

6306 Cornish ports and harbours; assessing heritage significance, threats, protection and opportunities (4A3.204)

Project Summary

English Heritage have commissioned the Historic Environment Service of Cornwall Council to undertake this project as part of the National Heritage Protection Plan. The project will be delivered in partnership with Cornwall Council's Maritime Section. Work is expected to start in September 2013 and be completed by November 2014.

Ports and harbours make a major contribution to local character and distinctiveness, forming significant landscape features and reflecting the varied history, use and development of maritime settlements, their hinterlands and the sea. As many ports and harbours are still in active use and so continue to develop and require maintenance in the face of natural and anthropogenic forces for change, they form an especially dynamic part of the coastal historic environment resource.

Cornwall Council's Maritime Strategy recognises the historic qualities of ports and harbours as positive assets, essential in enhancing quality of life and attracting tourism, business and innovation that recognise, protect and enhance the maritime environment. The strategy identifies three principal issues which this project will address:

- Resources are required to undertake historic environment assessments, surveys and recording exercises to better understand the significance of heritage assets within ports and harbours and to encourage their appropriate management.
- Marine and maritime heritage assets, including ports and harbours, are susceptible to the impacts of climate change, for example sea-level rise and flooding, so work is required in order to identify the assets at risk, develop a pragmatic policy about their future management and take action to safeguard them.
- Maritime heritage assets are susceptible to cumulative effects of development and industry, but many assets can also be safeguarded through positive development which secures their ongoing use, maintenance and management.

This project aims to establish effective methodologies for assessing the fabric, significance and character of English ports and harbours by using a study of those in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly as a pilot. It involves a rapid assessment of the forces for change affecting Cornwall's ports and harbours and their vulnerability or capability to benefit from change. It then aims to classify the sites according to a range of variables, including topography, scale, key components and current activity levels. A number of ports and harbours will then be selected for further study (including at least one from each class). This more detailed study will comprise historic characterisation of the selected ports and harbours and limited field work at the selected sites.

Outcomes of the project will include a widely disseminated report, a Historic Environment Action Plan for Cornish and Scillonian ports and harbours, management recommendations and a list of those ports and harbours which are candidates for designation. A statement of the methodology developed during the project and a summary of the results will be disseminated to all English local authorities possessing a coastline.

Project End Statement

In September 2013, English Heritage (now Historic England) commissioned the Historic Environment Service of Cornwall Council (now Cornwall Archaeological Unit – CAU) to undertake a project to assess heritage significance, threats, protection and opportunities for Cornish ports and harbours.

The project, which is now completed, aimed to establish effective methodologies for assessing the fabric, significance and character of English ports and harbours by using a study of those in Cornwall and Scilly as a pilot.

The project was carried out in four stages:

Stage 1: This stage was an assessment of the whole ports and harbours resource in Cornwall and Scilly; it involved a rapid review of forces for change, previous work and sources. A long list of ports and harbours was compiled and transformed into an outline classification of sites using a number of variables — types of use, topography, chronology, scale, key components, current activity levels, associated settlement, and condition. This was then reduced into nine classes by a process of rationalisation: Beach; Civic provision, Commercial, Fishing, Industrial, Leisure, Local trading, Military and Multi-purpose.

Models for vulnerability and capacity to benefit from change were produced for each class and their significance assessed based on Historic England's Conservation Principles. Those classes most at risk and those most likely to benefit from change were then identified and a long list of potential sites for further study was produced. From this list 15 sites were selected for individual study and an updated project design was prepared for Stage 2.

Stage 2: This stage comprised further study of the 15 selected ports and harbours: Bude, Charlestown, Duckpool, Fowey, Hayle, Higher Town Quay and Old Quay, St Martin's (Scilly), Kilcobben Cove, Lerryn, Newlyn, Penberth Cove, Penzance, Portreath, St Mary's Harbour (Scilly), Truro and Wacker Quay. A GIS database was set up and rapid characterisation was undertaken of each port/harbour at a scale of 1:2,500. Fieldwork was undertaken to identify typical components, identified in a gazetteer, and then individual reports were produced for each port/harbour.

Stage 3: During this stage the results were collated and reported on; products include the main project report, a summary of methodology and results for other local authorities to use, a PowerPoint presentation and a Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP) for Cornwall and Scilly's ports and harbours.

Stage 4: This stage was concerned with securing protection outcomes. A gazetteer long list of candidate sites and features was produced for consideration by Historic England's Designation Department; the main focus being on the ports and harbours selected for study in Stage 2. The Gazetteer has been submitted to HE's Designation Department for further consideration in discussion with Cornwall Council. In addition, following production of the HEAP and consultation with the LPA, a series of management recommendations was drawn up.