Bristol’s £27million City Museum opens

17/06/2011

The new museum was funded by an £11.6m Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant, Bristol City Council, DCMS and a range of individuals and trusts.

The museum will be housed in the landmark 1950s transit sheds at Prince’s Wharf on the historic waterfront in the heart of the city. Located less than half a mile away from the award-winning SS Great Britain and opposite the Arnolfini Gallery and Watershed Media Centre, it will be at the hub of a vibrant cultural quarter of Bristol. The whole site – the sheds and their quayside - is one of the last remaining complete 20th century docksides in the UK.

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of the Heritage Lottery Fund, said: “M-Shed is a significant addition to Bristol’s already exceptional cultural landscape. For the first time, this dynamic city will have a ‘one-stop shop’ that brings together all the different strands of its unique history. The Heritage Lottery Fund has invested over £11m to help make this happen – we’re absolutely delighted with the results and confident that Bristolians and visitors from further afield will feel the same way about this special museum.”

The museum will include 3,000 exhibits, drawn from the world class collection of the city, telling the many thousands of stories of the people of Bristol, which have been discovered through working with experts and communities across the city, a process that will continue for the life of the museum.

Julie Finch, Head of Bristol Museums and Archives, said: “M Shed will be a world class museum. It builds on Bristol’s great heritage to brings experts and the community together in the joint endeavour of building a new narrative for the city. I hope M Shed will become a destination for the understanding and celebration of the history of Bristol and its people and a vibrant learning resource for the future, open to all.”

M Shed, the building which gives the museum its name, has been sympathetically restored, with the aim of preserving its historic character, while also transforming it into a 21st century museum. The work has been carried out by LAB Architecture Studio, perhaps most famous for the design of Melbourne’s Federation Square. The new museum includes three permanent galleries and a temporary exhibition space, a new glazed rooftop extension with spectacular panoramic views across the harbour, workshops, a functioning train shed, a learning suite, and café, book and gift shop. Entrance to the museum will be free.

Among the unique displays will be:

• Models and props for Wallace and Gromit, Curse of the Were Rabbit, donated by animator Nick Park, from Bristol based Aardman Animations. Wallace and Gromit have not only established worldwide fame, but have now been officially adopted as Bristolians.
• Documents of the notorious Bristol Bus Boycott, led by a group of Bristol’s blackworkers, which hit the world’s headlines in 1963 and whose cause was championed by Tony Benn. The dispute was eventually to lead to the end of racial discrimination in Britain.

M Shed will also host live events including debates and discussions around the issues raised in the museum. It will also include hands-on workshops with volunteers from Bristol’s dock side community, who will share their skills with visitors

as part of a living archive for the Museum.

M Shed, Wapping Rd, Bristol, BS1 4RN
Opening Friday 17 June 2011
www.mshed.org
Admission free
Opening hours: Opening hours: Tuesday to Friday from 10am ? 5pm, and on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays from 10am ? 6pm.

Date of issue: 04.05.2011

Notes to editors:

Julie Finch is head of Museums and Archives in Bristol. She joined Bristol's Museum Galleries and Archives Service in 2006, from her previous posts as Director of the National Football Museum and before that Head of Salford Heritage Services. Her interests lie in providing access to resources for the public in creative and exciting ways and unlocking policy in order to establish the best possible outcome for the public. Connecting people with their history, contemporary society, their own identity and the identity of others is key to this.

Bristol City's Museums Galleries and Archives and their collections are a nationally recognised resource. In addition to M Shed, which replaces the former Industrial Museum, they include: the City Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol's premier museum including important collections of minerals and fossils, natural history, eastern art, world wildlife, Egyptology, archaeology and seven galleries of fine and applied art; **Blaise Castle House Museum**, a 19th century mansion set in 400 acres of parkland and home to the city's social history collection; the **Georgian House Museum**, an exquisite example of an 18th century townhouse, restored and decorated in the style of the period; the **Red Lodge Museum**, which houses one of the city's greatest treasures, the Great Oak Room, considered to be one of the finest Elizabethan rooms in the West Country; **Kingsweston Roman Villa**, the partial remains of a Roman villa; and the **City Record Office**, housed in a large converted tobacco warehouse at the entrance to the city's famous Floating Harbour and giving access to over 800 years of Bristol's historic archives.

For more information:
Laura Bates or Roland Smith, HLF press office, 0207 591 6027/6047 lbates@hlf.org.uk/rolands@hlf.org.uk