

Receiver of Wreck Manual

Document last updated August 2023

Customs Legislation Branch

Queries: CustomsLegislation@revenue.ie

This manual describes the role of the Receiver of Wreck and the relative rights, duties and responsibility of the Owner, Salver and Receiver. It is also a guide to the application of the relevant legislation and should be read in conjunction with that legislation.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	4
1.1 General	4
1.2 Legislation.....	4
1.3 Definitions (Section 2, Principal Act)	4
1.4 Not classified as wreck	5
1.5 Obligation to report wreck (Section 45, Principal Act)	5
1.6 Role of Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport (Section 40, Principal Act).....	5
1.7 Appointments (Section 41, Principal Act).....	6
1.9 Persons not permitted to act as Receiver of Wreck	6
1.10 Districts of Receivers of Wreck.....	6
1.11 Indemnification of Receivers of Wreck (Section 42, Principal Act)	6
1.12 Security.....	6
2. Fees 8	
2.1 General Provisions.....	8
2.2 Current Fees Chargeable	8
3. Role of Receiver of Wreck	9
3.1 Duties of Receiver of Wreck	9
3.2 Receiver of Wreck to assist in settling claims.....	9
4. Reporting formalities	10
4.1 Report Book to be kept	10
4.2 Notice of Wreck to be given by the Receiver of Wreck (Section 45, Principal Act).....	10
4.3 Statement relating to a Shipping Casualty	10
5. Custody of Wreck	11
5.1 Safe deposit of Wreck & Reports	11
5.2 Custody of Articles or Cargo from wrecked property.....	11
5.3 Wreck or proceeds to be retained for one year, except in certain cases.....	12
5.4 Proof of ownership, etc. to be completed as soon as possible	12
5.5 Claims of Owners of Wreck (Section 46, Principal Act)	12
5.6 Suspected claim to ownership	12
5.7 Property delivered into Receiver's custody which is proved not to be wreck	13
5.8 Limitations on power of Receiver of Wreck	13
5.9 Receiver to take possession of sunken and abandoned vessels	13
5.10 Receiver to put a fair construction on Derelict	14
5.11 Immediate sale of wreck by Receiver in certain cases (Section 47, Principal Act)	14
5.12 Disposal of unclaimed wreck (Section 49, Principal Act).....	14
5.13 State entitlement to all unclaimed wreck (Section 48, Principal Act)	14
5.14 Wreck found in another Receiver's District.....	14
5.15 Receiver not responsible for property after giving up possession	15
5.16 Claim by Agent	15
5.17 Whole of property to be taken.....	15
5.18 Claim after expiration of 12 months	15
5.19 Master to be treated as Agent for the owners of both ship and cargo.....	15
5.20 Humanitarian cargoes (Section 38, Principal Act)	16
6. Duties of finder of wreck.....	17
6.1 Removal of wreck in certain circumstances (Section 51, Principal Act)	17
7. Payments.....	18
7.1 Payments by the National Museum (Section 49, Principal Act)	18

7.2 Auctioneer should not be employed to sell Wreck	18
7.3 Sales to be advertised	18
7.4 Receiver to fix reserve bidding at sales of wreck	19
8 Salvage	19
8.1 Receivers claim for salvage.....	19
8.2 Revenue Officials claims for salvage.....	19
8.3 The Receiver of Wreck to assist salvor in claims	19
8.4 Payment of Salvage	20
8.5 Receiver to detain property for payment of salvage and release it on security being given ...	21
8.6 Receiver may appoint a Valuer in salvage cases	21
8.7 Property to be delivered to Owners.....	21
8.8 Claims of representatives of deceased Master or Crew.....	22
8.9 Property belonging to deceased passengers.....	22
8.10 Property found on dead bodies.....	22
9. Liability and Offences (Section 64, Principal Act).....	22
9.1 Interfering with wreck (Section 56, Principal Act).....	23
9.2 Passing over adjoining lands (Section 9, Principal Act)	23
9.3 Search warrant and powers of entry (Section 57, Principal Act).....	24
9.4 Seizure and Retention of property for use in criminal proceedings (Section 62, Principal Act)	25
9.5 Disposal of things seized (Section 61, Principal Act)	25
9.6 Provisions as to duties and taxes on goods from wreck, etc. (Section 58, Principal Act).....	26
10. Historic Wrecks and Archaeological Objects.....	26
10.1 Protection of sites of Historic wrecks (Section 3, National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987)	26
10.2 Disposal of Wreck being an archaeological object (Section 3(10) National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987).....	27
11. Wreck arrested by Admiralty Court	27
Appendix I	28
Appendix II	29
Appendix III	30

1. Introduction

1.1 General

A “Receiver of Wreck” is a Revenue Official appointed by the Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport with the consent of the Revenue Commissioners. Their duty is to deal with any wreck found in or on the shores of the sea or any tidal water or harbour. This manual is a guide to the role and duties of the Receiver of Wreck. It also contains information on procedures for appointment which should be noted by Branch Management.

1.2 Legislation

The legal provisions relating to the appointment and functions of Receiver of Wreck (the Receiver) are contained in the [Merchant Shipping \(Salvage and Wreck\) Act 1993](#) (The Principal Act), which amends and extends the Merchant Shipping Acts 1894 to 1992 and may be cited together with them as the Merchant Shipping Acts 1894 to 1993. **The Principal Act gives effect in Irish Law to the Salvage Convention carried out in London in 1989.**

In addition, [Section 3, National Monuments \(Amendment\) Act 1987](#) provides for the protection of sites of historic wrecks and the [National Monuments \(Amendment\) Act 1994](#) provides for the protection and preservation of archaeological objects.

1.3 Definitions (Section 2, Principal Act)

“**Wreck**” means a vessel, or part of a vessel, lying wrecked on, in or under the sea-bed or on, in land covered by water, and any objects that were formerly contained in or on a vessel and are lying on, in or under the sea-bed or on, in land covered by water.

Wreck includes “jetsam, flotsam, lagan and derelict found in or on the shores of the sea or any tidal water or harbour”.

“**Jetsam**” means goods cast overboard in order to lighten a vessel which is in danger of being sunk, notwithstanding that afterwards it perishes.

“**Flotsam**” means goods lost from a ship which has sunk or otherwise perished which are recoverable by reason of their remaining afloat.

“**Lagan**” means goods cast overboard from a ship which afterwards perishes, buoyed so as to render them recoverable.

“**Derelict**” means property whether vessel or cargo, which has been abandoned and deserted at sea by those who were in charge of it without any hope of recovering it. However, temporary desertion does not render a vessel derelict.

Most wreck which is reported to the Receiver falls under the heading of Derelict or occasionally Flotsam.

“**restricted area**” means an area designated in an Underwater Heritage Order.

“**sea**” includes any area submerged at high water of ordinary spring tides, an estuary or an arm of the sea and the tidal waters of any channel creek, bay or river and “**sea-bed**” shall be construed accordingly.

“**territorial waters of the State**” means the territorial seas of the State as defined in Section 93 of the [Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006](#) and the internal waters of the State for the purposes of that Act.

“**tidal water**” means any part of the sea and any part of a river within the ebb and flow of the tide at ordinary spring tides and not being a harbour.

1.4 Not classified as wreck

- (i) Boats which have come off their moorings are not classified as wreck, as they have not been abandoned without hope of recovery; and
- (ii) Buoys (i.e. marker buoys, mooring buoys etc.) other than those which form part of fishing equipment, are not classified as wreck.

1.5 Obligation to report wreck ([Section 45, Principal Act](#))

Any wreck material found in Irish territorial waters up to the twelve mile limit or outside Ireland and brought within Irish territorial waters, **must by law be reported** to the Receiver of Wreck.

The Receiver deals with wreck which comes from tidal waters only. All wreck material however small or apparently insignificant it may appear, must be reported to the Receiver who will decide if it is an important find. Examples of what may be reported include portholes, bells, plates, compasses, fixtures and fittings, bundles of wood, hatch covers, historical and archaeological material such as mediaeval pots, gold coins, cannon etc.

Under Section 80, Merchant Shipping Act 2010 a relevant party who has taken possession of a vessel raised under this Part shall give notice to the Receiver of Wreck for the district concerned in which the vessel is brought ashore stating that it has been found, taken possession of and brought ashore and describing the marks that distinguish it. Section 44 of the Principal Act does not apply to a vessel raised under this Part.

1.6 Role of Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport ([Section 40, Principal Act](#))

The Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport has general responsibility throughout the State for all matters relating to every wrecked or stranded vessel or other wreck. It also has responsibility for all policy issues relating to the functions of the Receiver of Wreck. The Maritime Services Division, within the Department, is where this policy is administered. Contact details are as follows:

Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport
Maritime Services Division
Leeson Lane
Dublin 2
Phone: 01-6783422/6783461
E-Mail: msd@dtas.ie

1.7 Appointments ([Section 41, Principal Act](#))

Under section 41 of the Principal Act, the appointment of Revenue officers as Receivers of Wreck is executed by the Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport with the consent of the Revenue Commissioners. For an up to date list of Receivers of Wreck, their contact details and the areas of coastline for which they are responsible, see [Receiver of Wreck - list of receivers](#). (Any other officers holding a preliminary inquiry or carrying out examination of vessels in distress must be specifically authorised by the Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport.) An appointment will remain in force as long as the officer remains at the stated Revenue office or until the Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport sees fit to revoke this appointment.

The following material is either exempt from or not required to be published under the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

[...]

1.9 Persons not permitted to act as Receiver of Wreck

No person shall be appointed as Receiver of Wreck, or allowed to retain that Office: – if they

- (i) are concerned directly or indirectly in the purchase or sale of wrecked goods or articles, or of ships or boats, ships tackle, apparel, or furniture, or other marine stores;
- (ii) are concerned directly or indirectly in the building or repairs of ships or boats;
- (iii) are a Consul or Vice-Consul for any Foreign State; or
- (iv) act or claim to act in respect of any wrecked ship or other property as Agent for any person having or claiming any interest in the wrecked ship i.e. an owner, a shipper, a consignee, an insurer or a salvor.

1.10 Districts of Receivers of Wreck

The aerial limits of the Districts of Receivers are specified in their appointments. See [Receiver of Wreck - list of receivers](#).

1.11 Indemnification of Receivers of Wreck ([Section 42, Principal Act](#))

The Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport shall indemnify each Receiver against any actions, expenses, costs, claims, demands and other liabilities in respect of any action by or omission or negligence on the part of the Receiver.

1.12 Security

In various sections of this Manual there is reference to security. For the purposes of this Manual, security is normally in the form of a bond. A bond is an irrevocable guarantee of all costs incurred

by the authorities. It must be drawn on a bank or other financial institution and must be unconditional and payable on first demand.

2. Fees

2.1 General Provisions

Fees, prescribed by the Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport are paid to each Receiver. A Receiver will be paid such fees in the discharge of his functions as a Receiver of Wreck as the Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport together with the Minister for Finance may direct.

A Receiver will not be entitled to any other payment in carrying out his duties other than those stated and he will have the same rights in respect of the recovery of expenses or fees as a salvor has in respect of salvage due to him.

Any disputes that arise about the amount of fees or expenses payable to a Receiver, will be determined by the Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport whose decision shall be final.

2.2 Current Fees Chargeable

The fees currently chargeable for functions carried out by the Receiver are listed in Schedule 6 of [S.I. No. 594/2010 Merchant Shipping \(Fees\) Order, 2010](#).

- (i) a fee of €7 will be paid to the Receiver for every report sent by him to the Secretary of Lloyds in London;
- (ii) a fee of 7.5% of the value of the wreck will be paid to the Receiver for wreck taken into custody by him;
- (iii) in cases in which any services are rendered by a Receiver in respect of any ship in distress, not being a wreck or in respect of the cargo or articles belonging to the ship, €72 for each day during which the Receiver is employed on that service; and
- (iv) in addition to the above mentioned fees, any expenses incurred in a particular case by a Receiver will be chargeable.

As Receivers of Wreck are salaried employees of the Revenue Commissioners they are not entitled to retain any fees or expenses payable by virtue of their carrying out their responsibilities in that regard. Accordingly, fees and expenses received are to be brought to account as receipts other than duties (R.O.D.). Where officers incur travelling and, or subsistence expenses in the carrying out of their duties as Receiver, normal rules apply.

3. Role of Receiver of Wreck

3.1 Duties of Receiver of Wreck

Upon notification that a wreck has been found the Receiver must attend at the site of the wreck. The duties of the Receiver are to:

- (i) give legal owners the opportunity of recovering their property and to ensure that the salvage reward is paid to the legal salvor when due;
- (ii) ensure the safe custody, protection and preservation of wrecked property;
- (iii) obtain information in respect of wrecks;
- (iv) settle salvage claims;
- (v) protect duties and taxes;
- (vi) protect duties and taxes arising from unclaimed wreck; and
- (vii) assist in cases of wreck or casualty including the preservation of life and property and the prevention of disputes and differences between the parties.

The Receiver processes incoming reports of wreck in the interest of both owner and salvor. This involves researching ownership, liaising with finder, owner and other interested parties such as the National Museum and Government Departments.

3.2 Receiver of Wreck to assist in settling claims

The Receiver has important duties to perform in endeavouring to settle salvage claims amicably.

The Receiver may have to

- (i) provide for the payment of what may be due by detaining the property saved;
- (ii) release the property on proper security being given;
- (iii) sell the property when necessary, to satisfy the claims of salvors; and
- (iv) apportion money paid in satisfaction of such claims.

4. Reporting formalities

4.1 Report Book to be kept

In every instance whereby a Receiver takes possession or custody of any goods or articles of any kind, whether Wreck or otherwise, the Receiver shall enter them in his Report Book, Wr. 10 (see [Appendix III](#))

4.2 Notice of Wreck to be given by the Receiver of Wreck ([Section 45, Principal Act](#))

When a report has been received, the Receiver must within 72 hours of taking possession of a wreck:

- (i) ensure that a notice is posted ([see Appendix II](#)), describing the wreck and any marks which distinguish it at the appropriate Revenue office and Garda station, which are nearest the place where the wreck was found. If there is more than one Office in the District, the notice should be posted at the Office the Receiver considers to be the most appropriate;
- (ii) send a similar notice to the Director of the National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin 2; and
- (iii) if, in the opinion of the Receiver, the value of the wreck exceeds €25,395 a report should be sent to the Secretary of the Committee of Lloyds of London, 1 Lime Street, London, EC3M 7HA, United Kingdom, using the form in [Appendix II](#).

4.3 Statement relating to a Shipping Casualty

Whenever a shipping casualty (e.g. Collision, Foundering, Missing, Fire, etc.) is reported to the Receiver he should contact The Marine Surveyors Office, Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2 and follow up with details on form Wr. 1 (see [Appendix III](#)). A Surveyor is normally sent by that Department to carry out a report on the casualty. The Receiver should note this in the Report Book.

However, the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport may request the Receiver to carry out the report. In this instance sworn statements are taken on form Wr. 2 (Examination on Oath-Instituted by the Receiver of Wreck) – see [Appendix III](#). A certified copy of Form Wr.1 and the statements taken on Form Wr.2 should be forwarded to the Secretary of the Committee of Lloyds of London, Royal Exchange, 1 Lime Street, London, EC3M 7HA, United Kingdom, for which the appropriate fees should be charged.

5. Custody of Wreck

5.1 Safe deposit of Wreck & Reports

As soon as any wreck is reported and brought to the Receiver or otherwise taken possession of by him, he should be careful to deposit it in some place of safe and proper custody avoiding all unnecessary expense.

He should also record an accurate description of it and any marks thereon in his Report Book, and complete form Wr. 5, 7 & 11 (Report of wreck taken into possession) – see [Appendix III](#). This report should be sent to the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport on any day on which an entry is made – see [Section 1.6](#) for address. (See also section 4, [Reporting formalities](#)).

5.2 Custody of Articles or Cargo from wrecked property

If any person finds or takes possession of any wreck in the State or finds and takes possession of any wreck outside the State and brings it into the State that person shall, pursuant to section 44 of the Principal Act:

- (i) give notice to the Receiver stating that they have found a wreck or taken possession of it and describe the marks that distinguish it if they own the wreck; or
- (ii) as soon as possible deliver it to the Receiver if they are not the owner of the wreck.

The object of this provision is to:

- (i) secure the property;
- (ii) prevent theft;
- (iii) provide for the just payment of salvage claims; and
- (iv) restore property to the owners

If it is necessary to detain the property the Receiver will do so and deposit it in some safe place, taking care to avoid all unnecessary expense.

5.3 Wreck or proceeds to be retained for one year, except in certain cases

The Receiver should never part with or give up possession of the wreck or of the proceeds of the sale within one year from the time the wreck came into the receiver's possession unless:

- (i) an owner or agent establishes his right to possession and identifies the property to the Receiver's satisfaction; or
- (ii) the Receiver is given a written direction (by a Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport official or the Admiralty Court) to give up possession to the owner or underwriters or their agent.

5.4 Proof of ownership, etc. to be completed as soon as possible

The Receiver should always point out to owners and underwriters that, with a view to keeping down expenses, it is in their interest to identify their property, to lodge security and to complete their proofs of ownership at an early date.

5.5 Claims of Owners of Wreck ([Section 46, Principal Act](#))

When a person establishes a claim to ownership of a wreck to the satisfaction of the Receiver within one year from the time when the wreck came into the Receiver's possession, then that person having paid the salvage, fees and expenses due, will be entitled to have possession of the wreck or of the proceeds of sale of the wreck.

A diplomatic agent or a consular officer of a foreign State shall be deemed to be the agent of the owner regarding custody and disposal of any foreign wreck found in the State or brought into any harbour of the State where:

- (i) the wreck is a vessel or part of a vessel registered in the foreign state or
- (ii) the owners of such wreck reside in the foreign state,

5.6 Suspected claim to ownership

If any person claims to retain wreck as owner and the Receiver has any doubts as to his title he should be requested to complete form Wr. 24-25 (Claim to wreck or other property) – see [Appendix III](#) and must prove ownership to the satisfaction of the Receiver. The possession of the wreck by an agent duly appointed by the owner should be treated as equivalent to possession of the wreck by the owner.

In no case should persons claiming to be agents of owners, masters or underwriters be permitted to interfere with or to take possession of property in the Receiver's custody under the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Acts 1894 to 1993, unless and until satisfactory evidence of ownership and of the authority of the person claiming to interfere, has been produced.

5.7 Property delivered into Receiver's custody which is proved not to be wreck

If property is brought to the Receiver which does not appear to be "wreck" within the meaning of the Act he should refuse to accept it into his custody. If property is taken into his custody and the wreck is subsequently verified by the claimant not to be wreck, no commission should be charged on restoring it but an account of actual expenses necessarily incurred in recovering and protecting it should be handed to the owners with a request for payment. If the owner refuses to make the payment the Receiver need not detain the property, but should report the particulars of the case to the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport.

5.8 Limitations on power of Receiver of Wreck

If the master of the vessel is in possession or is able to keep custody of the property or if the owner or any duly appointed agent of the owner or master can take and keep custody of the property and if there are no dutiable articles and if all salvage claims are paid or provided for by proper security the Receiver is not to take possession of or detain the property. He will however offer his services explaining his position, office and will give any assistance which the master, owner or agent may require. The presence of Lloyds agents or the owners being able to take charge of their property does not relieve the Receiver from attending at the scene of wreck and doing all in his power to prevent any attempt at stealing.

5.9 Receiver to take possession of sunken and abandoned vessels

In cases where vessels have sunk off the coast below low water mark and afterwards abandoned by the owners, the Receiver of Wreck in the District such vessels are situated should take possession of them.

In order to take possession it will be sufficient for the Receiver, or his nominee, to proceed in a boat to the spot where the vessel is lying and to drop a lead line over the vessel, declaring at the same time that he takes possession of such vessel by virtue of the powers vested in him by statute.

A record of the transaction should be kept by the Receiver in his report book and signed by him or his nominee, as the case may be, and the Receiver should at the same time make a report to the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport.

5.10 Receiver to put a fair construction on Derelict

In claiming the custody of “wreck” the Receiver must take care to put a fair and proper construction on the term “derelict” and, where the property is still in the custody or possession of the master or crew or of persons appointed by the master, he will neither encourage persons improperly claiming possession as salvors nor will he make claims himself to the custody of the property as wreck.

5.11 Immediate sale of wreck by Receiver in certain cases ([Section 47, Principal Act](#))

Any wreck in the possession of a Receiver may, with the prior agreement of the Director of the National Museum of Ireland, be sold if in the Receiver’s opinion it:

- (i) is under the value of €6,349; or
- (ii) is so much damaged or so perishable or volatile in nature that it cannot be kept; or
- (iii) is not of sufficient value to pay for storage.

5.12 Disposal of unclaimed wreck ([Section 49, Principal Act](#))

Where any wreck remains unclaimed within one year after it came into the Receiver’s possession, the Receiver is to notify the Director of the National Museum who is to decide within 30 days whether or not the wreck or any part of it is of historical, archaeological or artistic importance and notify the Receiver of his decision.

If the Director decides that the wreck or any part thereof is of historical, archaeological or artistic importance, the Receiver will deliver the wreck or any part thereof to the Director who will retain it on behalf of the State.

5.13 State entitlement to all unclaimed wreck ([Section 48, Principal Act](#))

The State is entitled to all unclaimed wreck and is also deemed to be the owner of that wreck.

5.14 Wreck found in another Receiver’s District

If goods which have been found on the shore in the District of one Receiver are reported or delivered to another Receiver, the latter Receiver will at once forward the report to the former Receiver, without paying or providing for salvage or making any charge on his own account.

5.15 Receiver not responsible for property after giving up possession

When a person establishes a claim to ownership and when the Receiver has given up possession (whether or not the salvage is paid, or security by bond or by cash is lodged) he need no longer look after the property. The agents who receive it on behalf of their principal must then be held responsible and any claims they may have must be settled by their principal.

5.16 Claim by Agent

If the person claiming it is an agent, or an owner unknown to the Receiver, he is to complete and declare the form Wr. 24-25 (see [Appendix III](#)) according to the directions on the form and deliver it to the Receiver. The Receiver must in all cases be careful that the proper documents are produced in support of the claim before delivering up possession of the property.

5.17 Whole of property to be taken

Care should be taken that when a claim to wrecked property is admitted the claimant is made to take the whole of what is comprised in his claim, or to pay the expenses of any portion of it which may be left by him in the Receiver's hands as not worth claiming.

For example, if a claimant establishes his claim to a cargo from a wrecked ship, and any portion of the cargo is damaged, he must take the damaged portion with the sound portion or must pay the expenses of salvaging, watching and disposing of the damaged portion before he is allowed to remove the other portions.

5.18 Claim after expiration of 12 months

If the property is wreck and no claim to it is made within one year after the Receiver obtains possession of it, any subsequent application by or on behalf of the owner must be referred to the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport.

5.19 Master to be treated as Agent for the owners of both ship and cargo

Where the owner of the ship is responsible for the cargo and the master of the ship has the legal custody thereof (as the agent of the owner) the Receiver will treat the master when present, as the agent of the owners not only of the ship, but also of the cargo, unless it is clearly proven that the owners have ended such agency.

5.20 Humanitarian cargoes ([Section 38, Principal Act](#))

The Provisions of Part III of Principal Act are not be used as a basis for the seizure, arrest or detention of humanitarian cargoes donated by the State or another state if the State or such other state, as the case may be, has agreed to pay for salvage services rendered in respect of such humanitarian cargoes.

6. Duties of finder of wreck

- (i) If any person, who is not the Receiver of Wreck for the District concerned, finds or takes possession of any wreck in the State or outside the State and brings it into the State that person must:
 - (a) if the owner of the wreck, make a report to the Receiver for the District concerned in which the wreck is found or into which the wreck is brought stating that he has found or taken possession of it and describing the marks which distinguish it; and
 - (b) if the finder is not the owner of the wreck, deliver it to the Receiver for the District concerned, as soon as possible.
- (ii) Failure to report wreck (even if a person owns the wreck) constitutes an offence and:
 - (a) if that person is not the owner of the wreck he forfeits any claim to salvage; and
 - (b) is liable to pay twice the value of the wreck to the owner if it is claimed or, if it is unclaimed, to the Receiver on behalf of the State.
- (iii) If any person conceals or, in the case of a person not being the owner of the wreck, keeps possession of any wreck or refuses to deliver the wreck to a Receiver for the District concerned or to any person authorised by a Receiver to demand the same, that person will be guilty of an offence.
- (iv) Any member of An Garda Síochána may take by force any wreck from the person who refuses to deliver it to the Receiver, and deliver it to the Receiver themselves, (see also section 11, [Wreck arrested by Admiralty Court](#)).

6.1 Removal of wreck in certain circumstances (Section 51, Principal Act)

Where any wreck is likely to become an obstruction or danger to navigation or to lifeboats engaged in the lifeboat service or a threat or harm to:

- (i) the marine environment;
- (ii) the health of the public;
- (iii) the marine resources, flora and fauna and their habitats;
- (iv) the tourist attractions of any area concerned; or
- (v) the maritime coastal, port, estuarial, or aquatic activities including fishing and tourist activities;

the owner of the wreck at the time of its sinking, wrecking, stranding, grounding or abandonment shall as soon as possible raise and remove it or otherwise render it harmless.

7. Payments

7.1 Payments by the National Museum ([Section 49, Principal Act](#))

The Director of the National Museum of Ireland shall pay:

- (i) the Receiver any expenses incurred by him and his fees in relation to the wreck or any part of it; and
- (ii) to the salvors of the wreck or any part of it, an appropriate salvage award.

If the Director decides that the wreck is not of historical, archaeological or artistic importance the Receiver will sell the wreck and pay the proceeds of the sale into the Exchequer after deducting:

- (i) expenses of the sale and any other expenses including fees incurred by the Receiver in relation to the wreck; and
- (ii) appropriate salvage award payable to any salvors.

A wreck which the Director decides is part of historical, archaeological or artistic importance shall not, in whole or in part, be removed by any person without the approval of the Director.

A person who contravenes the above will be guilty of an offence unless it can be shown the act was done:

- (i) in the course of an action to deal with an emergency of any description; or
- (ii) out of necessity due to stress of weather or navigational hazards.

7.2 Auctioneer should not be employed to sell Wreck

In cases in which Receivers (appointed under the Merchant Shipping Acts 1894 to 1993) have to sell Wreck, they should not employ an auctioneer for the purpose. Receivers are allowed to conduct such sales without auction licences.

7.3 Sales to be advertised

Advertisements of the sale of wrecked goods should be inserted in newspapers through the Revenue Press Office in the same way as notices relating to other goods which are for sale by Revenue. The Receiver should ascertain from the Revenue Press Office the gross cost of the advertisements and ensure that such cost is charged against the proceeds.

7.4 Receiver to fix reserve bidding at sales of wreck

In order to prevent goods from being sold under their value all Receivers are in every case to fix a fair and reasonable sum as a reserve bidding on the part of the State or other party entitled to the proceeds of the sale of unclaimed wreck.

8 Salvage

8.1 Receivers claim for salvage

The Receiver can never be entitled to salvage in respect of wreck. However, in cases of assistance rendered to ships in distress and to the persons on board, the Act does not preclude him from making such a claim but it is clear that he cannot claim salvage for any of the duties imposed on him for which certain fixed fees are to be paid. It can therefore only be in very special cases, where he incurs some risk or undertakes some labour or expense beyond the scope of his duties as Receiver that he can make any claims to salvage.

No powers that he possesses as Receiver may be used to determine or enforce his own claims to salvage.

8.2 Revenue Officials claims for salvage

Claims to salvage on behalf of Revenue Officials should be submitted in writing to the Receiver setting out the details of the claim. The application should be forwarded by the Receiver to his Branch Manager for adjudication.

8.3 The Receiver of Wreck to assist salvor in claims

Having completed salvage operations the salvaged vessel and other property should not, without consent of the salvor, be removed from the harbour or place at which they first arrived until satisfactory security has been put up for the salvors claim against the relevant vessel or property.

If satisfactory security has not been provided and the salvaged property is in the harbour but not in the salvors possession or control, the Receiver if required by the salvor, will detain the vessel and other property in the harbour until payment is made for salvage or a warrant of arrest has been issued by the High Court.

The Receiver will release any detained property if the security given:

- (i) is to the satisfaction of the Receiver (Security is normally in the form of a bond. It is an irrevocable guarantee of all costs incurred by the authorities. It must be drawn on a bank or other financial institution and must be unconditional and payable on first demand.) and
- (ii) where the claim (exclusive of interest and costs) exceeds €25,395 and any question is raised to the satisfaction of the High Court regarding the adequacy of the security,

and any security given for salvage may be enforced by the High Court in the same manner as if bail had been given in that Court.

Salvage operations which have had a useful result shall give rise to a reward in accordance with Part III of the Principal Act. With certain exceptions, no payment shall be due if the salvage operations did not have a useful result.

A salvor may be deprived of the whole or part of the payment due under Part III of the Principal Act to the extent that salvage operations have become necessary or more difficult because of fault or neglect on the salvors part or if the salvor has been guilty of fraud or other dishonest conduct.

8.4 Payment of Salvage

The Receiver shall give careful consideration to services rendered for salvage before suggesting the total value of such services. He will take into consideration:

- (i) the degree of danger from which the lives or property are rescued;
- (ii) the value of the property saved; and
- (iii) the risk incurred by the salvors.

Where the service rendered is one of time and labour only, it cannot be called salvage service and should be paid as labour only. If the service is rendered by a fishing vessel, the value of the fishing lost should be taken into consideration.

As a general rule, the value of the salvage service seldom exceeds one half of the value of the property and, except in highly meritorious cases, the half should be regarded as the maximum.

8.5 Receiver to detain property for payment of salvage and release it on security being given

It will be the Receiver's duty in every case where a salvage claim is disputed, except where the ship is a ship of war or other vessel belonging to a foreign Government, to detain the property saved until the claim is settled or proper security given. Special care should be taken in the case of a foreign vessel to make the detention effective. The application by the salvors to the Receiver to detain the property must be in the form of a written declaration executed before a Commissioner for Oaths and delivered to the Receiver. This declaration must contain sufficient information, as to the description, location and other relevant details of the wreck, to enable the Receiver to positively identify the wreck.

8.6 Receiver may appoint a Valuer in salvage cases

To determine the value, the Receiver has power, whether the wreck is in his custody or not (in which latter case he should first obtain payment of the fee) to employ a valuer whenever any salvage question arises, if either of the parties applies to him for the purpose. Any valuer so employed should be licensed.

The valuation, when made, should be signed by the valuer and kept by the Receiver. The Receiver should make and attest two copies and hand one to the salvors or their agent, and the other to the owners or their agent. These copies may be received in evidence in any subsequent proceedings.

Application to the Receiver to appoint a valuer should be made in writing; this should contain sufficient information, as to the description, location and other relevant details of the wreck, to enable a valuation to be carried out. The valuer should be appointed in writing. These valuations are not exempt from Stamp Duty.

For foreign vessels, the apportionment of salvage should be made according to the laws of the country to which the salving vessel belongs and the assistance of the particular Consul or Vice Consul will be useful.

8.7 Property to be delivered to Owners

On actual payment of all sums due or advanced for Customs duties, fees and expenses and upon salvage being either paid or provided for, the Receiver will deliver all property which comes into his possession or custody (and the proceeds of such parts of it as may have been sold) to the rightful owner or his appointed agent or will dispose of it as he or they may direct. The receipt for the property or for the proceeds is to be taken on form Wr. 24-25 (Claim to wreck or other property) – see [Appendix III](#) .

8.8 Claims of representatives of deceased Master or Crew

If the property belonged to the master or any of the crew of a wrecked ship, and if the person to whom it belonged is deceased, the claim of the person entitled to receive the property is to be submitted in a report to the Receiver of Wreck.

8.9 Property belonging to deceased passengers

Receivers should act in accordance with the preceding paragraph in respect of property whether in the nature of personal effects or ordinary luggage not wanted on a voyage, provided that the property is clearly marked with the name of the passenger.

8.10 Property found on dead bodies

Any property found on dead bodies picked up at sea or washed ashore should not be taken charge of by the Receiver but should be left to be dealt with by the proper authority. Should however such property come into his possession, he should communicate with the local Garda Síochána in order that they may take it over and deal with it, as lost property.

9. Liability and Offences ([Section 64, Principal Act](#))

A person shall be guilty of an offence if, in relation to a wrecked or stranded vessel, he:

- (i) impedes or hinders or attempts to impede or hinder the saving of a wreck;
- (ii) conceals any wreck;
- (iii) obliterates any mark on any wreck;
- (iv) removes any wreck; or
- (v) interferes with any wreck in any way.

A person shall not obstruct or impede an authorised officer, harbour master or Receiver in the due exercise of any of the functions conferred or exercisable by such officer, harbour master or Receiver under the Principal Act. A person who so obstructs or impedes shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable:

- (i) on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding €1270 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months, or to both; or
- (ii) on conviction on indictment, to a fine not exceeding €19046 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or to both.

9.1 Interfering with wreck ([Section 56, Principal Act](#))

A person who boards or attempts to board any wrecked or stranded vessel without the permission of the master or owner of that vessel shall be guilty of an offence. Where a person is accused of an offence, it shall be a good defence to prove that the person was acting in any of the following capacities:

- (i) as an authorised officer, an authorised person under [Section 26 of the Sea Pollution Act 1991](#), a Receiver of Wreck, a commissioned officer of the Defence Forces, a member of An Garda Síochána, a Revenue Official, or a harbour master; or
- (ii) a person acting in the place of any of these persons; or
- (iii) acting by or under the command of any person; or
- (iv) any person acting in an emergency situation where the master is not available to give permission to board, for the purpose of either or both:
 - (a) saving the lives of shipwrecked persons; or
 - (b) saving the vessel or any part of its cargo or apparel from destruction provided the saving is not for the purpose of wrongfully carrying away or removing any part of its cargo.

9.2 Passing over adjoining lands ([Section 9, Principal Act](#))

- (i) Whenever a vessel is in distress, any person may for the purpose of rendering assistance to the vessel, saving the lives of the shipwrecked persons or saving the cargo or apparel of the vessel, pass and repass either with or without vehicles, over any adjoining lands, unless there is some public road equally convenient, without being subject to interruption by the owner or occupier, so that as little damage as possible is done and may also deposit on those lands any cargo or other article recovered from the vessel;
- (ii) any damage sustained by an owner or occupier, as a consequence of the exercise of the rights given by Section 9 of the Principal Act, will be a charge on the vessel, cargo or articles in respect of or by which damage is occasioned, and the amount payable in respect of the damage shall in the case of dispute, be determined and shall, in default of payment, be recoverable in the same manner as the amount of salvage is determined or recoverable;

- (iii) the owner or occupier of lands shall have no liability in respect of:
- (a) personal injuries which may be sustained by persons passing or re-passing over such lands pursuant to subsection (1); or
 - (b) damage sustained to the vessel in distress, its cargo or any other article recovered therefrom

except where the owner or occupier, or persons duly acting as the servants or agents of the owner or occupier, are maliciously involved in such injuries or damage; and

- (iv) where the owner or occupier of any land:
- (a) impedes or hinders any person in the exercise of any rights given; or
 - (b) impedes or hinders the deposit of any cargo or other article recovered from the vessel; or
 - (c) prevents or endeavours to prevent any such cargo or other article from remaining deposited on the land for a reasonable time until it can be removed to a safe place of public deposit,

that owner or occupier shall be guilty of an offence.

9.3 Search warrant and powers of entry ([Section 57, Principal Act](#))

If a Judge of the District Court is satisfied, by information on oath of a member of An Garda Síochána or a Receiver, that there is reasonable cause for suspecting that any wrecked or stranded vessel or other wreck is being concealed by, or is in the possession of, some person who is not the owner or Receiver of it, or is otherwise being improperly dealt with, the Judge may issue a search warrant under Section 57 of the Principal Act.

A search warrant issued under the above section shall be expressed and operate to authorise a named member of An Garda Síochána or a named Receiver, accompanied by such members of An Garda Síochána and Revenue Officials as the named member or Receiver thinks necessary, at any time or times within one month from the date of issue of the warrant, on production if so requested of the warrant:

- (i) to enter (if necessary by force) the land, premises, vehicle, vessel or aircraft named in the warrant;
- (ii) to search the land, premises, vehicle, vessel or aircraft and any persons found therein; and
- (iii) to examine anything found therein.

9.4 Seizure and Retention of property for use in criminal proceedings ([Section 62, Principal Act](#))

If there is reasonable ground for suspecting that anything:

- (i) may be required as evidence in proceedings for an offence under Section 57 of the Principal Act; or
- (iii) should be in possession of the Receiver for retention or disposal in accordance with the provisions of Section 57 of the Principal Act;

it shall be seized and retained.

9.5 Disposal of things seized ([Section 61, Principal Act](#))

Where anything is seized by a member of An Garda Síochána under the Principal Act the Receiver may apply to a Peace Commissioner for a direction that the thing so seized be delivered to that Receiver for retention or disposal.

Where a direction is given, the Receiver concerned shall give notice of the making of the direction to the owner and such other persons (if any) in such a manner as the Peace Commissioner may direct.

Any person who is aggrieved by a direction may, not later than 7 days after notice of the making of the direction is given, or such longer period as the Peace Commissioner may direct, appeal to a Judge of the District Court against the direction and in determining the appeal the Judge may:

- (i) if satisfied that the direction was properly given and that, having regard to the circumstances of the case, the direction should be confirmed in respect of some or all of the things so seized, confirm the direction to that extent; or
- (ii) if not so satisfied, annul the direction or annul the direction to the extent that the Judge is not so satisfied; or
- (iii) where no appeal has been made within the appropriate period, the direction shall have effect upon the expiration of that period; or
- (iv) where an appeal is taken to the District Court the order shall, if the District Court confirms the direction, have effect to such extent and at such time as the Court determines.

9.6 Provisions as to duties and taxes on goods from wreck, etc. ([Section 58, Principal Act](#))

Without prejudice to the Customs Acts or the statutes which relate to the duties of excise and to the management of those duties, the Revenue Commissioners shall, subject to the provision of such security as they see fit to require, permit:

- (i) all goods saved from any wrecked or stranded vessel on its homeward voyage to be forwarded to the port of original destination; and
- (ii) all goods saved from any wrecked or stranded vessel on its outward voyage to be returned to the port at which they were shipped.

Goods include wares and merchandise.

10. Historic Wrecks and Archaeological Objects

10.1 Protection of sites of Historic wrecks ([Section 3, National Monuments \(Amendment\) Act 1987](#))

Where the Commissioners of Public Works are satisfied in respect of any place on, in or under the sea-bed of the territorial waters of the State or on, in or under the sea-bed to which [Section 2 of the Continental Shelf Act 1968](#) applies or on or in land covered by water that:

- (i) it may prove to be the site where a wreck or archaeological object lies or formerly lay; and
- (ii) on account of the historical, archaeological or artistic importance of the wreck or the object, the site ought to be protected;

they may by order (referred to as an Underwater Heritage Order) designate an area of the sea-bed, or land covered by water, around and including the site as a restricted area. In a restricted area a person shall not tamper with, damage or remove any part of a wreck or any:

- (i) archaeological object; or
- (ii) carry out diving, survey or salvage operations directed to the location or exploration of a wreck or archaeological object, or to recovering it or a part of it from, or from under, the sea-bed or from land covered by water, as the case may be, or use equipment constructed or adapted for any purpose of diving, survey or salvage operations; or
- (iii) deposit, so as to fall and lie abandoned on the sea-bed or land covered by water anything which, if it were to fall on the site, would wholly or partly obliterate the site or obstruct access to it, or damage any part of the wreck.

10.2 Disposal of Wreck being an archaeological object (Section 3(10) National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987)

If wreck that is an archaeological object and was removed from a restricted area is in the possession of the Receiver for any District and no person establishes a claim under the Merchant Shipping Acts 1894 to 1993, to the ownership of the wreck within one year after it came into the possession of the said Receiver, he will, as the Director of the National Museum of Ireland may request, either:

- (i) deliver the wreck to the Director of the National Museum of Ireland who, as soon as may be after such a delivery, will:
 - (a) retain it on behalf of the State;
 - (b) pay to the Receiver any expenses incurred by him, and his fees, in relation to the wreck; and
 - (c) pay to any salvors of the wreck, such amount of salvage as appears to the Director of the National Museum of Ireland to be reasonable in all the circumstance;

or

- (ii) sell the wreck and pay the proceeds of the sale (after deducting the expenses of the sale and any other expenses incurred by him, and his fees, in relation to the wreck and paying to any salvors of the wreck such amount of salvage as appears to the Director of the National Museum to be reasonable in all the circumstances) to the Minister for Finance.

11. Wreck arrested by Admiralty Court

When a derelict vessel in the custody of the Receiver, or other wrecked property detained by a Receiver for the payment of salvage, is arrested on foot of a warrant issued by the Admiralty Court, the vessel is then in the custody of the officer of the court. (The Admiralty Court is a specific Branch of the Courts Service dealing with shipping matters. That Court has specific rules - for example, where a summons/warrant is served, it must be physically fixed to the mast or some prominent place of the ship.)

If ownership of a wreck is in dispute the case may end up in the Admiralty Court which may issue a warrant for arrest of the wreck while the dispute is settled.

Before releasing the vessel, the Receiver should claim any expenses and fees he may have incurred.

Appendix I

For an up to date list of Receivers of Wreck, their contact details and the areas of coastline for which they are responsible, see [Receiver of Wreck - list of receivers](#).

Appendix II

The following material is either exempt from or not required to be published under the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

[...]

Appendix III

The following material is either exempt from or not required to be published under the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

[...]