Portsmouth boatbuilding skills project secures Lottery support

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The project, which focuses on preserving and celebrating valuable traditional skills, will be delivered by PNBPT and the IBTC Portsmouth, the new, south coast branch of the long established International Boatbuilding Training College, specialists in traditional boatbuilding training. The centre will open its doors to the public and begin training in April 2015.

Boathouse 4, an iconic building within the Historic Dockyard constructed during the massive 1930s rearmament period, will be restored and opened to the public as the Boatbuilding & Heritage Skills Training Centre. The boathouse will become a Centre of Excellence for boatbuilding training, with IBTC Portsmouth and Highbury College delivering practical, intensive courses in traditional boatbuilding and related skills. The centre will provide annual Heritage Bursaries, offering local people currently unemployed or disengaged with education the opportunity to undertake one year's full time traditional boatbuilding training, leading to a City and Guilds qualification and an IBTC Portsmouth Diploma. Graduates will leave the centre with valuable boatbuilding and engineering skills, enabling them to develop careers in the broader heritage and marine sectors.

Nat Wilson, CEO of IBTC Portsmouth said: "Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, as the centre of the nation's maritime heritage, is the best location in the UK to deliver traditional boatbuilding skills training. We are looking forward to opening our doors in April 2015 and are already receiving enquiries from those wishing to take up our range of courses."

The centre will also offer many opportunities for people to get involved with and learn about our maritime heritage, including short courses and family weekend programmes, sessions with local schools, a summer festival, and an extended volunteer scheme offering mentoring and skills training.

Visitors will be able to watch traditional boatbuilding in action as well as enjoy fun, tactile and engaging exhibitions on the building and the fascinating story of small boats in the British Navy, including the display of several small craft from the trust's own collection. The centre, based in the very boathouse used during the Second World War to construct the secret three man midget X-Craft submarine, will be the perfect setting for visitors to discover the astonishing history of small boats in the Navy, from Captain Bligh cast off the Bounty in a 23ft launch to Ernest Shackleton's legendary voyage to South Georgia in the James Caird.

Peter Goodship, PNBPT Consultant Chief Executive said: "The Heritage Lottery Fund grant will increase diversification in the Historic Dockyard, leading to meaningful community engagement and greatly enhanced prospects of employment for those taking the training courses. It is also significant that Boathouse 4 will be used for the purpose for which it was originally built, bringing alive part of the civilian story of the dockyard, as well as giving a new slant on the history of the Royal Navy."

Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East, said: "This is a great opportunity to provide in demand and popular heritage skills training. The project will recreate the industrial past of Portsmouth Historic Dockyard's impressive cathedral-sized boathouse which was so crucial for rearmament on the South coast during teh Second World War. We are passionate

about helping people learn new skills so our great maritime heritage can be enjoyed and maintained for the future."

As well as securing the future of Boathouse 4, the skills training opportunities delivered within this project will help to create the next generation of craftsmen to preserve iconic ships such as HMS Victory and HMS Warrior. IBTC Portsmouth students will spend part of their course at the Shipwright's School to be established at the historic shipbuilding village of Buckler's Hard on the Beaulieu River, enabling them to further develop the skills required for the construction and restoration of larger vessels.

Dominic Tweddle, Director General of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, which owns HMS Victory, said: "HMS Victory depends on traditional craft skills for her very survival. It is splendid that there will be a centre at the Dockyard which can train the people Victory desperately needs."

The project has also received £479,000 from the Regional Growth Fund, a government initiative supporting large projects with the potential to create long-term private sector jobs, as part of a £1.3m award towards PNBPT projects.

Further information

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Boatbuilding, blacksmithing and shoe-making – HLF boosts heritage skills across the UK