

Heritage Policy & Principles

HERITAGE POLICY

1. Introduction

Our aim is for the heritage of the waterways to be treasured as a valued national asset. The careful protection and management of that heritage is an essential part of the ongoing work to achieve our vision.

2. Definition

BW's primary heritage assets consist of its historic canals and river navigations, and their built heritage, archaeology and man-made landscapes. Secondary heritage consists of the portable artefacts and archives that BW indirectly manages in partnership with The Waterways Trust and others. Beyond these, the wider historic environment includes assets that are not managed by BW but are nevertheless important to the appeal and use of our waterways.

3. A working, living inland waterway network

- 3.1 BW's waterways are used for navigation and recreation. We seek to integrate the needs of those who visit and use the network with a sustainable approach to effective management of the waterway heritage..
- 3.2 In line with our vision BW seeks to become the acknowledged expert in achieving sustainable integration of the competing needs and uses of the waterways. Compliance with legislation and regulation is a minimum requirement. We will aim to exceed this requirement by continually improving our performance and delivering appropriate good practice.
- 3.3 Where balances and judgements have to be made between competing resources and activities, we will take a long term and strategic view that assumes a presumption in favour of preserving the waterway heritage.

4. Heritage Principles

- 4.1 Our heritage principles provide the framework within which BW manages the waterway heritage. The principles establish best practice in the maintenance,, repair and adaptation of historic structures, the management of man-made landscapes, the relationship with new development, the importance of archaeology and the use of interpretation and public events. We will monitor our activities and outputs through an annual State of the Waterways Heritage report.
- 4.2 We will promote best practice amongst our employees, contractors, suppliers, customers and partners. We will seek suppliers, contractors and partners with standards consistent with our own.
- 4.3 This policy is available to all British Waterways employees and members of the public.

HERITAGE PRINCIPLES

General

1. BW will seek to manage the physical impact of human activities in order to protect the waterway heritage.
2. BW will seek, through national and local planning policies, to encourage adjacent land uses and development which will not conflict with the historic environment of the waterways.
3. BW will seek to become increasingly self-regulating in its management of the waterway heritage through the use of Heritage Partnership Agreements.

Understanding significance

4. Before works to a historic building, structure or historic site take place, research should be undertaken to determine its significance. This research will establish heritage value and will help to guide the planning and execution of works.
5. Regard should be had for the historic functionality of waterways; e.g., gauge of track, turnover bridge configuration, positioning of bollards, strapping posts and rope hooks. The heritage value of these functional traditions is significant and should be secured.

Historic buildings and structures

6. All major projects and general works should demonstrate a respect for waterway heritage and an approach based on minimum physical intervention involving minimum loss of existing fabric should be undertaken.
7. Interventions should be reversible wherever possible.
8. Regard should be had for the contributions of different periods of work in an historic structure. The heritage value and significance of such contributions must be judged within the context to which their host structure belongs.
9. The patina of age and use forms part of the value of a historic building or structure and its removal should only be considered when it is essential to the protection of historic fabric. Falsification of patina should be avoided.
10. Most repairs and alterations should be carried out in materials that match the historic fabric. Interventions involving replacement of missing parts should be discreetly date-marked to differentiate new from old.
11. Historic materials, fixtures and fittings are valuable and wherever possible should remain in situ. Where such items cannot be left in situ they should be carefully salvaged and stored for re-use in an appropriate context.

Historic man-made landscapes

12. Major projects and general works will be planned and designed so as to minimise their impact on the historic man-made landscape.
13. Consideration of landscape character and local distinctiveness will influence the design and planning of waterside development.

New development

14. New development can be acceptable in an historic setting provided it maintains an appropriate visual context of form, scale, and materials and does not reduce the significance and value of heritage assets.
15. New uses that are sustainable and compatible with the heritage significance of the waterways will be encouraged.

Archaeological recording

16. Where development or major works that affect heritage assets are taking place, physical features should be archaeologically recorded.
17. Archaeological records should be placed in local Historic Environment Records (HERS) and made publicly available.

Interpretation

18. Heritage interpretation should aim to communicate the local distinctiveness and cultural associations of individual historic waterways. BW will work in partnership with relevant local and national organisations to achieve this aim.
19. Interpretive signage should be carefully planned and designed and integrated into historic sites with minimum intrusion.

Volunteers

20. Volunteers, particularly those with specialist knowledge, will be encouraged to participate in a range of heritage activities including research, heritage recording exercises, and restoration projects.

Competent people

21. All BW people will attain a heritage competency that is assigned to their role and responsibilities.
22. All BW people and contractors working on historic buildings and structures or archaeological sites will have sufficient competence and expertise.

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Authorised for Issue by:



Chief Executive

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