

Exmouth receives controlled site status!

I received a personal telephone call from the MoD yesterday afternoon to inform me of the outcome of the MoD Public Consultation Process into protection provided to wrecked military vessels, in particular military maritime graves.

The Under Secretary of State for Defence approved "a limited number of 16 vessels within UK jurisdiction which meet the criteria and are representative of all others lost - to be designated as controlled sites. A further 5 vessels in International waters deemed to be at immediate and significant risk will be designated as protected places."

The list of 16 controlled sites includes the name 'HMS Exmouth'. This means any diving must be carried out with a special licence obtained from the MoD. Such licences will not be easily available and special reasons would have to be given as to why a dive should take place. This being so, a licence would be issued only under stringent conditions and penalties for breaching these regulations will be rigorously imposed.

This is a 'rolling programme' and over time the names of other known vessels will gradually be added to the list. Clearly the loss of one life is the same as the loss of any other - devastating, whatever the circumstances. It is, however, an honor to see the name 'Exmouth' at last being of enough importance to be included in a such a list which includes some 'high profile' names such as HMS Royal Oak and HMS Hampshire. Particularly as the 16 listed are said to be 'representative of all others lost'.

The inclusion of Exmouth in the list is due in no small part to the intense lobbying carried out by our membership in the months leading up to the Memorial Weekend in Wick at the beginning of September.

I am sure we will all welcome the news that the final resting place of Exmouth is now protected in legislation.