Making History on the River Lagan

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The Barge MV Confiance, has been restored as part of Lagan Legacy's plans to create a dedicated maritime museum which tells the story of the River Lagan and Northern Ireland's industrial and maritime heritage. Funding was secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund (£624,000), the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (£150,000), and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (£90,000). The barge houses a state-of-the-art exhibition, a multi-use heritage and arts space, with a café in the pipeline, boasting panoramic views of the river that nurtured Belfast's unmatched historic productivity.

Visitors to the museum will have access to Lagan Legacy's collection of thousands of artefacts of local maritime heritage, including important drawings from Harland and Wolff, physical artefacts, letters and photographs. Local schools, colleges and community groups will benefit from a programme of outreach and educational activities, enabling them to explore and learn more about our maritime heritage.

Derek Booker, Founder/Director of Lagan Legacy, said: "The River Lagan was the artery to the world for thousands of millions of tons of exports, and is still a vital natural resource. In the past, four thousand Lagan-launched ships ruled the waves and many still do. Harland &Wolff's prototype Churchill Tank reigned over battlefields; thousands of tons of Belfast's fruit lozenges were savoured by countless happy children; and the riverside's glass kilns punctured the skies. The Lagan connected its wares to the world's wants; from pins and planes to pottery and preserved potatoes.

"This is the greatest untold story, until now. The museum will act as a focal point for our industrial heritage, bringing to life the history of the River Lagan through interactive exhibitions and changing displays to provide a unique visitor experience. We would like to thank the project funders for their support which allowed us to deliver this new resource for the city."

Ronnie Spence, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund Northern Ireland Committee, said: "We are delighted to be involved in this project which will raise awareness of, and increase access to, Belfast's rich maritime heritage. This fantastic resource will create new opportunities to attract and engage both local people and visitors to the city with our unique industrial past, and demonstrates the importance of our heritage in creating a brighter, more sustainable future for us all."

Lorraine McDowell, Director of Operations, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, commented: "The Arts Council is pleased to offer its support to this fantastic new performance space on a barge in the heart of Belfast. This newly furbished arts space will provide a unique location for theatre and dance organisations from across Northern Ireland to come together to train and perform."

Siobhan McCauley, NITB Director of Product Development said: "Belfast has a rich maritime history and I am pleased that NITB's Tourism Development Scheme is supporting the Lagan Legacy. By providing a maritime heritage venue, in the form of MV Confiance which houses maritime collections, our history will be brought to life for local communities and visitors alike. It will also complement the Titanic Quarter and become part of Belfast's maritime trail. It is hoped that this project will not only increase tourism in the area but also promote employment in the local tourism industry."

Further information

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