Restoration of SS Nomadic Receives Lottery Support

27/09/2010

HLF awarded a first-round* pass of £2.65million for the Nomadic Charitable Trust (NCT) plans to restore the *SS Nomadic* and Hamilton Graving Dock. The decision is a positive endorsement of the outline plans and the NCT can now progress to the final round of the funding process.

The *SS Nomadic* was launched on 25th April 1911, and is the tender ship that ferried 1st and 2nd class passengers from Cherbourg to the Titanic on her fateful voyage. *SS Nomadic* was built by Harland and Wolff and is believed to have been originally fitted at Hamilton Graving Dock on Queen's Island. Both the vessel and the dock are of huge national and international heritage importance, with the *SS Nomadic* listed on the Core Collection of the National Historic Ships Register and Hamilton Dock designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The NCT proposals aim to restore the *SS Nomadic* and Hamilton Graving Dock and open both as learning and interpretive shared spaces. Information and artefacts relating to the *SS Nomadic*, the dock and their links to the Titanic will be brought together and used to tell the story of the shipyards and the wider industries operating during the period, creating a sense of what it was like to live and work in Belfast in 1911 during the great age of trans-Atlantic travel.

Commenting on the announcement, Head of HLF Northern Ireland, Paul Mullan, said: "This is fantastic news for Northern Ireland. In a hugely competitive funding environment, the heritage merit of this project shines through. As one of the great industrial cities of the 19th and 20th centuries, Belfast has a rich industrial and maritime heritage, and as the city that built the world's most famous liner, a unique claim to the Titanic story. The *SS Nomadic* and Hamilton Graving Dock are key links in that story and this project has the potential to play a significant part in the centenary commemorations of the sinking of the Titanic in 2012.

"Now the real work begins to transform these outline proposals into an achievable plan that will deliver a high quality heritage experience for both the local community and visitors from across the world."

The project will use the restored *SS Nomadic* to explore the hierarchy of travel in the period, along with the many famous passengers she carried in her golden age, including Charlie Chaplin, Elizabeth Taylor and John Jacob Astor. The restored interior will be interpreted to show the grandeur of the lower and upper decks which housed the 1st and 2nd class passenger areas, which contrast to the comparative austerity of the 3rd class area.

The restored vessel will also house the People's Museum, a shared exhibition and events space which will be developed in partnership with the Ulster People's College. The People's Museum will accommodate talks, lectures, exhibitions and events to enable people to better understand their heritage.

The restoration of Hamilton Dock and the repair of its existing cobbles will provide opportunities to explore the quay as a working 1911 dockside. Themes to be explored include the construction of the dock between 1863 and 1867, its role in the much larger shipyard and how water was controlled in the dock.

The plans also include the development of a range of educational and outreach activities to increase opportunities for the local community to engage with, learn more about and become actively involved in the project. Friends of Nomadic

Trust (FONT) has been established to encourage community participation and volunteers will be recruited and trained to take part in the restoration and act as tour guides following its completion.

Denis Rooney, Chairman of Nomadic Charitable Trust, said: “We are delighted that HLF appreciate the tremendous potential of the Nomadic project and have awarded us this first round pass. We are confident that we will be able to deliver a project which will reward their trust in us and will be something which the will make everyone in Northern Ireland immensely proud."

Alex Attwood MLA, Social Development Minister, said: “The funding award by the Heritage Lottery Fund provides a welcome boost for the Nomadic restoration project and will help secure the Nomadic Trust's plan to create at Hamilton Dock a sustainable visitor attraction which presents the vessel and the Dock as an authentic picture of Belfast in 1911."

For more information about HLF grants programmes.

Notes to editors

* A first-round pass means the project meets our criteria for funding and we believe it 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.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage.

Since 1994 the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded £135 million to projects across Northern Ireland.

Further information

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SS Nomadic & Hamilton dock development

SS Nomadic restored as a major maritime tourism attraction

Nomadic restoration sails ahead thanks to £3million lottery grant