

Repairs to the historic Steamship Shieldhall

Thanks to NHMF funding, one of the UK's best surviving steamships will be repaired following damage caused by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A historic ship

[Steamship Shieldhall](#) started life in 1954 as a 'Clyde sludge boat', travelling down the River Clyde from Shieldhall in Glasgow to dispose of treated sewage sludge at sea.

These steamships had a tradition of taking disadvantaged families and wounded ex-service personnel on leisure trips during summer months.

After 21 years on the Clyde, SS Shieldhall came to Southampton. It carried sludge from the city to an area just south of the Isle of Wight, before finally being laid up in 1985. Since 1988 the boat has been preserved as a working heritage attraction, carrying on the tradition of leisure cruises.

Shieldhall is the largest still-operating steamship in Britain, and one of only 200 vessels that form the National Historic Fleet – equivalent to Listed Building status. Much of the now-rare technology that powers it dates back to the end of the 19th century.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

The [Steamship Shieldhall Charity](#) preserve and operate the ship. Their normally busy schedule of summer leisure trips – the main source of their income – was brought to an abrupt halt by pandemic lockdowns. Inactivity has resulted in a build-up of barnacles, mussels and other marine life on the ship's hull – normally kept at bay by its progression through water.

Shieldhall's anti-fouling coating has been compromised, and work is urgently needed to prevent worsening damage and prohibitive restoration costs in future.

Funding from NHMF's Covid-19 Response Fund

A £196,415 grant has been awarded from the government's Cultural Asset Fund for England, part of [NHMF's COVID-19 Response Fund](#) available to support the UK's most significant heritage impacted by the pandemic.

The SS Shieldhall will now be taken to a dry dock for repairs, ready to be put back to sea in time for 2022's summer season.

Region

South East England

Grant awarded

£196,415

Year awarded

2021