HSM No. 93 The Wreck of Endurance: Conservation Management Plan and Future Protection

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**Working Paper submitted by the United Kingdom**

Summary

This paper provides an update on progress with the Conservation Management Plan and future protection of HSM No. 93: Wreck of Endurance following its discovery on the 5th March 2022 and as noted in ATCM XLIV WP47.

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. notes the progress made to date on the Conservation Management Plan for HSM No. 93 and proposed next steps;
2. notes the proposed consultation during the development of the Conservation Management Plan for protecting HSM No. 93; and
3. invites Members to share any initial views on the possible future proposal for seeking ASPA designation for the wreck site.

Background

The wreck of the *Endurance*, the vessel owned and used by Sir Ernest Shackleton during his 1914-16 Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, was designated as Historic Site & Monument (HSM) No. 93 in 2019 through Measure 12 (2019) before the wreck was located.

The British-led Endurance22 expedition embarked on board the South African vessel *Agulhas II,* equipped with SAAB Sabretooth underwater vehicles, and located the wreck site on the 5 March 2022, 107 years after it was lost. The expedition team undertook a detailed survey of the site, capturing considerable data on the condition of the wreck, its components, and its environment, which will inform the future management of the site. Work continues on the processing and analysis of these data.

Through Measure 18 (2022) the area protected by the HSM listing was enlarged from a 150m to 500m radius around the wreck to afford greater coverage of possible distributed debris that may have dispersed as the wreck sank 3000m through the water column. The report of the discovery of the wreck and the updated HSM listing was also accompanied by the intention to produce a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the site (ATCM XLIV WP 47).

In 2022, the UK government commissioned the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust (UKAHT), the organisation responsible for the conservation and care of several HSMs on the Antarctic Peninsula, to create the CMP and provide recommendations for the future protection of the site. This work is notable as it will be the first such document for an underwater heritage site in Antarctica.

Creating the Conservation Management Plan

Following the Guidelines for the Assessment and Management of Heritage in Antarctica (Resolution 1 (2022)) and drawing on international guidance on the protection of underwater heritage the preparation of the CMP is now underway. UKAHT has assembled a team of experts to assist with the preparation of the document. The detail for the CMP will include historical research, analysis of the data collected by the expedition that discovered the wreck, the analysis of the potential risks and adoption of best practice policies and practices internationally for heritage of this nature and significance.

Historical context and significance

To date, progress has been made to document the history and significance of the vessel and to set up the framework for the full document, identifying where there needs to be additional external input or access to data and information. Archival research into the construction of *Endurance*, the original expedition, the loss of the ship and subsequent transactions between the insurers and the Shackleton family is already shedding new light on the detailed history of the vessel. A statement of significance is in preparation and will be better informed with insights from new data collected from the wreck site.

Contemporary data

New data collected by the Endurance22 expedition will be an invaluable resource and, once processed and available, it will provide insights into the composition and condition of the vessel today and indications of the environment and the potential environmental risks to the wreck.

Policy framework

The heritage policy framework will draw upon the guidance from ATCM/CEP heritage management policies and best practice internationally. It will also be informed by consulting with international specialists.

Risk management

A full analysis of the risks to the wreck is being undertaken. Its resting place at 3008m depth in the Weddell Sea offers some protection, and the vessel appears from published imagery to be in remarkable condition. However, the wreck may be vulnerable to the impacts of both human activity and natural processes. Climate change is a particular concern as a warming climate might make the Weddell Sea more accessible and may disrupt the current biological and chemical environment.

Instruments for protection

Additional measures for the protection of the wreck from inappropriate or unmonitored human intervention are also being explored. Remote monitoring and consideration of additional levels of protection within the Antarctic Treaty System are also being considered.

*Further investigation*

There will be much more to learn about the vessel, the site and its environment and the CMP will make recommendations for future study or data capture that might enhance understanding of this unique site. The authors are not aware of any current intentions to revisit the site.

Raising the ship or removal of artefacts

The status of the site as an HSM and the will of the descendants is to leave the vessel and its artefacts intact and the CMP will seek to strengthen this policy for the future protection of the site in line with internationally accepted best heritage practice.

Consultation process

For the CMP to be as comprehensive and as effective as possible, there will be a process of consultation to give expert bodies and interested parties the opportunity to share their views on the draft CMP. Given the international significance and interest in *Endurance*, CEP members are welcome to contact the UK to find out more about the plan. Equally the authors welcome suggestions or recommendations of any expert bodies whom should be consulted during the next year. There will also be a controlled public consultation to raise awareness of the protection of *Endurance* and, in turn, heritage protection in Antarctica.

Consideration of additional protection

As part of the CMP development process, consideration will be given to any additional measures that may be needed to protect the wreck. In particular, the work may indicate that the additional protections afforded by ASPA designation may be appropriate. If seeking ASPA designation is deemed appropriate, an ASPA prior assessment template could be submitted to CEP XXVI in 2024.

We would welcome Members’ initial views on the consideration of any future ASPA designation for the wreck of *Endurance.*

Next steps

The following work plan is proposed:

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| **Step** | **Approximate dates** |
| Stage 1 CMP prepared and circulated to expert advisors | June – August 2023 |
| Open consultation on Stage 1 CMP | August – October 2023 |
| Consultation analysis and response | November – December 2023 |
| Stage 2 CMP – incorporation of results of consultation and additional data | December 2023 – March 2024 |
| Preparation of Stage 2 CMP | February - March 2024 |
| Potential submission of ASPA Prior Assessment Template to CEP XXVI | May 2024 (CEP XXVI) |

Conclusion

The preparation of a Conservation Management Plan is always a team effort. The CMP for *Endurance* is a unique undertaking for Antarctica that will inform not only the protection of this site, but may perhaps inform how other similar sites in the Southern Ocean might be protected. This CMP will principally guide the UK in the future management of the wreck site, but should further protection under the Antarctic Treaty System be deemed necessary, it may provide a bedrock for future management. Expertise, data, informed opinion and stakeholder engagement is vital to the success of the creation and implementation of such a plan and the authors welcome any interest expressed by CEP Members.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the CEP:

1. notes the progress made to date on the Conservation Management Plan for HSM No. 93 and proposed next steps;
2. notes the proposed consultation during the development of the Conservation Management Plan for protecting HSM No. 93; and
3. invites Members to share any initial views on the possible future proposal for seeking ASPA designation for the wreck site.