'Command of the Oceans' rides the waves of success

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The Historic Dockyard Chatham in Kent has received initial HLF support* for its ‘Command of the Oceans’ project, it was announced today. At the heart of this new £8.4m project will be ‘the ship beneath the floor’ which focuses on the conservation and long-term preservation of the remains of a highly significant warship with important associations with 18th and early 19th-century people and events. The project will become the gateway to Chatham’s world-class naval and military heritage, providing a sense of arrival, orientation, navigation to dispersed sites and interpretation. HLF has given development funding of £116,300 at this stage to assist The Historic Dockyard Chatham in progressing its plans to seek approval for the full £4.5m grant at the second-round.

The project will reconnect some of Chatham’s earliest features including the North and South Mast Ponds constructed in 1696 and 1702, the adjacent ‘Mast Houses and Mould Loft’, and ‘Wheelwright Shop’. This redevelopment work will provide visitors with a four and a half hectare, free to enter heritage gateway and improved entrance to the Dockyard in the mast pond area, and in doing so make the most of the important mast making monuments. This new space will encourage everyone to explore the history of the dockyard and its defences and also form the starting point for a series of discovery trails.

Bill Ferris OBE, Chief Executive of Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, said; “This is fantastic news, we are thrilled that we have received the first-round pass from the Heritage Lottery Fund, an organisation which has already done so much in supporting the heritage of this amazing place. Visitors’ overall experience when going to see The Historic Dockyard Chatham and the wider world class military and naval heritage in Medway will be dramatically improved through the provision of a new and very much enhanced sense of arrival, with layered orientation and interpretation - appropriate to arrival at a destination of outstanding historic significance. However, the hard work is yet to come and we are ready for it! We must raise £4m within 15 months to enable us to match the £4.5m allocation from Heritage Lottery Fund to complete the project. We are currently in negotiations with a significant funder to cover the majority of the remainder”.

Mr Ferris continued: “We will be making an exciting announcement about this project here at The Historic Dockyard Chatham on Friday 17 August. The name of our ‘ship beneath the floor’ and its major historic significance to Britain’s ‘Command of the Oceans’ will be revealed!”

Stuart McLeod, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South East, said: “The Historic Dockyard at Chatham is an extraordinary site that charts Britain’s impressive naval history. The Heritage Lottery Fund is delighted to be giving our initial support for the ‘Command of the Oceans’ project which includes plans to dramatically improve the visitor experience at Chatham and reveal important archaeological finds for the first time. We are looking forward to seeing these exciting and innovative plans develop over the next few months.”

Notes to editors

*Initial support (about the first-round pass)
A first-round pass means the project meets HLF criteria for funding and HLF believes the project has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has

up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award. On occasion, an applicant with a first-round pass will also be awarded development funding towards the development of their scheme.

Further information

Gail Louise James, Communications Manager, Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust on 01634 823 813 or gjames@chdt.org.uk.