

Command of the Oceans at Chatham Historic Dockyard

29/11/2013

Command of the Oceans will secure the repair and preservation of a range of the Historic Dockyard's Scheduled Ancient Monuments and its 18th century Ship's Timbers Archaeological find.

It will create world class galleries, interpretation and visitor facilities to reveal the story and significance of the dockyard and its defences during the age of sail and deliver an appropriate sense of arrival for visitors - not only to the Historic Dockyard itself, but also to the wider Chatham Dockyard and its Defences Tentative List World Heritage Site – through the creation of a 4.5 hectare area of heritage based public realm and a discovery centre for the dockyard and potential wider World Heritage Site. Simply put, this investment will, through excellent storytelling and conservation, unlock the value of Chatham's world class heritage.

The Historic Dockyard Chatham is the world's best preserved example of a dockyard of the age of sail. During the 18th century the site played an instrumental role in supporting the Royal Navy secure worldwide supremacy at sea, setting in place the conditions that enabled trade and empire to develop and Britain to lead an industrial revolution that changed the world. This project will enable that story to be told at Chatham for the first time.

Chief Executive of Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, Bill Ferris OBE, said: "Command of the Oceans is arguably the most significant single project undertaken by the trust in pursuit of its own educational charitable purposes since the 'Wooden Walls' gallery opened in the late 1980s. The project meets a number of urgent conservation and visitor needs. The news that the wonderful Heritage Lottery Fund has again supported us, with a number of long standing funding partners – including the Homes and Communities Agency – is testament to the ever increasing significance of our work here, the significance of the place and the outstanding creativity of our team. We hope this news will give a major boost to the 'Chatham Dockyard and its Defences' World Heritage Site bid."

Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East, said: "The Historic Dockyard at Chatham is an extraordinary site that charts Britain's impressive naval history. We at HLF are delighted to be supporting the 'Command of the Oceans' project which will dramatically improve the visitor experience at Chatham and reveal important archaeological finds for the first time. Visitors from around the country and beyond will now have the chance learn about the huge impact Chatham had on our military heritage."

The HLF grant announced today also unlocks a further £4m for the project including a substantial £3m contribution from the Homes & Communities Agency, responsible for the regeneration of the adjacent Chatham Maritime site and c£1m from a range of Charitable Trust's & Foundations.

The grant announced today will enable Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust to start project delivery early in the new year with completion anticipated in Spring 2016.

Notes to editors

The Historic Dockyard Chatham

Examples of those who have funded previously for projects such as No. 1 Smithery include the Garfield Weston Foundation, the Headley Trust, DCMS / Wolfson Galleries Improvement Fund, Biffa Award.

The Historic Dockyard Chatham is the most complete Dockyard of the Age of Sail to survive anywhere in the world. For over 370 years the Royal Dockyard at Chatham played a crucial role in supporting the Royal Navy, building over 400 ships – including HMS Victory, Nelson’s flagship at Trafalgar. Since 1984, Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust has created a unique world-class maritime heritage destination providing homes, work places and unrivalled visitor experiences through its strategy of ‘preservation through re-use’ with stunning iconic buildings, historic ships, museum galleries and attractions, where visitors discover the unique part the Historic Dockyard played in Britain’s maritime history.

Chatham Dockyard and its Defences Discovery Centre

There is currently no central point of arrival to Chatham’s World Class Heritage. A key part of the project is to create a sense of arrival not only to the dockyard but to the tentative Chatham Dockyard and its Defences World Heritage Site. This will be achieved through the creation of a free to enter discovery centre within the Wheelwrights’ shop (Scheduled Monument and Grade II*) that will enable visitors to gain an initial orientation, overview and understanding of the wider Chatham Dockyard and its Defences sites and their significance. A network of discovery trails will be developed linking navigation marks at each of the key sites – Fort Amherst, Great Lines Heritage Park and Lower Lines Park, Royal Engineers Museum Library and Archives; and Upnor castle.

The Discovery Centre will enable visitors to dig deeper into the history and relationships between all the Chatham sites, discovering more about what each site has to offer and how to access and explore them. The centre will provide much needed facilities to support community engagement, providing a home base for the wider potential Chatham World Heritage Site and other community groups engaged with Chatham’s naval and military heritage. The centre will be the hub of activity and learning spaces for formal, informal and lifelong learning users and community groups.

Further information

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