Ed Vaizey opens London Museum of Water and



Following its £2.3million re-development grant, London's greatest Victorian steam pumping station reopens under a new name. **The London Museum of Water and Steam** opens to the public on Saturday 22 March, (following a press launch on Friday 21 March), as part of the UN designated World Water Day.

Wesley Kerr, Chair of the London Committee of the Heritage Lottery Fund, said: "We are delighted to have been able to support the transformation of this museum on the site of the world's oldest surviving waterworks containing its original steam pumping engines. It has a fascinating story to tell about technical innovation revolutionizing public health right at the dawn of the Victorian era."

The London Museum of Water and Steam (formerly Kew Bridge Steam Museum) is one of London's most significant Victorian visitor attractions. It houses some of the world's rarest working steam engines still in their original location and tells the incredible story of how the Victorians cleaned up London's water supply – and in doing so created the blueprint for the modern city of London we know today.

As part of the £2.3m refurbishment, the London Museum of Water and Steam takes you on a journey through time, descending deep down under a floating city of London, past a timeline of pipes, from women at the well, to Hugh Myddleton digging the New River, until you are beneath London itself and can see all the pipe and tunnel work needed to keep a modern city going. There are examples of how water was used from the 17th-century to the present day, as

well as crawl-through tunnels and walk-through sewers.

There are also two laboratory areas for children to examine clean and dirty water as well as interactive exhibits on how much water we now use in the UK compared to other places around the world. Outside there is a new Splashzone, where children of all ages can make water travel to heights of up to five metres with the assistance of specially designed pulleys, levers, sluices and pumps, as well as the 1902 Hindley Waterwheel, which shows one of the ways water was moved in the early 20th century.

In addition to a welcoming new visitor entrance and café - which can be enjoyed without the need to visit the museum - there will be improvements and repairs to the historic building work, including a new locomotive shed and a refurbished fire engine shed.

Kew Bridge Pumping Station is particularly significant, as during the early nineteenth century, much of London's water supply was deadly. Thousands of people regularly died from cholera and other diseases after drinking dirty water drawn from the rivers, canals and many wells in London. In 1838, Kew Bridge Pumping Station was built, supplying for the first time a constant supply of clean water that was pumped directly into people's homes. Thanks to Thomas Wicksteed, the innovative engineer of the Grand Junction Water Works Company which built Kew Bridge Pumping Station, steam engines were able for the first time to pump water 24 hours a day at a price people could afford. It was this single technical innovation which made the expansion of London into a world city possible.

The London Museum of Water and Steam houses five original and four other large pumping engines, one of which the 90 inch Cornish Engine, is the largest example in the world. Most of these engines are in steam every weekend and bank holidays, along with the museum's diesel pumps, narrow gauge railway and steam fire engine. On weekdays a number of engines are operated electrically including the Hindley Waterwheel and the James Kay double beam rotative engine.

In 1993 the United Nations declared March 22 as *World Water Day* in an attempt to raise global awareness of the world's water as a precious and finite resource. The water we use today is the same water that has been used for millions of years, and yet each year we need more and more to meet our needs, making it the worlds most precious resource.

Notes to editors

In July 2012 the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded the Kew Bridge Engines Trust £1.845m enabling it to begin a vital restoration work. The total project cost is £2.45m. Additional funding has been provided by Thames Water Utilities Ltd., the London Borough of Hounslow, the Garfield Weston Foundation and the Charles Hayward Foundation.

The Kew Bridge Engines Trust was established to restore the buildings and pumping engines of the Kew Bridge Pumping Station and to open the site to the public. It has operated the museum for 37 years during which time it has repaired the main historic buildings, restored four of the five original pumping engines to working order, and added four more large pumping engines, many other exhibits and displays on water supply, and a narrow gauge steam railway. The museum currently opens six days a week, with the pumping engines operating most weekends. Visit the museum website for further information.

Further information

For further press information and images please contact Ewan Thomson PR on 020 8743 6837 / 07917 167790 or email: ewan@ewanthomsonpr.com.