

OGA ACM 2026, Agenda Item 10

OGA Youth Fund Criteria - Proposed changes to definitions

Presented by Peter Elliston, EC Secretary

Reference documents:

- a) Youth Fund Criteria and Application process (dated 17th May 2024)*
- b) Youth Fund FAQs (dated 17th May 2024)*

Background to Proposal

EC Youth Fund

The East Coast Area have been collecting donations from their own members this past season (2025) as part of the Ticket Tailor booking system, with an option to opt out. We have been building up a fund which was loosely thought might be used for transporting EC Gafflings to and from events for younger members or the young children of members or even to support the maintenance of the two boats we have in the area. So far, no money from the EC fund has been allocated.

Central Youth Fund

1. One EC member who was aware of the central fund (established in 2013) suggested to us that it could be used for one of the crew of the Lowestoft Trawler Excelsior to gain RYA Day Skipper qualification to further her sailing career as she was then a student. Thomasina Mallett, a Shetlander at college in Scotland therefore joined the OGA as an EC member, applied for and was awarded the grant. She wrote up her experience in the Log and now has a Relief Mate position on Excelsior and an offer to work on Jolie Brise. To date I believe she has been the only major benefactor of the central Youth Fund.
2. Also, on the East Coast the central Youth Fund gave a grant to a group of Young Gaffers to attend the AGMs in Liverpool and Gloucester. Apart from these, there have been very few applications to the central Youth Fund, to my knowledge.

EC Youth Fund – how to spend it?

Several EC Area committee members have been uneasy that we are collecting money into a Youth Fund without a decision on how to allocate it. The committee resolved to contact Ipswich Maritime Trust where the Project Manager is an East Coast member. Linking up with a recognised trust which, already involving children in their activities, has the appropriate safeguarding status, would be a definite advantage in the eyes of the EC committee. We hoped to form a symbiotic relationship with IMT as a worthy recipient of our EC Youth Fund perhaps also with support from the Central Youth Fund.

Our EC committee member with responsibility for safeguarding, due to his experience as a former local teacher, contacted IMT.

He soon reported that there was a lot of really good work being done by IMT in the local community with their Ipswich Heritage Harbour Project, centred on the Port and the maritime history of Ipswich. Over the last 30 years the EC OGA held many events based in the port's wet dock. We also chose Ipswich port as the first base for the OGA's 60th Anniversary celebrations with major sponsorship from ABP. We investigated further.

An email exchange followed between us and Judy Harrison, the IMT project manager (and OGA EC Member). Judy wrote the following text setting out details of the Ipswich Heritage Harbour Project. Her document is also attached at the bottom of this proposal:

The Ipswich Heritage Harbour Project has been funded for 12 months by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The main element of the project has been to connect more young people in Ipswich with the maritime heritage of the town.

We chose to focus our attention on year 6 and 7 of the local primary schools. These are children who are ten and eleven years old, who are still very impressionable, and will not have shaped their education choices towards any future career.

We planned an education package which included introducing children to the town's maritime heritage at assemblies, followed by a classroom visit, and then the children came to the waterfront for a package of activities:

- *We led a waterfront eye-spy tour, with the children looking for, and learning about, examples of the industrial heritage left from days gone by. The children looked at the size of the Wet Dock, and the grandeur of the Customs House, and learned that it was the biggest wet dock in England when it opened – and how the constant water level resulted in*

bigger ships coming all the way up to Ipswich, and facilitated the development of many industries – like the maltings, mills, and saltworks that can still be seen in their new role today, bringing great prosperity to Ipswich at that time.

- The children then took part in some educational activities in the Old Customs House in which they looked at a chart of the River Orwell and learned about some of the features on a chart. From that they saw how shallow the river is and how much mud there is if you navigate outside the channel. They went on to learn about how vessel design evolved to give us Thames sailing barges which were flat-bottomed, and able to visit shallow creeks and ports, but also capable cargo carriers, that supplied towns like Ipswich with all the goods the people in the town needed for their everyday lives. They tested blocks and pulleys to learn about mechanical advantage and discovered how all the blocks and pulleys on a sailing barge mean that it can be handled by just two people – making it cost effective to deliver the goods because of low wages. They also looked at wind direction using bubbles, to help them understand how wind power sometimes means that travelling into the wind is difficult for a sailing boat, as an introduction to the concept that the sails (which we now know to be clean and green) were replaced with engines to enable more timely deliveries, and then eventually lorries, which were not impeded by stormy weather.*
- Finally, the youngsters took a boat trip either aboard the SB Victor or aboard Orwell Lady. The time available meant we just did a tour of the Wet Dock, but they were able to see all the things they had learned about from a different perspective. This also enabled us to talk about maritime careers – driving boats, building boats, loading ships, running a harbour or a marina – these are all visible from a tour of the dock.*

These sessions took a morning or an afternoon, and we were able to deliver to a whole year group at a time. They were free for the schools to access. We had a very limited budget for transport for schools who could not walk to the waterfront, meaning that some schools were able to access the sessions using a coach.

Ipswich has a much higher than average number of children accessing free school meals. There is also a very mixed multi-cultural community in the town, and many schools have a high number of young people for whom English is not their first language.

We were prepared to meet children who had never been to the waterfront, and this was very frequently the case. We were surprised to find many children had never been to the waters edge of the River Orwell or a beach anywhere (particularly given the close proximity of Felixstowe) and consequently had no awareness of tides coming up and down a shoreline. We were absolutely stunned to discover whole classes of children who had never been over the Orwell Bridge.

These visits were very keenly taken up by the local schools, and the feedback received has been very positive. The children were very excited – particularly to go on a boat, which for most was for the very first time. There was huge excitement when they could see jellyfish in the dock, or fish in the water around the boat. Everything was new, absolutely every child participated with great enthusiasm, and clearly went away having had a very positive experience. We delivered over 3400 youth contacts during the project, with over 600 children going afloat. We worked with 9 primary schools, two secondary schools, and one SEND school. Demand far outstripped our funding and whilst we delivered far more than we ever set out to do, we ran out of resources and had to stop!

It is easy to forget when one has regular access to the water and a boat which can take you anywhere, how different life is for those who live in our community but are not so fortunate. Part of

the project was to help develop a sense of place for the children (many being unaware that Ipswich was connected to the sea by a river), and a greater sense of understanding and pride in the area that they live in.

We have gone on to produce a comprehensive Key Stage 2 educational resource for years 3-6, which will be free for local schools to access, consisting of a large pack of PowerPoint slides and teacher notes, enabling schools to continue to deliver education about the maritime heritage of the River Orwell and the Ipswich waterfront beyond the life of this project.



Judy Harrison

Project manager – Ipswich Heritage Harbour Project. January 2025

Thought Process

I found it quite shocking that there were so many children in the area so close to the Port and the river who had absolutely no idea that either existed!

It then led me to wonder if there are other great maritime locations around our coasts with a similar problem.

That then made me wonder if we on the East Coast went in with IMT, would other OGA areas wish to do the same?

That led me to look at our criteria!

Proposal

We should overhaul and make appropriate changes to OGA documents a) and b) above, to allow us to work with a trust body such as IMT whose activities, when reading about Ipswich Heritage Harbour Project, are clearly worthy and should fit the overall broad aims of the OGA. Requirements for a report should be broadened to include comments and feedback from appropriate adults involved in the project.

Summary

The criteria for suitable projects within the OGA document a) are very narrow and should be broadened to better suit the possible third parties that we might be interested in working with.

In OGA document b), the answer to the question 'How can we make the most of Youth events for the greater good of the OGA?' already fits perfectly with the ideal outcome of OGA involvement in the IHHP project.

OGA document b) states

'Youth events provide the OGA with an excellent platform to showcase the OGA beyond our membership, not only to the youngsters participating, but also to parents, teachers, supervisors, partnership organisations and skippers and crew of vessels used during the event.'

It concludes:

Every attempt should be made by event organisers to promote the OGA and what we are all about.

The OGA is all about promoting gaff rig, but also an awareness of our maritime heritage. We believe, if the criteria for suitable projects and report writing can be broadened, the EC area can begin discussing the possibility of OGA involvement in eg the Ipswich Heritage Harbour Project with the IMT in earnest. We hope that other areas might find similarly worthy projects, making members even more proud to belong to the OGA.



IMT document.pdf