# Major boost for Maritime Museum

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The outline proposals from Derry City Council were awarded a first-round pass and development grant of £278,000, which will be used to work up more detailed plans in order to secure the full £3million grant award. The ambitious project will create a new visitor attraction on the Waterside of the city by conserving two listed buildings within the former military site for use as the Maritime Museum and Archive Centre.

The project will bring to life the city's rich maritime heritage with the museum galleries tracing the history of the River Foyle, the development of the port and its impact on human and social heritage through exhibitions, interpretative materials and interactive elements. Inside the buildings the Heritage and Museum Service's archive of some 30,000 items, which are currently largely inaccessible, will be opened to the general public. Amongst the gems of the collection, which is the largest and most significant public archive held outside of the Public Records Office NI, are 18th and 19th century records related to emigration - Derry~Londonderry being the main port of emigration from the north of the island of Ireland at that time.

Announcing the award, Head of HLF Northern Ireland, Paul Mullan, said: "This excellent project has the potential to explore the largely untold story of the region's maritime history and its impact upon the people of the north-west. The new Maritime Museum and Archive Centre will undoubtedly be a major legacy of the UK City of Culture 2013 programme, and we are delighted to offer our initial support to these plans and look forward to receiving the fully developed proposals in due course."

The creation of the regional archive centre will provide access, display and interpretative space for the city's archive and genealogical collections, which are unique to Northern Ireland. The galleries will also introduce the story of the Erbington site. The first known military use of Ebrington was during the Siege of Derry (1688-89) when Jacobite soldiers used the site to bombard the walled city. Many of the remaining heritage buildings at Ebrington date from the 1840s and span the Crimean War, both World Wars, the Cold War and the Troubles.

Local people will be encouraged to become involved in the project with volunteers recruited and trained to help index the collections and carry out genealogical research. Training will also be provided in collections care, learning programmes and research skills. New education facilities such as a lecture theatre, meeting spaces and training rooms will create space for a range of formal and informal learning opportunities including guided tours, activity trails and audio tours. A series of open days, behind-the-scenes experiences, living history and cross-generational events will be held to encourage community groups, school children and members of the public to get involved with the activities.

Welcoming the announcement, the Mayor Cllr Kevin Campbell, said: "This is a welcome announcement from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The development of the Maritime Museum and Archive Centre at Ebrington will highlight the importance of our city's maritime heritage and illustrate the international significance of these collections and stories."

Mel Higgins, Acting Chief Executive of Ilex, added: "Today's announcement is another important step in the development of Ebrington, following on from the opening of the Peace Bridge and Ebrington Square, the development of The Venue 2013 and the forthcoming creative industries hub. There is no more appropriate site for the maritime museum which will be the most significant of its kind in the island of Ireland."

**Notes to editors**

A first-round pass plus development funding 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 this is an endorsement of outline proposals. The project will submit fully developed proposals to secure a firm award at a later date.

**Further information**

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