Nomadic restoration sails ahead thanks to £3million lottery grant

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The plans from Nomadic Charitable Trust (NCT) will see the *Nomadic* and Hamilton Graving Dock become a learning and interpretative space which will provide an authentic experience of life and work in booming industrial Belfast in 1911.

Launched on 25 April 1911, *Nomadic* was built by the same Harland and Wolff workers who built *Titanic* and is exactly one quarter the size of her more famous sister ship. She was the tender ship that ferried mainly 1st and 2nd class passengers from Cherbourg to *Titanic* on her doomed maiden voyage. During her years of service as a tender Nomadic carried the most famous passengers of the day including Charlie Chaplin, Elizabeth Taylor and John Jacob Astor, before becoming a troop ship during the First and Second World Wars and finally a restaurant on the River Seine, Paris.

It is believed *Nomadic* was originally fitted out at Hamilton Graving Dock, a Scheduled Monument on Queen's Island. The dock was constructed between 1863 and 1867 and was the first graving dock built on the County Down side of the River Lagan.

Both the vessel and dock will be conserved, restored and developed to create an attraction dedicated to Belfast's maritime heritage and the golden age of trans-Atlantic steam travel. The city's ship building heritage and links to *Nomadic*, *Titanic* and the White Star Line will be explored alongside the story of life in, and emigration from Northern Ireland.

Commenting on the announcement, Ronnie Spence, Chair of the HLF Committee for Northern Ireland, said: "We are delighted to announce this multi-million pound grant to restore and conserve the SS *Nomadic* and Hamilton Graving Dock, two heritage assets which are of huge importance in the wider story of the industrialisation of Belfast.

"The project will enable people to see, hear and experience what life was like in the famous Harland and Wolff docks during 1911, and with the world's last remaining link to *Titanic* and sole-surviving White Star Line vessel taking centre stage, the SS *Nomadic* will provide a unique and authentic offering for visitors to the Titanic Quarter".

The project will provide public access to Hamilton Graving Dock for the first time, enabling visitors to explore the quay as a working 1911 dockside. The original Pump House, which dates to 1867, will be also be restored to house a retail, gift and interpretative space.

Original plans and drawings will be used to sensitively restore the vessel, with original panelling and features retained and reused where possible. The restored interior will highlight the hierarchy of travel during the period, with the lower and upper decks which housed the 1st and 2nd class passengers contrasting sharply with the austerity of the 3rd class area.

The lower deck will house a dedicated education and learning space for local schools and community groups and the People's Museum, which will accommodate a programme of events and activities such as lectures, talks and exhibitions.

Welcoming the announcement Denis Rooney, Chairman of NCT, said: "On behalf of the Nomadic Trust I am delighted by this great news. Thanks to the generous support of Heritage Lottery Fund we will now be able to complete the restoration of this magnificent ship and deliver an iconic tourist attraction for Northern Ireland. I would like to acknowledge the support of DSD as well as the other key funders which has made the project possible."

The Nomadic Charitable Trust will announce in the months ahead its plans for the future management of the vessel which involves a commitment from the Department for Social Development to transfer ownership of the Nomadic to the NCT.

Nelson McCausland MLA, Minister for Social Development said: “I am delighted to hear that the SS Nomadic Restoration project has been awarded £3.25million to sensitively restore both the vessel and Hamilton Dock and to open these heritage assets as learning and interpretative shared space. This grant will require a matched funding contribution from my department, which currently has ownership of the *Nomadic*. Subject to satisfactory appraisal I have therefore earmarked a funding contribution of up to £1million to deliver this heritage project which will potentially deliver significant regeneration benefits. It is recognised that the project will attract new and additional visitors to Northern Ireland, Belfast and Titanic Quarter in particular by offering a rich visitor attraction.”

Further information

Please contact Julie Halliday on 07733 100 674 or email julieh@hlf.org.uk.



SS Nomadic & Hamilton dock development

SS Nomadic restored as a major maritime tourism attraction

Restoration of SS Nomadic Receives Lottery Support