



Maritime Heritage Trust **Your Vessel; Their Future** *How to engage young people with their maritime heritage*



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Introduction

“It is difficult to overstate the importance of engaging young people with maritime heritage. A few vessels and museums have excellent activities but the vast majority of vessel projects have little on offer. In Maritime Heritage Trust we were therefore keen to develop user friendly advice on how to remedy this and gratefully acknowledge the donation from The Lois Cumbers Charitable Foundation which has enabled us to fund this project. We are hugely grateful to SS Shieldhall and Helen II for agreeing to be case studies, and taking part so enthusiastically, and to other heritage vessels that supplied comments or material. Thank you also to Judy Harrison, JCH Marine Consulting, (jch.marineconsulting@gmail.com) for her advice and Conwy Culture Centre and Southampton Libraries for hosting and supporting our events. Our consultants, Keystone Heritage have been excellent throughout and risen to every organisational challenge. Lastly I thank my MHT colleagues and in particular Trevor Godbold, Hannah Hurford, John Evans and Maddie Phillips for all their help. We hope it will be useful.”

Henry Cleary, formerly Chair, MHT



Keystone Heritage

Keystone Heritage are learning freelancers Lorna Kernahan and Sarah Pevely. Based in North Wales since 2017, together we have over forty years combined experience in the heritage sector. Keystone Heritage's mission is all about championing heritage and bringing history to life. We inspire people of all ages through hands on, interactive workshops, projects, resources and short films. We specialise in creating resources and workshops for schools both in person and online, creating cross-curricular activities which emphasise developing pupils' skills and knowledge. We encourage people to discover and explore their past, taking pride and ownership of their own heritage. We also specialise in researching ways that museums and heritage sites can engage schools with their organisation. www.keystoneheritage.org.uk



Why is it so important to engage young people with heritage vessels?

The aim of this report is to highlight the importance of engaging young people with heritage vessels and to highlight how this can be achieved. Young people can benefit from these visits for many reasons including learning the importance of their local history, developing new skills and learning about job opportunities and wider community awareness. By engaging with young people vessels can reach a wider audience and inspire future generations to support their local heritage vessel.

“Introducing children to local maritime heritage is a great way of enabling young people to develop a sense of place and pride in the area they call home. The extended benefit of engaging children and their families with a local heritage vessel helps to embed a vessel at the heart of a community, bringing benefits to both the local population and to the vessel. I would encourage any team responsible for the restoration or preservation of a heritage vessel to think creatively about how to embed the vessel into the lives of local young people to bring the past alive, and connect the present community with the relevance of their maritime roots.”

Judy Harrison, freelance maritime charity consultant

Summary of project

During August and September 2025, three youth engagement activity days were run with Steamship Shieldhall in Southampton and one with the Helen II in Conwy. The aim was to:

- Discuss the vessel's current youth engagement offer
- To make links with local youth groups and schools to organise visits to the vessels
- To work with vessels to create activities for young people if needed
- To support and evaluate activities with the vessels
- To learn from the process to share best practice

The outcome of these visits helped to raise awareness with local schools and groups over the benefits of visiting heritage vessels as well as give the vessels an opportunity to test activities and improve community links.

“It benefited our group because it was educational, a new experience... (helped towards) badge work, it was something different to take part in...not an everyday opportunity for the young people...”

Scout leader, 29th Immaculata Scout Group leader

“Gives opportunities for exciting learning to children who may not be able to access it.”

Teacher quote Abbotswood Junior School

“Pupils learned about the history of a local project and vessel...children enjoyed it and learnt about local history. Good Curriculum for Wales opportunities. Children learnt a lot.”

Teacher quote Ysgol Cynfran



Case studies summary

- Steamship Shieldhall, Southampton
- The Helen II, Conwy
- Summary of lessons learned





The Steamship Shieldhall, Southampton

“The reasons for engaging young people are multi-faceted, but the common theme is funding. We’re all dependent on our local community to buy tickets, hire for alongside events, donations, legacies and for grants we need to show community engagement. The more we can bring people on to the ship for other activities, schools, emergency services etc. the more we spread the word that a) we exist, b) it’s interesting ...”

Paul Smith, Steamship Shieldhall



3 groups visited Steamship Shieldhall during August and September 2025. 16 young people aged 10-14 from 29th Immaculata Scout Group, 13 young people from Girlguiding Hampshire and 28 Year 5 pupils from Abbotswood Junior School.

All groups took part in a carousel of activities including line throwing, knot tying, the boatswain (bosun’s) chair, tug of war, investigating the bridge, investigation of the boiler room and using the fire hoses.



This was a selection of feedback from the young people who visited:

- *I learned a lot, especially about the navigation equipment on Shieldhall.*
- *I liked throwing the ropes and trying to hit the pole.*
- *I have learnt that even if you pull the rope which was doing the friction thing with one person, you still won’t be able to pull it against four people!*
- *They “enjoyed practising the things crew did on board”.*
- *I feel like I would get to explore the world more (reason for wanting to volunteer).*



After the visits Paul Smith and Phil Stehpens reflected on the activities and responded with:

Our challenge is to have the resources to seek out groups wanting to visit and to tie that to the curriculum for schools. Hands on activities were definitely scored higher...Need to think about making the Bridge session more engaging for the younger groups . It is a challenge thinking of activities which keep the young people engaged and enjoying themselves...Combining youth training with a sailing day does allow them to see the ship actually working.

From observation, discussions and evaluation the following recommendations for the Steamship Shieldhall activities were highlighted:

- Groups wanted to have more emphasis on the history of the ship.
- As Paul discussed groups wanted more hands on activities in the bridge alongside explanations.
- Groups wanted an explanation of the different roles people would have on the ship.
- Some children wanted challenges set and a guided tour of the different aspects of the ship.





The Helen II, Conwy

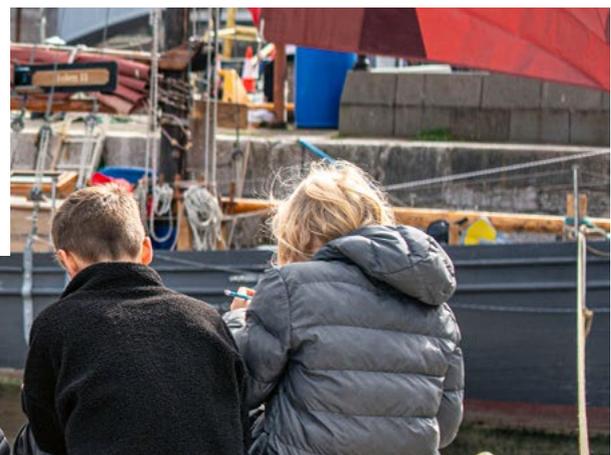
"I think that it is important to involve young people with heritage vessels, so that they understand how important they were in developing the modern world. To make them aware that every continent was discovered and opened up by wooden vessels under sail, also the importance of fishing as a source of food without any electronics or mechanical assistance."

Ronald Loveday, Helen II

In September 2025 24 Year 5/6 (9-11 year olds) from Ysgol Cynfran visited the Helen II. They took part in a talk at the side of the boat about the different parts of the boat, knot tying, tug of war and sketching. The original aim had been to take the young people onto the vessel but unfortunately due to time constraints this was not possible.

This was a selection of feedback from the young people who visited:

- *I now know more parts of the boat.*
- *They learnt how to tie knots and how long it had taken to rebuild the Helen.*
- *Benefits of the visit included team work, well being and skills.*
- *It was a good Curriculum for Wales opportunity.*
- *Knowledge of the volunteers was one of the best parts of the visit.*

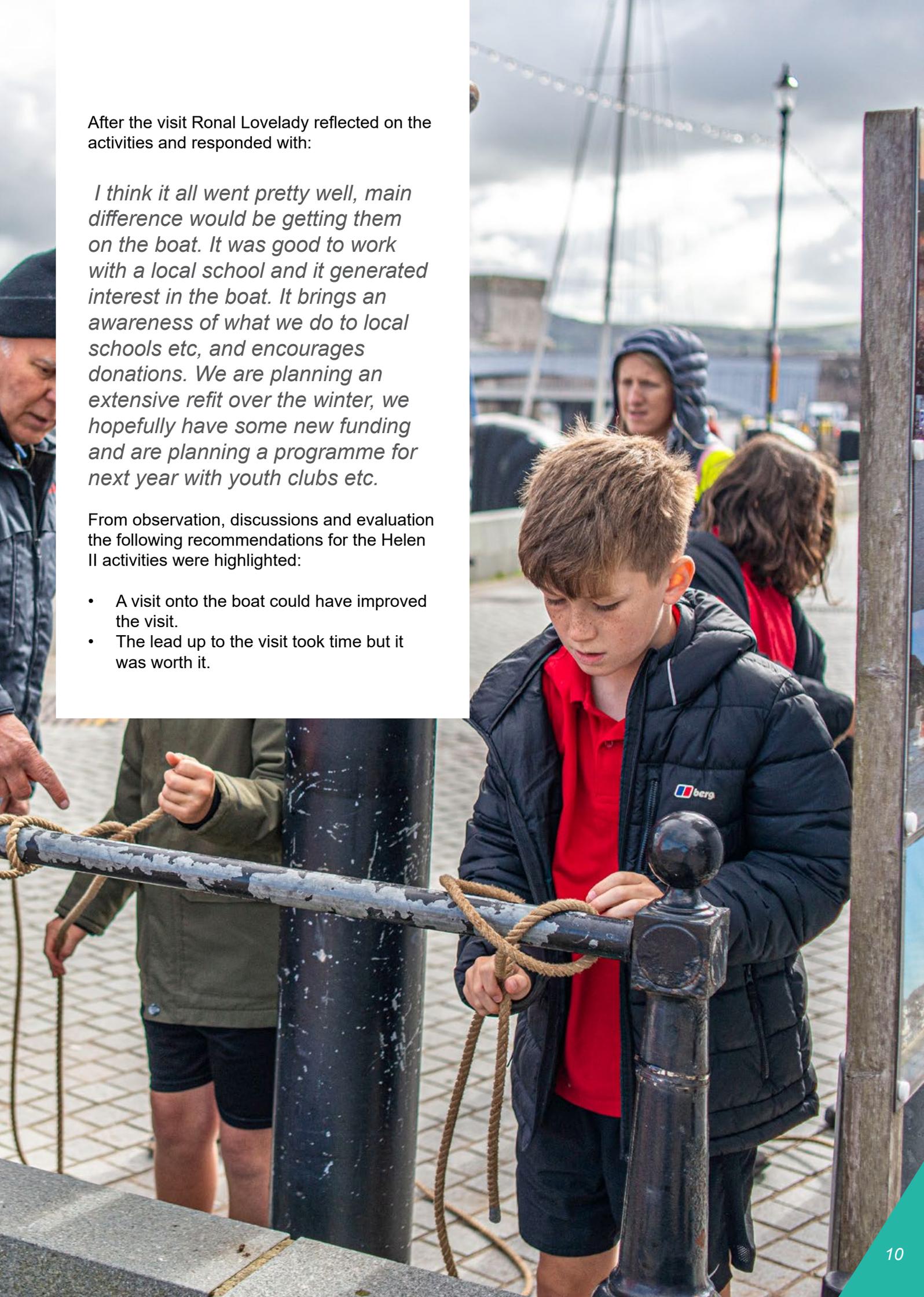


After the visit Ronal Lovelady reflected on the activities and responded with:

I think it all went pretty well, main difference would be getting them on the boat. It was good to work with a local school and it generated interest in the boat. It brings an awareness of what we do to local schools etc, and encourages donations. We are planning an extensive refit over the winter, we hopefully have some new funding and are planning a programme for next year with youth clubs etc.

From observation, discussions and evaluation the following recommendations for the Helen II activities were highlighted:

- A visit onto the boat could have improved the visit.
- The lead up to the visit took time but it was worth it.



Summary of lessons learned

Visit:

- The hands on activities were the most successful. Activities with long periods of talking were the least successful.
- If a vessel has the option of a sailing, a wet weather contingency plan needs to be in place. This should be stated clearly when a group books a visit due to the cost of transport.
- Youth groups e.g. scouts/guides usually have their own transport so no extra funding is required for this.
- If a vessel does not have an undercover area or lunch space, this needs to be stated clearly when a group books.

Administration:

- Youth groups required a risk assessment but as long as there were enough leaders on the visit a DBS was not required (from these youth groups). This needs to be checked at the start of the booking process.
- Vessels need to check in advance with their current insurance provider that they cover the activities being undertaken.
- If offering a pre-visit for teachers this should be undertaken at least a month in advance to allow time for the risk assessment to be processed, especially if on the water.



Recommendations

- Sharing best practice
- Linking with the local community
- Sharing volunteer opportunities
- Marketing



Recommendations

Sharing best practice

- Vessels should look for ways to share best practice around what has worked well in terms of marketing and sharing information with local communities. This could also take the form of asking vessels who do this well to share their ideas and best practice. A possible example would be to create a best practice sharing newsletter/email update from vessels.

Linking with the local community

- Looking for ways to link to the local community helps to share information about vessels activities. From this project local libraries are willing to host a table/information sharing event and are keen to work together especially if the library has links to the vessel's history. Vessels could also look to tap into local school networks, contacting a local school for advice would support this.

Sharing volunteer opportunities

- From consultation over half the people spoken to were interested to hear about volunteering on heritage vessels. Vessels should also find ways to promote their volunteering opportunities. This could be linked to the above promotion at local community venues as well as investing in marketing. Simple ways to promote volunteering would be to create a poster to go up in the local library and/or community centre and share on local social media pages which reach local people. Young people also expressed an interest in volunteering, this could be another way to engage local schools through work placements and work experience.

Marketing

- The Maritime Heritage Trust undertakes to look for ways to increase the marketing of opportunities and activities. This could be through recruiting an individual with marketing experience, linking up with local press and community magazines or looking for funding to create a Maritime Heritage Trust marketing campaign and to provide support to vessels where needed. Funding this will obviously need to be a consideration. This is something that Heritage Harbours might wish to consider. For Heritage Harbours see <https://maritimeheritage.org.uk/heritage-harbours/about-heritage-harbours>



Best Practice

Information from a selection of vessels who already offer youth visits



Best Practice

Information from a selection of vessels who already offer youth visits

Vessel	Who they engage with	What the offer is	Cost	Resources (if any)
SS Shieldhall Experience the golden age of steam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people including schools • Uniformed organisations • Young carers • Emergency Services • Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Experience Days which include a short harbour trip and non trip visits • Short excursion, including visits to the bridge, engine room and boiler room 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free youth visits • Sailings from £39 per adult, £16 per child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of the ship • Videos • Ship tour photos • Technical information
The Danny A steamship experience with a unique story, River Weaver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people • Schools • Families • LGBTQIA+ young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools programme for KS1 and KS2 • Hands-on activities, treasure hunts, teddy bear hunts, roleplay, maths (problem solving), art and well being activities • Secondary Schools-Careers in maritime, importance of maritime in region, Heritage and maritime engineering, volunteering, life skills, projects. • Family cruises and activity days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £120 for half day school visit • Family cruise tickets £10 adult, £5per child, babe-in-arms free • £55-65 for a selection of different public cruises per person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maths and poetry activities • Presentations in schools about river history • Danny history

Vessel	Who they engage with	What the offer is	Cost	Resources (if any)
<p>SS Great Britain</p> <p>The ship that changed the world!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools- KS1, KS2 and KS3, 4 and 5 Home educators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careers Guided tours Self-guided visits - treasure hunts/ trails 1 hour classroom based workshops: KS1 and KS2- workshops around Brunel, Victorians at sea, Passenger Investigation for years 5 and 6 KS3- Passenger Investigation and Self guided trail with a bag of resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £60 per workshop (1 hour) £20 for a guided tour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downloadable resources including historic passenger diaries, colouring sheets and wordsearches, newspaper articles, stories, art and design, STEM activities Loan boxes Videos
<p>The Matthew of Bristol</p> <p>Learn about Bristol's maritime history</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools - KS1, KS2 and KS3 General public Public trips and private hire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 hour sessions with a sailing trip around the harbour and a talk/Q&A 1 hour static sessions, tour of the ship and a talk/Q&A Talks cover: The Matthew's voyage of 1497, Tudor life at sea, 15th century sailing, 18th century pirates and connections with Bristol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Per 1 hour session: sessions with sailing = £260 static sessions = £175-£200 Harbour trips (45 minutes to 4 hours) £14 to £45 per adult, £11.50 to £42.50 per child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Available to all: 10 downloadable detailed factsheets about parts and operations of the ship Visitor information guide A cross-curricular (online) learning resource

Organising a school visit



Organising a school visit

Visits to heritage vessels give children an experience they cannot get anywhere else and this is a key selling point to schools. This was highlighted in the evaluation from the groups who visited Steamship Shieldhall and the Helen II. The hands-on activities provided were the most successful as these created a very memorable experience and inspired the young people. Group leaders commented on the importance of engaging young people with their local vessels, as these vessels are part of their local history and heritage. Pupils were able to see the experience and passions of the volunteers first hand and this was inspirational. From visits like these a seed of interest will grow and passing this on will help preserve heritage vessels for the future.
Keystone Heritage

A school would want to visit a heritage vessel for a number of reasons. It fits with the curriculum and their objective to study local history. It also fits in with developing careers and engaging with their local community. A visit to a heritage vessel also allows pupils to develop key skills of investigation, historical enquiry and teamwork.

This section details how a vessel might go about organising a school visit from preparing an offer, contacting a school and ensuring relevant documentation is in place. It also includes examples of links to the curriculum and a tick list to help vessels consider what they need in place when organising a visit.

There are three decision trees to help support vessels.

Preparing an offer

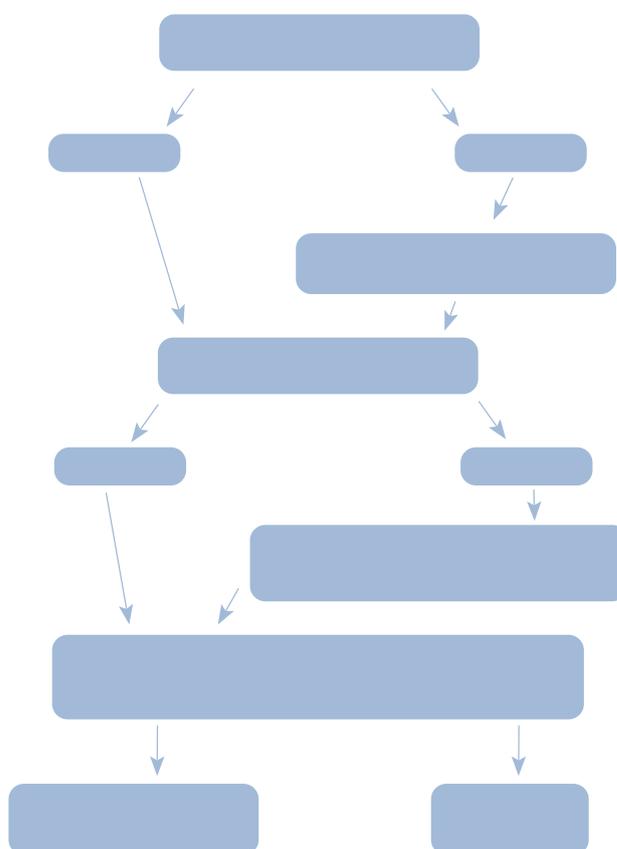
This decision tree supports vessels to think about what their offer might entail and how they might go about designing activities for groups. If there is no offer yet, contacting a few local schools for a conversation and support in piloting activities is an option.

Contacting schools

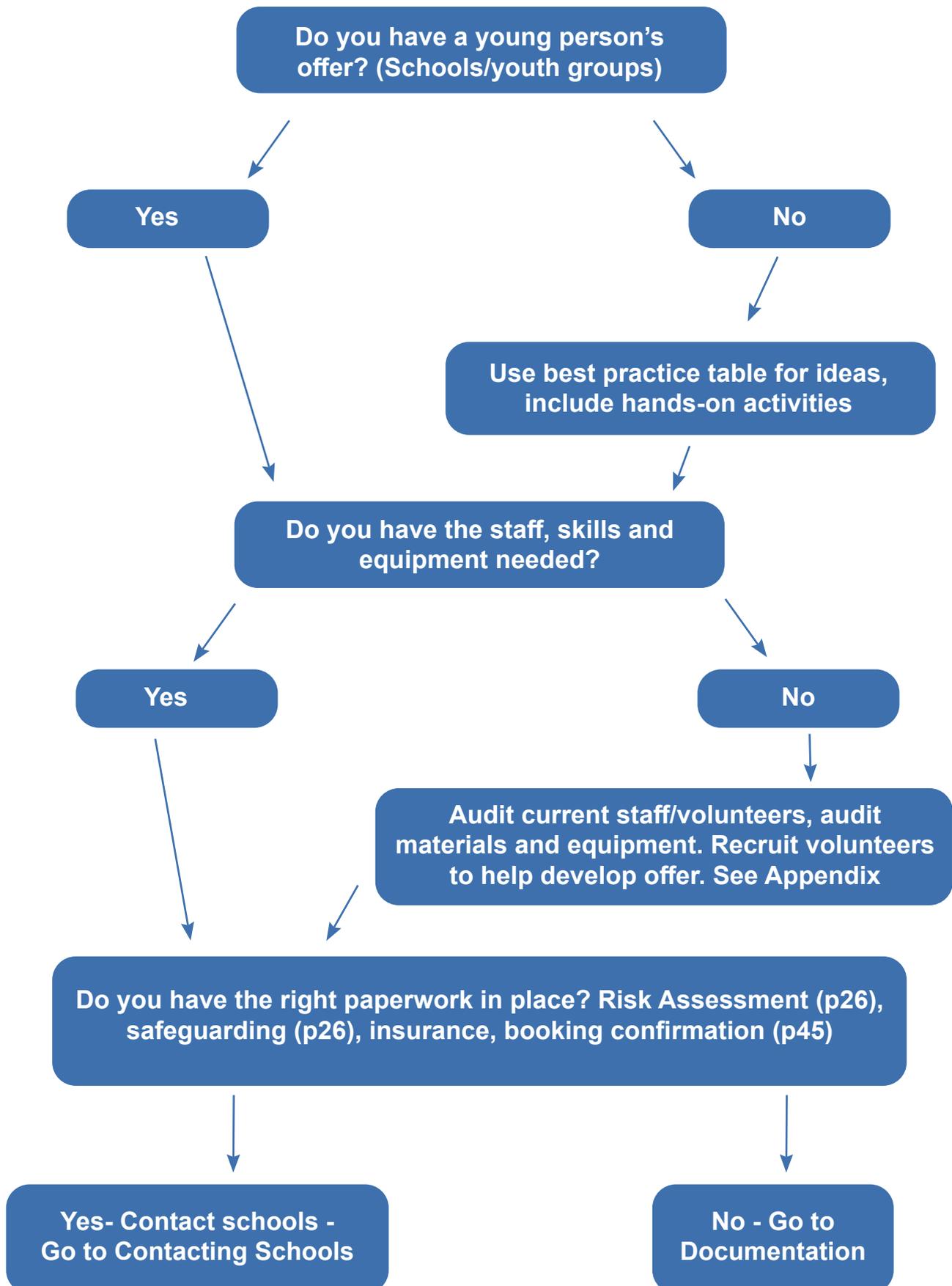
This decision tree helps support vessels to contact schools. Schools should be approached via different channels. If an offer is in place this could include sending an email to the school office with a marketing flyer or special offers to encourage new schools. Assemblies are also another way to make links with schools. Creating a database of school contact details to send marketing would help to send regular information. Emailing schools individually has more success as a bulk mailout can send emails to junk mail.

Documentation

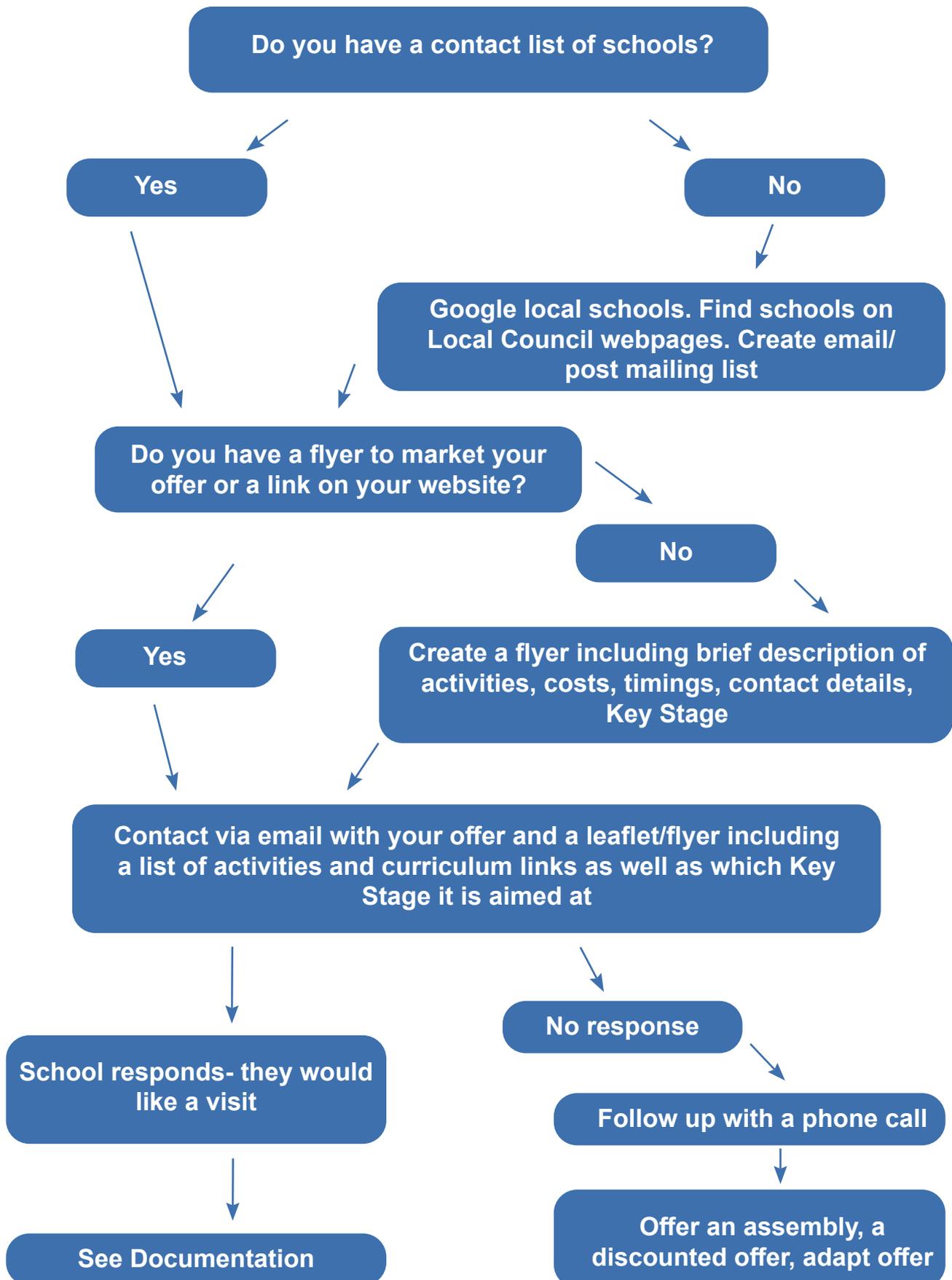
This decision tree helps support vessels to think about what documentation needs to be in place before a visit is organised.



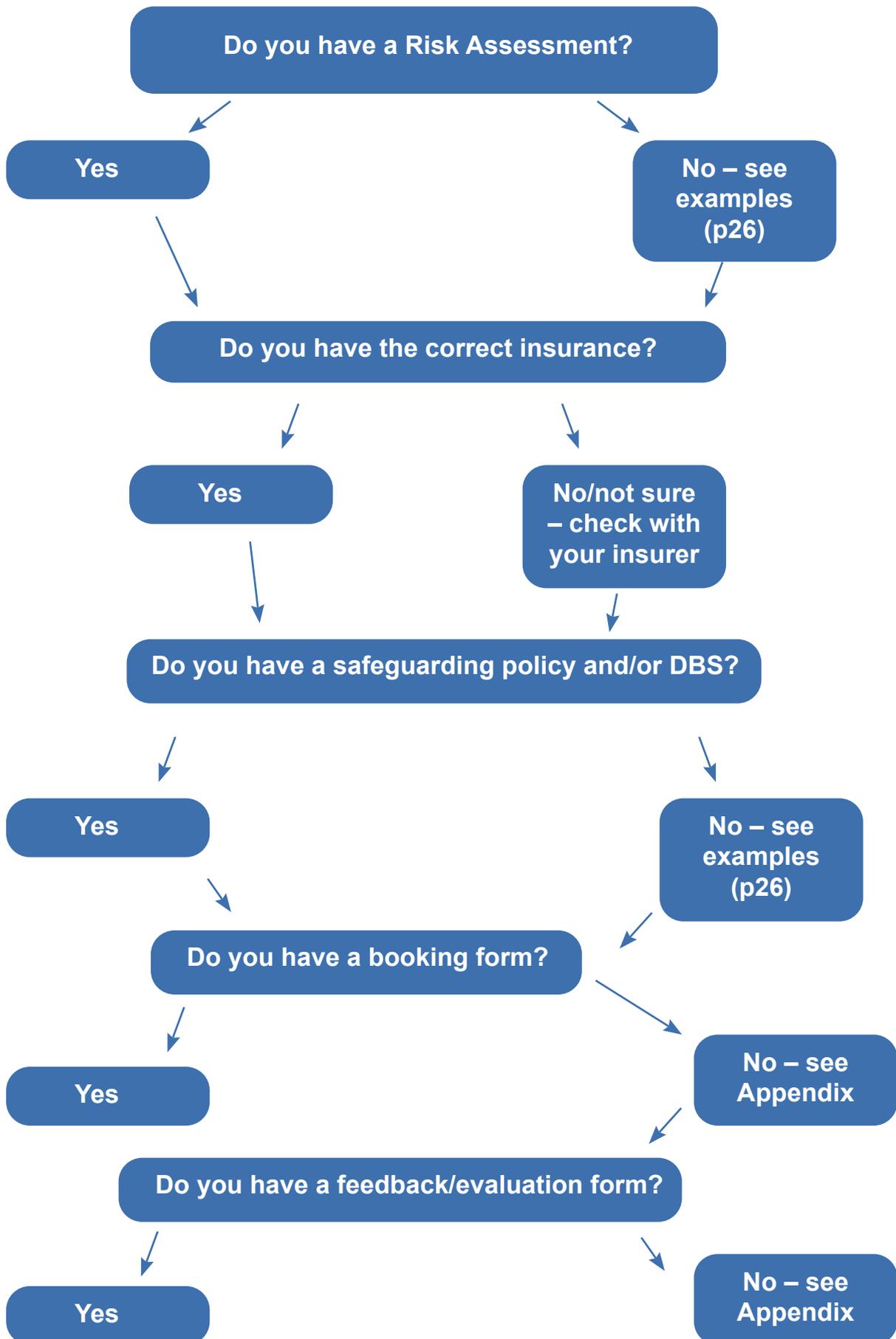
Preparation of offer



Contacting schools



Documentation



Key Curriculum Areas England/Wales



Key Curriculum Areas England/Wales

Historic vessels help us tell the story of the world. The migration of people and goods, advances in technology, exploration and discovery, and the problems and advantages these things can bring. You can use the story of one ship to share potentially hundreds of stories to engage and inspire children.

Sarah Trubshaw, SS Great Britain

We have found that both in terms of encouraging and supporting young people who are struggling, and in terms of connecting young people who are within education with future careers they might not have thought of, our historic vessel has an impact greater than expected. We also feel that if we don't engage with the students of today, we don't have support from the engineers and maritime professionals of tomorrow, who may be the ones to secure the Danny's legacy for the generations after them in turn... the vessels are held in trust for the young visitors as much as anyone else.

Cathriona Bourke, The Danny

Visiting a historic vessel can help support schools to meet National Curriculum aims. A visit to a vessel will be cross-curricular. Some of the key subject areas are highlighted below. The most important point is to use the correct curriculum wording when contacting a school about a vessel offer and highlight any skills development as well as subject links. Here are the links to the English and Welsh Curriculum:

English National Curriculum:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum>

Welsh National Curriculum:

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>



Example of activities from the MHT project linked to the curriculum

Science/Science and Technology: Pulley's and Leavers



Local history and Geography/Humanities (Cynefin): History of the vessel and map of the local area



English/Language, Literacy and Communication: Team work and communication



Careers and volunteer opportunities



Other curriculum links:

Art and Design/Expressive Arts

Health and Well-being

Skills development: Teamwork, problem solving, investigation and enquiry

Risk Assessments and Safeguarding



Risk Assessments and Safeguarding

Risk Assessments/Accessibility

Best practice Risk Assessments/Identifications can be found here to help shape your own Risk Assessments as schools/groups will ask to see this before a visit.

Examples:

- [Risk Identification HMS Belfast | Imperial War Museums](#)
- [SS Great Britain Risk Identification](#)
- [SS Shieldhall - Ship's Accessibility Guide Steamship Shieldhall](#)

DBS and safeguarding guidance

Safeguarding is important when working with young people and all volunteers involved should have an understanding of a vessels safeguarding procedures. Schools/groups will have their own policies in place and it is important to make sure vessels understand the requirements when the school/group books.

General guidance for volunteers running youth engagement or work with vulnerable adults is:

A DBS check is not a legal requirement if a volunteer is not alone with a child/vulnerable adult, however schools/groups may ask about this. Vessels can use the 'check if you need a DBS link' if they are unsure.

School/groups should be informed of a heritage vessels safeguarding policy before the visit and groups should be advised the correct number of accompanying adults to bring.

The vessel organisation should have a safeguarding policy in place. This should include advice such as:

- The volunteer should not be alone with a child or vulnerable adult 1 on 1 and should remove themselves from this situation if this happens.
- There should be a nominated safeguarding lead in the vessel organisation (i.e. someone who understands what the requirements are and can advise others).

- Safeguarding should form one of the points in the risk assessment.
- Basic training should be provided for current and new volunteers at the vessel (even those who do not work directly with children and vulnerable adults) highlighting the vessels safeguarding policy.

Basic DBS checks

Cost £21.50 for all applicants, including volunteers (October 2025).

Standard, Enhanced, and Enhanced with Barred Lists DBS checks:

Applicants do not pay for Standard, Enhanced, or Enhanced with Barred Lists DBS checks for volunteer positions. The checks however are processed in the same way as for a paid position.

When applying for a Standard, Enhanced, or Enhanced with Barred Lists DBS check, you need to consider whether the position is eligible for the level of check that you are applying for, in accordance to the relevant legislation. This is the case for both paid and voluntary positions.

All Standard, Enhanced, and Enhanced with Barred Lists DBS certificates now show if a fee has been charged by DBS, so applicants can see if the certificate was issued for a paid role or a volunteer role.

Website links:

Gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disclosure-application-process-for-volunteers/disclosure-application-process-for-volunteers>

Check if you need a DBS: <https://www.gov.uk/find-out-dbs-check>

The National Council for Volunteering: <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/safeguarding/>

School/youth group activity check lists

Simple check lists that vessels could use to help plan and organise their group visits.



Planning for a school/group visit

- Activities created →
- Age group/s identified →
- Curriculum links identified
(if needed for a school) →
- Cost of the visit decided →
- Volunteers to deliver activities/Volunteer training →
- Timetable of activities (including start and end time) →
- Marketing of activities e.g. a flyer/website text/ email text to send →
- Risk Assessment of activities (including any accessibility requirements and wet weather plan) →
- DBS checks (or safeguarding details in place) →
- Insurance in place (e.g. Public liability and Employer's liability) →
- Information on lunch space options, toilets, parking →
- Photography plan →
- Create an evaluation form →

Contacting a school check list

- Agree date, times and activities and confirm price →
- Confirm numbers (children and adults) and age group →
- Confirm DBS checks (if needed) →
- Check if there are any accessibility requirements (this could be physical or special educational needs) →
- Send booking confirmation and booking information (directions, place to park, toilet, lunch information, clothing, activity timings) →
- Send Risk Assessment →
- Send any insurance information (if requested) →

Case studies in full:

Youth groups and public engagement



Case studies in full: Youth Engagement

The following information is the full case study information from the activities with the Steamship Shieldhall and Helen II. It also includes the public engagement work undertaken in Southampton and Conwy to gather people's views on visiting heritage vessels.

Steamship Shieldhall Southampton

Steamship Shieldhall was launched on 7th July 1955 to transport treated sewage sludge down the river Clyde to be dumped at sea. She also offered disadvantaged families and wounded or disabled ex-servicemen and women free day trips down the river in the summer months. This meant that Shieldhall was built with a large saloon and facilities to accommodate up to 80 day-passengers on trips down the Clyde. Today she is now believed to be the largest working steam ship in Northern Europe, she is owned and operated entirely by volunteers.

<https://ss-shieldhall.co.uk/the-ship/history-of-the-ship/>

The youth engagement volunteers include 3 Captains, 4-6 from the deck team and similar number from the engine room. Numbers of volunteers depend on the date of the visit and availability.

Youth engagement visits on average: 3 experience days, which include a short harbour trip and two non-trip visits.

2025 Maritime Heritage Trust youth group engagement process

In June 2025 Keystone Heritage sent out Microsoft form engagement questionnaires to youth groups local to Southampton. 6 responses were received from:

- 9th Southampton City Scouts
- Girlguiding Hampshire West
- Lordshill Youth project
- The Garage youth club
- 29th Immaculata Scout Group
- Southampton Sea Cadets

From the questionnaire answers a group was chosen to visit the Shieldhall based on if they had visited before and their availability and transport.

1st youth group information

- Date: Wednesday the 20th August
- Name: 29th Immaculata Scout Group
- Numbers: 16 young people aged 10 to 14 and 4 leaders
- Transport: Minibus

2nd youth group information

Due to the second vessel being unable to accommodate a youth group, Steamship Shieldhall volunteers agreed to host a second group.

- Date: Sunday 14th September
- Name: Girlguiding Hampshire
- Numbers: 13 young people and 2 leaders.
- Transport: Drop off in cars
- Note: They took part in the same activities as the scouts but had an extra activity of using the boatswain's chair

Approach

Steamship Shieldhall already had a series of activities which they ran with young people. They were happy to run these again during these visits.

Pre-booking information

The groups were sent a booking confirmation with a plan of activities and timings, directions and a Risk Assessment.

The group were asked about any access issues or adjustments needed. It was stated there was limited accessibility on the Shieldhall due to the nature of the ship.

On the day

9 volunteers supported the visits. During the visits the groups were split into four groups, given coloured bibs and issued with a timetable on arrival. The activities include:

Line throwing



Knot tying and the boatswain's chair



Investigation of the bridge



Tug of war



Investigation of the boiler room



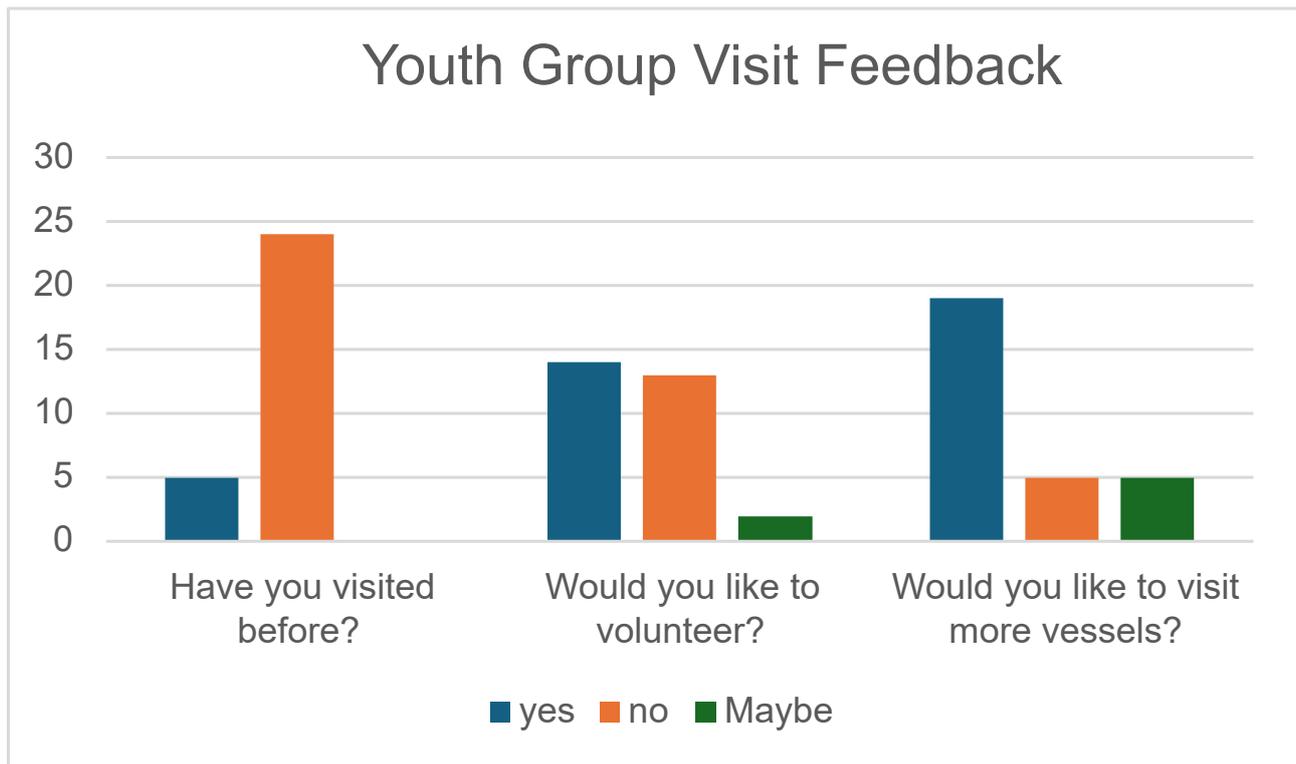
Using the fire hoses



The ship was scheduled to have a public sailing on the 14th September visit but the sailing was cancelled due to the weather. This was communicated to the group a few days in advance.



Outcomes



Summary of results

- 29 young people visited in total and filled out feedback questionnaires.
- Have you visited before: Yes: 5, No: 24
- Would you like to volunteer: Yes: 14, No: 13, Maybe: 2
- Would you like to visit more vessels: Yes: 19, No: 5, Maybe: 5

Feedback from participants from youth groups

The young people said they had enjoyed learning about the elements of the ship and how the ship works.

The line throwing was the favourite activity among the group, as well as the fire hose. Some also mentioned the boatswain's chair and visiting the engine room as their favourite activities.

A number commented that they would have liked to sail during the visit but the weather prevented the event going ahead. The only other improvement mentioned was the fact that the coloured bibs were a bit awkward to wear and more hands on activities in the bridge. The young people also mentioned the volunteers and that they enjoyed speaking to them.

Comments from participants:

- I learned a lot, especially about the navigation equipment on Shieldhall.
- I learned how expensive it is to keep a steam ship running.
- I liked throwing the ropes and trying to hit the pole.
- I have learnt that even if you pull the rope which was doing the friction thing with one person, you still won't be able to pull it against four people!
- They "enjoyed practising the things crew did on board".
- It was very interesting and cool to look around.



How easy was it to book the visit?



Summary of results

There were six youth group leaders but only five completed feedback forms. All five said they would like to visit again and would recommend the visit to other groups. They appreciated the hands-on aspects of the activities and that they could be linked to their badge work.

Group leader comments:

- Benefits to the group were team building and getting to know others, learning skills and having practical experience of sea life.
- Compliments Scouting badge work.
- Enhances connecting with local area.
- It was good for building interest in conservation at a young age.
- They would have liked a bit more of the history of the ship and what it used to do, as well as improvement to the interactivity of the bridge visit.
- All leaders said they would visit again.

Lessons learned

- Both youth groups had their own means of transport making this part of the visit easier to manage as no extra funding was needed. 6 groups responded to the initial questionnaire which was sent out, so this type of visit is appealing to these groups.

- Youth groups required a risk assessment but as long as there were enough leaders on the visit a DBS was not required (from these youth groups). This needs to be checked at the start of the booking process.
- The hands on activities were the most successful. Activities with long periods of talking were the least successful.
- If a vessel has the option of a sailing a wet weather contingency plan needs to be place. This should be stated clearly when a group books a visit.



Steamship Shieldhall Southampton: School Engagement

In June 2025 Keystone Heritage sent out Microsoft form engagement questionnaire to all schools in Southampton, Junior and Senior schools. Two responses were received: Bassett Green and Abbotswood Junior Schools

Based on the answers to the questionnaire as well as availability, Abbotswood was chosen to visit the ship.

School information

- Date: 24th September 2025
- Name: Abbotswood Junior School
- Numbers: 28 (Year 5, 9-10 year olds) and 4 adults
- Transport: Two minibuses
- Cost: Free and transport paid for by the Maritime Heritage Trust as part of the project

Approach

Pre-booking information

The school was sent a booking confirmation with a plan of activities and timings, directions and a Risk Assessment.

They were asked about any access issues or adjustments needed. It was stated there was limited accessibility due to the nature of the ship.

On the day

9 volunteers supported the visit. During the visit the pupils were split into four groups and took part in a carousel of four activities.

Line throwing



Knot tying and boatswain's chair



Investigation of the bridge



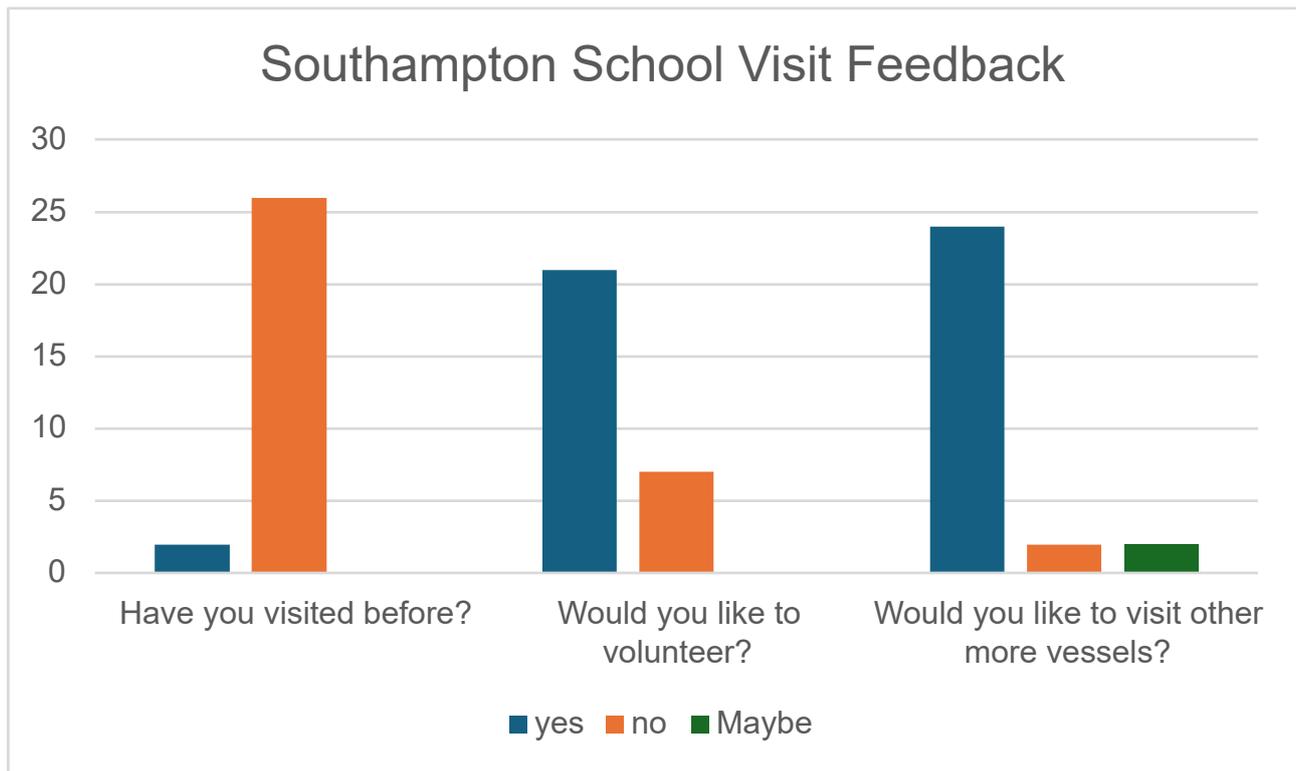
Investigation of the boiler room



Using the fire hoses



Outcomes



Summary of results

- 28 young people visited in total and filled out feedback questionnaires.
- Have you visited before? Yes: 2, No: 26
- Would you like to volunteer: Yes: 21, No: 7
- Would you like to visit more vessels: Yes: 24, No: 2, Maybe: 2

Feedback from participants

The feedback from pupils and teachers was very positive and they really enjoyed the visit. Their favourite activity by far was the line throwing and they loved the ropes. They also enjoyed the fire hoses and visiting the engine room as well as the boatswain's chair. Many pupils had learned and remembered special facts about the operations of the ship and names of the parts of the ship.

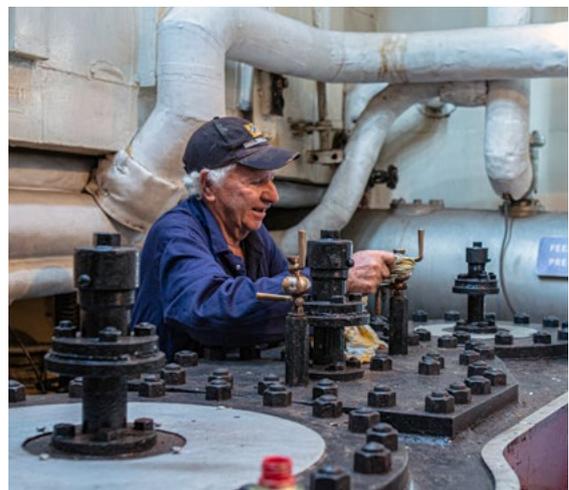
- They had learned that "the rope knot on the end is a monkey's fist".
- Thank you for this, it was really fun.
- It would be fun being a sailor.
- I feel like I would get to explore the world more (reason for wanting to volunteer).

Summary of results

All 4 adults said they would visit again, visit more heritage vessels and recommend this type of visit to other groups. 3 of the 4 had all the documentation needed (1 did not see the documentation).

Teacher comments:

- They found it easy to book the visit.
- Activities were pitched perfectly to the age group.
- Pupils were kept engaged and activities enhanced their understanding.
- They could see links to the science curriculum.
- Teachers and pupils found the visit a lot of fun.
- Perhaps there could have been a mid morning break to allow children to have a snack.
- There could be something more interactive on the bridge visit.



After the visits

Comments from Shieldhall volunteers Paul Smith and Phil Stephens after the visits:

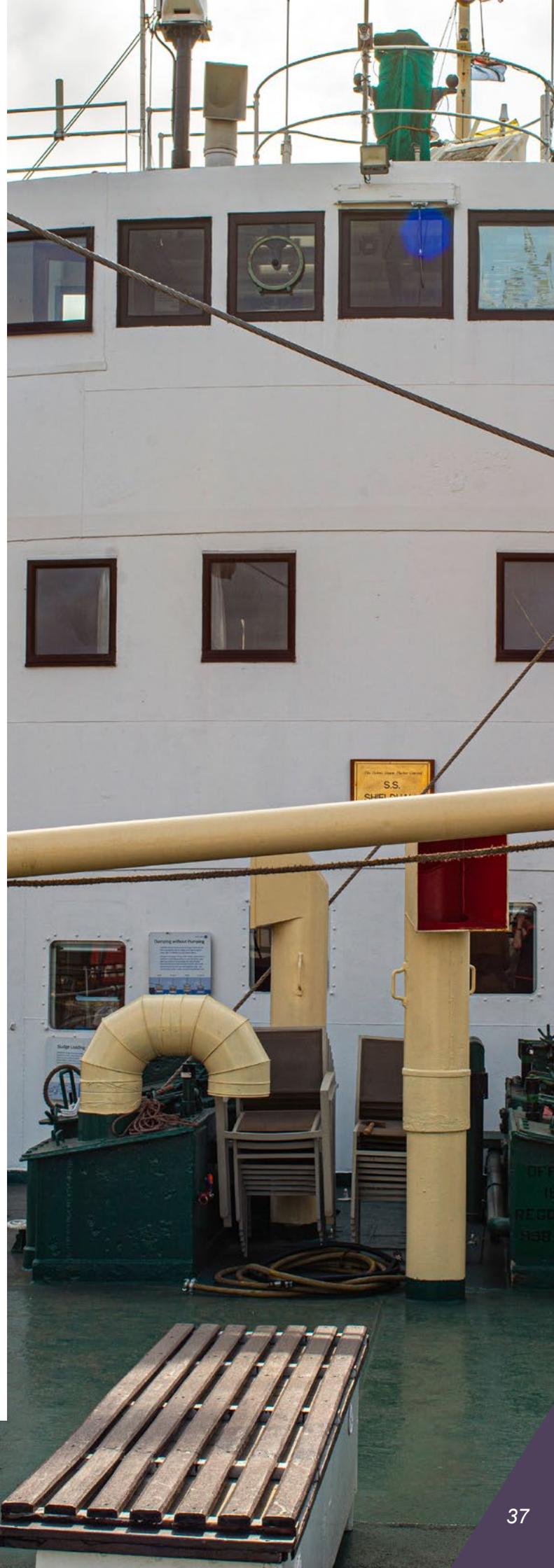
Our challenge is to have the resources to seek out groups wanting to visit and to tie that to the curriculum for schools. Hands on activities were definitely scored higher. Need to think about making the Bridge session more engaging for the younger groups . It is a challenge thinking of activities which keep the young people engaged and enjoying themselves. Combining youth training with a sailing day does allow them to see the ship actually working.

Reasons for engaging young people:

“Hopefully we will have identified a school to work with as part of our potential NLHF project in 2026, leading to further engagement in the delivery phase with more schools.”

Lessons learned

- If a vessel has offered an option of a sailing and this has to be cancelled a wet weather contingency plan needs to be place as this can sometimes be a last minute decision. This should be stated clearly when a group books a visit. This is especially important with a school group who have booked a coach.
- For school visits it is important to highlight if vessels need schools to bring enough DBS checked staff. A school will need to bring enough adults per group to have this covered.



Helen II Conwy: School Engagement

The Helen II was originally a fishing boat built in Conwy in 1910 and is a Nobby class boat or Prawner. She is 40 feet long, with an oak frame and pitch pine construction. She operated out of New Brighton and then worked along the North Wales coast from Porthmadog and Bangor and later the Lancashire coast. She also has a long history of racing awards.

In 1999 she was purchased by the Jamie Roddick Trust and with various funding she has been restored by a keen group of dedicated volunteers. By June 2023 the Helen was able to be refloated and the volunteers have been undertaking tests and getting appropriate licenses and paperwork in place in order to take visitors out to sail.

The vessel does not yet have a formal learning offer and this was the first time the boat had engaged with young people, although some of the volunteers had many years experience of teaching sailing and working with young people. Their ambition is to be able to take young people out sailing on the Helen II from Conwy harbour.

School information

- Date: 16th September 2025
- Name: Ysgol Cynfran, Dosbarth Elian
- Numbers: 24 (Year 5/6, 9-11 year olds)
- Transport: Coach (paid for by the Maritime Heritage Trust project)

Approach

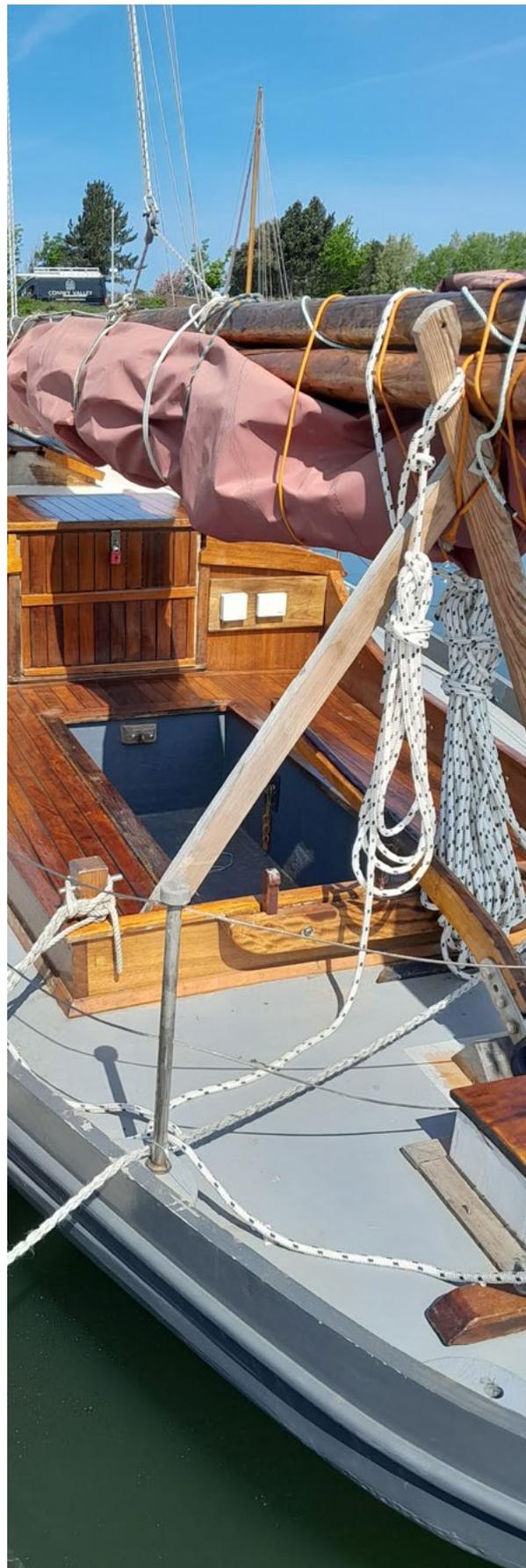
Volunteers from the Helen II had run activities for young people in past roles but not on the Helen II. Keystone Heritage and the volunteers discussed ideas leading up to the school visits. These were adapted after a number of meetings, emails and phone calls.

Pre-booking information

Keystone Heritage, the lead teacher and Ronald Lovelady, the lead volunteer from Helen II met at the quayside for a pre-visit meeting. Discussions involved:

- Activity ideas and timings
- Lunch
- Risk Assessment
- Insurance

Due to the teacher not being able to see the vessel on the day of the risk assessment and the ladder to access it, it was decided the children would not go on the boat.



On the day

3 volunteers supported the visit and 2 Keystone heritage staff. 2 teachers came with the class. During the visit the pupils took part in four activities:

Talk at the side of the boat



Sketching – this was run by Keystone Heritage so a DBS person was with each group.



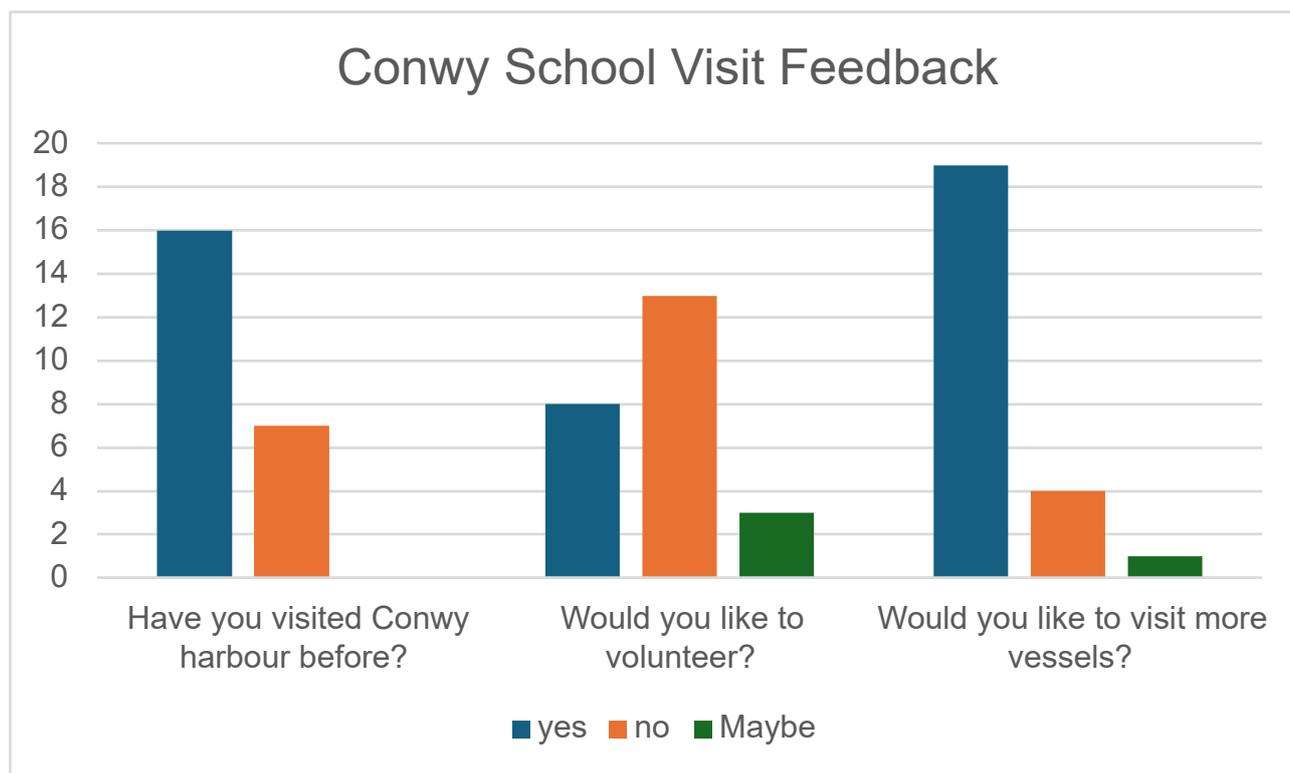
Knot tying – run by the volunteers, supervised by the teacher



Tug of war – run by the volunteers, supervised by the teacher



Outcomes



Summary of results

- There were 24 children on the visit, 23 completed the feedback form and one did not.
- Have you visited Conwy harbour before: Yes: 16, No: 7
- Would you like to volunteer: Yes: 8, No: 13, Maybe: 2
- Would you like to visit more vessels: Yes: 18, No: 4, Maybe: 1

Summary of feedback from the children from Conwy

A lot of the children said they had visited the harbour before but quite a few had not. The most popular activity was the tug of war, followed by drawing and the knot tying. Most children said what they had learned was how to tie different knots. A few commented that they had learned about the history of the boat, when it was built and how long it had taken to renovate.

Children's comments:

- I now know more parts of the boat.
- They would have liked to have gone on the boat.
- They know how to tie knots.
- They had learned about how long it had taken to rebuild the Helen.
- Boats are awesome.

Summary of results

Both teachers said they would visit again, visit other vessels and recommend the visit to other groups.

Teacher comments:

- Benefits of the visit included teamwork, well being and skills.
- Pupils have learned a lot about the history of a local project and vessel.
- It was a good Curriculum for Wales opportunity.
- Knowledge of the volunteers was one of the best parts of the visit.
- The activities were hands-on and engaging.
- Seeing the children learning while having fun.
- A visit onto the boat could have improved the visit.
- The lead up to the visit took time but it was worth it.

After the visits

Comments from Ronald Lovelady, Helen II volunteer after the visit:

I think it all went pretty well, main difference would be getting them on the boat. It was good to work with a local school and it generated interest in the boat. It brings an awareness of what we do to local schools etc and encourages donations. We are planning an extensive refit over the winter; we hopefully have some new funding and are planning a programme for next year with youth clubs etc.

Lessons learned

- Vessels need to check in advance with their current insurance provider that they cover the activities being undertaken.
- If offering a pre-visit for teachers this should be undertaken at least a month in advance to allow time for the risk assessment to be processed, especially if on the water.
- If a vessel does not have an undercover area or lunch space, this needs to be stated clearly when a group books. A local church hall was hired within walking distance of the Conwy vessel as a wet weather contingency plan. The group had their lunch in the hall.



Case studies in full: Public Engagement

Two public engagement events were held in September 2025 to ask the public what they thought about heritage vessels, one at Southampton Central Library and the other was held at Conwy Library and Culture Centre. At both events, members of the public were asked to complete a survey questionnaire to assess the reasons why people engage and do not engage with heritage vessels. A total of 35 people completed the survey.

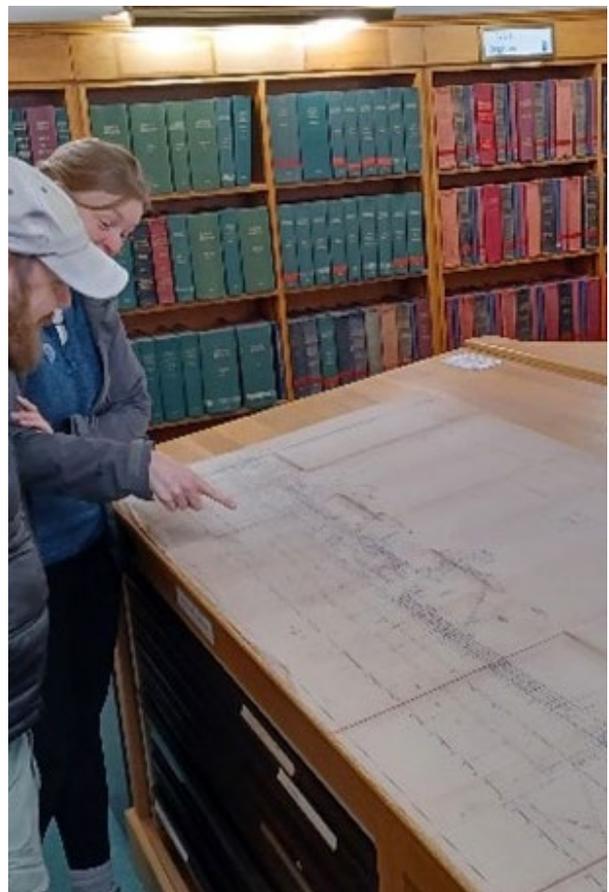
Conwy Library Event

The event included a display of pictures of heritage vessels and information about their sailing offers and prices, as well as a display of historic maritime objects. A craft activity was offered for families which included making a paper plate boat and a peg doll sailor.

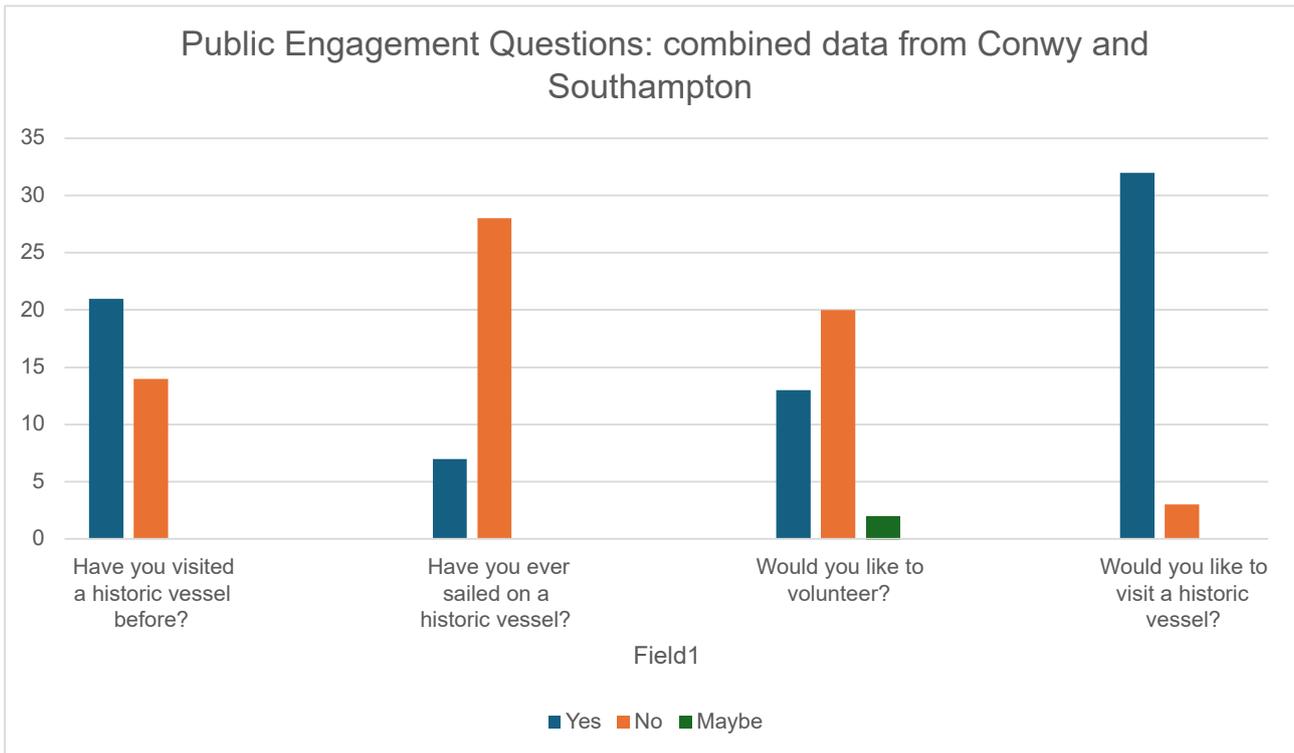


Southampton Library Event

The event at Southampton library also included a display of pictures and information and in addition, the library staff brought out some of their archive materials about the Steamship Shieldhall including plans and photos for people to look at. Library users were asked the same survey questions.

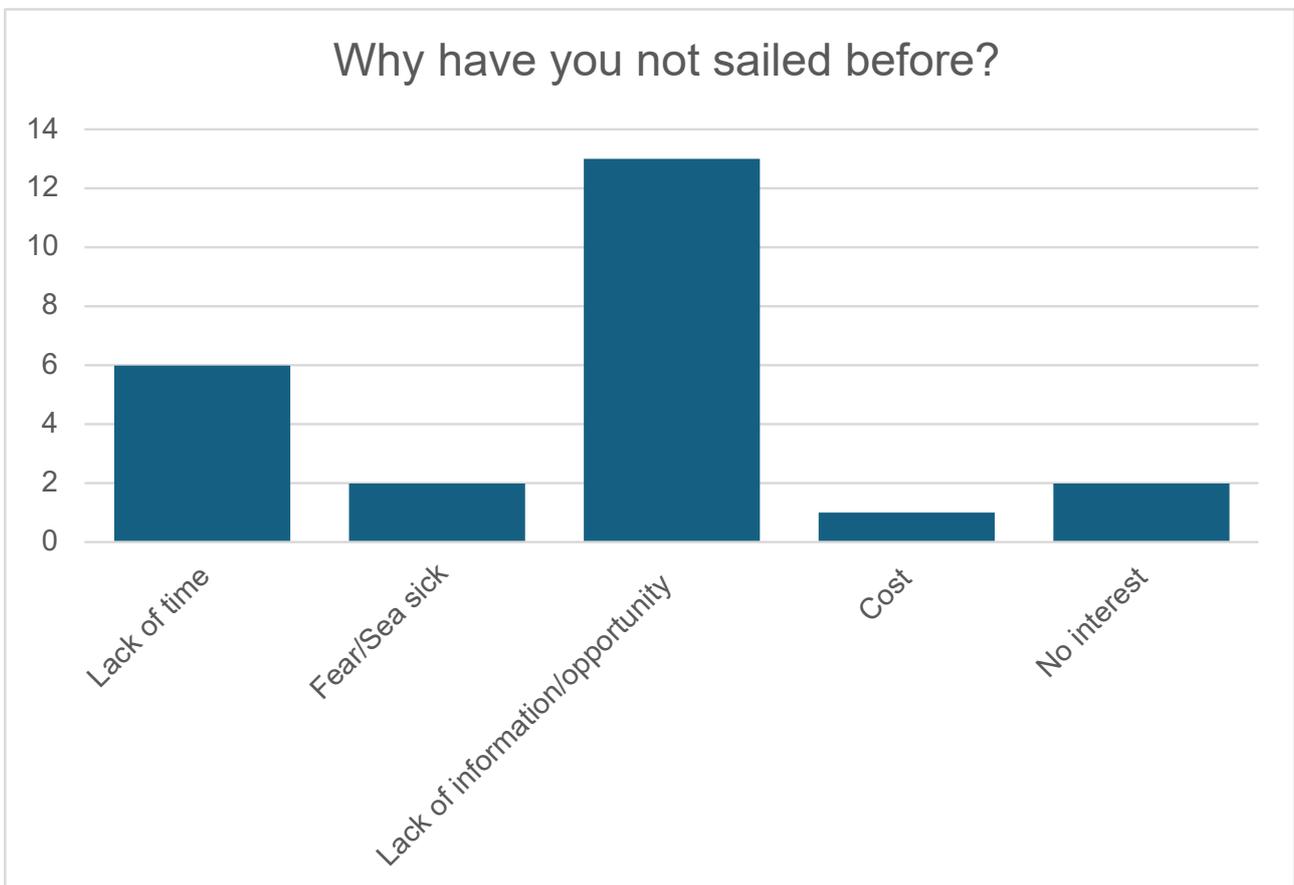


Outcomes



The data collected showed that most people had visited a historic vessel before but had not sailed on one. Overwhelmingly most people said they would like to visit a historic vessel in the future.

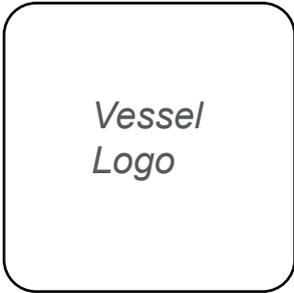
One of the main aims was to ascertain the reasons why people did and did not engage with historic vessels. The main reason people gave was the lack of information and opportunities.



Appendix

- *Booking Confirmation Example*
- *Feedback Form Example*
- *Education and Engagement Administrator Volunteer Role Example*





Booking Confirmation

Contact Details of Vessel

.....

.....

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Day and Date of Visit					
Name of Session					
Contact Name of leader					
School/Group					
Full Address & Post Code					
Tel:					
E-Mail Address:					
Access requirements					
Number of Children		Age Group		Cost Total:	
Timings					
Vessel visit cancellation policy					

School Name: Numbers/ages of group:.....

Date:.....

Please rate the session by answering the following questions.

How far did the sessions meet your national curriculum targets? (which targets were met)

.....
.....
.....

Were the activities pitched at the correct level for the year group?

All of them Some of them None of them

Please state which activities need improvement

.....
.....
.....

How engaging were the activities? Circle your answer.

(1 = Lowest score, 5 = Highest score)

Lowest 1 2 3 4 5 Highest

Which were the best activities and why?

.....
.....
.....

What were the best parts of the visit?

.....
.....
.....

How could we have improved the visit? (Is there anything else you would have liked to have seen or learnt about)

.....
.....
.....

Any other comments would be gratefully received:

.....
.....
.....

Role Overview:

Responsible to: Volunteer Co-ordinator

Hours: Flexible, but ideally a few hours a week, for a minimum of six months

Location: Home based, at the vessel

Purpose of the role: To work with the team to engage schools and community groups

Overview of the vessel:

Role and Responsibilities:

- To work with the vessel to find ways to engage with young people; this could be schools, youth groups or community organisations
- To liaise between youth groups and schools and the vessel to help provide opportunities
- Supporting the administrative functions of the youth engagement programme
- To take part in and relevant training including health and safety as required
- To report any concern to Volunteer Co-ordinator
- To adhere to the Volunteer agreement, and Volunteer Policy

Key skills:

- Past experience or knowledge of schools and youth groups
- Competent IT skills
- Good communication skills both in person and via emails/phone calls
- Interest in maritime heritage and engaging young people

Training:

- Full training on youth activities offer available from the vessel

Benefits of being a volunteer:

e.g. discounts, training, thank you events, references, CV building

This volunteer role description is intended to be a guide only. You may have other skills to offer, and we may have other tasks which we would ask you to help with. Equally, if you would like to help in other areas just let us know.