through targeted intervention.

The medium risk category will also be monitored since it is at this point that action can be taken to prevent future damage, decay or loss. This is a more desirable strategy than taking remedial action once the damage, decay or loss has already occurred.

When considering these questions you should investigate any management plan and assess its adequacy and implementation,and whether it is leading to a stable or declining wreck site

YES		NO
	1 Does the site comprise completely buried remains?	
Go to 2		Go to 3
	2 Is the site at risk of immenent exposure?	
medium risk		low risk
	3 Is the site affected by unauthorised intrusive activity?	
Go to 4		Go to 5
	4 Is the site buoyed?	
Go to 5		high risk
	5 Are features of special interest subject to physical and/or biological decay?	
high risk		Go to 6 (and add 1 risk level)
	6 Are features of special interest in optimal condition and environment?	
Go to 7		Go to 8
	7 Are features of special interest in a generally satisfactory condition and environment?	
medium risk		high risk
	8 Is the wreck's condition and environment generally satisfactory?	
low risk		medium risk

Once the risk level has been assessed based on condition and vulnerability, go to 9

management
9 Has the owner agreed and accepted a management plan or is there a licensee?
- If yes, deduct one risk factor

trajectory
10 Is the wreck stable? - If yes, deduct one risk factor
Is it in natural decline? - If yes, no impact
Is wreck site under accelerated decline? - If yes, add one risk factor

Figure 3
Risk Decision Tree to be used in conjunction with Category Band Definitions and Codes.

6 Risk Assessment Template Sheet

Wreck/Site Name			
NRHE / UKHO No.	HE Region	Restricted Area	Principal Land Use
Latitude (WGS84)			
Longitude			
Class Listing	Period	Status	
Licensee	Nominated Archaeologist	Principal Ownership Category	
Seabed Owner	Navigational Administrative Responsibility		
Environmental Designations			
Seabed Sediment	Energy		
Survival			
Overall Condition	Condition Trend	Principal Vulnerability	
Amenity Value: visibility			
Amenity Value: physical accessibility	Amenity Value: intellectual accessibility		

Management Action														
Management Prescription	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N

Notes:

Risk is assessed as: **High / Medium / Low**

Data Source		Date & Initials	
Date of previous assessment:		Has an ecological survey been undertaken? Y / N	

7 Annex

Annex to the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage

The UK Government has adopted the Annex (Rules Concerning Activities Directed at Underwater Cultural Heritage) to the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage as being best practice for archaeology. The Annex to the 2001 Convention provides objective standards by which to judge the appropriateness of actions in respect of the underwater cultural heritage and is available from: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/underwater-cultural-heritage/

8 References

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9 Where to Get Advice

Practical advice on assessing and managing risk in relation to historic wreck sites and the conservation management of such sites is available from Historic England and, where applicable, the appropriate Historic England Regional Office (see the Contact pages of Historic England 's website).

Further information and guidance on Maritime Archaeology and Protected Wreck Sites is available from: https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/protected-wreck-sites/

Benthic ecological survey

It is recommended that an ecological survey of a wreck site is undertaken to complement and inform risk management.
See http://www. seasearch.org.uk/ for guidance.

Downloadable data

The Statutory Instruments for current designations are available from the National Archives.
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi

The location of all England's Protected Wreck Sites is available to download as a spatial dataset from the Historic England website.
https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/data-downloads/

Spatial information related to statutory rural designations, including Protected Wreck Sites is available from the Government's Multi-Agency Geographic Information system for the Countryside website.
http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/home.htm

10 Acknowledgements

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