Titanic Drawing Offices and Northern Counties to



Nicky Dunn and Carole Souter in the famous Drawing Office One

Two projects from Northern Ireland are among the first in the UK to benefit from the Heritage Lottery Fund's (HLF) pioneering new funding programme, Heritage Enterprise. A huge £5.7million investment has been earmarked by HLF through the programme for the conservation and regeneration of the former Harland and Wolff Headquarters Building and Drawing Offices in Belfast and the Northern Counties in Derry~Londonderry.

The investment is part of an UK-wide funding package worth £12m that will transform five important but neglected historic buildings back to commercial use, creating economic growth in five local areas and an estimated 230 FTE* jobs by attracting private investment. This is part of a wider investment of at least £125m over the next five years.

Heritage Enterprise addresses 'market failure' - where buildings have previously failed to attract investment or realise their commercial potential because the cost of repair has meant that - until now - they were not commercially viable. The Lottery investment announced today bridges that financial gap. It will specifically help fund vital repairs and conservation works to these historic buildings, converting them into safe, usable and inspirational spaces for new businesses. By doing so, these Lottery grants will help remove one of the key obstacles currently standing in the way of regeneration by transforming these neglected buildings into productive enterprises that will create local jobs and generate wealth.

Commenting on the announcement, HLF Chief Executive, Carole Souter, said: “Through Heritage Enterprise we have inspired creative new partnerships between social and private enterprise to rescue and return to use some of our most neglected historic buildings. Not only are we safeguarding these wonderful heritage assets, through this investment the local economy will also receive a boost and much-needed new jobs will be created.

“This multi-million pound investment in Northern Ireland’s heritage will enable two iconic local buildings to be brought back to life and have their potential as tourist assets and catalysts for wider regeneration achieved, and we are delighted to be involved.”

The Harland and Wolff Headquarters Building and Drawing Offices on Queen’s Island were the control centre for the largest shipyard in the world. It was here that Belfast workers created and designed over 1000 ships including the White Star Olympic Class Liners – Olympic, Titanic and Britannic and naval warships such as HMS Belfast. The building has been vacant since 1989 and has been considered ‘at risk’ for almost a decade.

A £5m grant has been earmarked to support the restoration of the B+ Listed building into an 87-bedroom boutique hotel, with the potential to create 109 FTE jobs. The most historically important rooms such as the Drawing Offices, Board Room, Telephony Room and Entrance Lobby will be developed as spaces for public use. The building will be used to tell the story of Belfast’s industrial heritage, focusing on the authentic spaces and fixtures and fittings that relate to the local shipbuilding industry.

Nicky Dunn, Chair of Titanic Foundation Limited, welcomed the investment: “We are delighted that our application to HLF’s Heritage Enterprise fund has been successful. The former Harland and Wolff Headquarters Building and Drawing Offices are one of the most authentic and tangible links to narrating Belfast and Northern Ireland’s maritime and industrial heritage. The Titanic Foundation has worked in partnership with Titanic Quarter Limited to develop a new use for what we regard as a national icon. We are committed to maximising both the heritage and commercial opportunities, promoting preservation, public access as well as tourism and wider economic benefits.”

The Northern Counties in Derry~Londonderry is located on Bishop’s Street within the Conservation Area and was originally developed as two buildings before it was remodelled around the year 1902. Its previous life included time as a private member’s club, when it was an iconic base for the business and civic leaders of the city and as such was not accessible to the general public. Social and demographic changes in the city resulted in the closure of the club and it became used for office accommodation before becoming vacant in 2006.

A £784,000 earmarked HLF grant will be used to transform this iconic building into a hospitality based complex. The Preservation Trust is currently finalising its options appraisal including discussions with potential operators. The refurbished building will bring social and economic benefits to the inner city area with the potential to create approximately 45 new jobs and significantly improve the tourism offer in the city centre.

Managing Director of the Inner City Building Preservation Trust, Helen Quigley, said: “This is an exciting project that will substantially contribute to the renewal of the building and regeneration of the area and is part of our overall investment strategy for projects within the old walled city part of the city centre."

Notes to editors

*Heritage Enterprise applications are assessed in two rounds. A first-round pass is given when HLF has endorsed outline proposals and earmarked funding. A first-round pass may also include an immediate award to fund the

development of the project. Detailed proposals are then considered by HLF at second-round and as long as plans have progressed satisfactorily and according to the original proposal, an award for the project is confirmed.

**FTE - Full-time equivalent jobs created, based on applicant estimations.

Since 1994 the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded £175million to over 1,000 projects across Northern Ireland.

Further information

HLF Northen Ireland, please contact Julie Halliday at on 07733 100674, email: julieh@hlf.org.uk.

For further information on the regeneration of the former Harland and Wolff Headquarters Building and Drawing Offices in Belfast or to request an interview with a representative from the Titanic Foundation Limited, please contact Selina McElwee at Smarts Communicate on 028 9039 5500 / 07724 477 087, email: selina.mcelwee@smartscommunicate.com.



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Carole Souter and Nicky Dunn at the Harland and Wolff drawing offices

Lottery investment to unlock commercial potential of five unused historic buildings