# Steamship SS Shieldhall returns to service and wins Heritage Lottery Fund award

14/06/2012

A development grant of £143,600 will enable essential work to take place and a dry dock inspection at A & P's facilities in Falmouth in preparation for a submission for a full HLF grant of £838,100 to ensure the long term future of the Shieldhall in Southampton.

The Heritage Lottery Fund first-round funding represents a 66% contribution towards the total costs of £218,020 during the development phase for the project. The balance has been made from contributions from our many supporters.

Shieldhall successfully returned to passenger sailings in April following the grant by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency of a passenger certificate for 2012. She participated in the Titanic commemorations in April and in Cunard's 'Three Queens' jubilee celebrations. A busy and exiting sailing programme from her home port of Southampton is scheduled for the coming months.

Graham Mackenzie, Managing Director, said: " This funding will help us to draw up a full submission which if successful will ensure the SS Shieldhall continues to sail for many more years and to be a working example of our maritime heritage. We are absolutely delighted that all of our hard work has paid off and that HLF have recognised what a valuable contribution the SS Shieldhall is to our island maritime heritage. I would like to thank the HLF and all our friends for their continued support. Its been an exciting period for us receiving this news at the same time as we returned to sea representing the steam age at the Titanic and Cunard's 3 Queen's Jubilee event".

Explaining the importance of the HLF support, Stuart McLeod, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for South East England, said: “SS Shieldhall is the largest remaining sea-going steamship operated by volunteers in the UK, and the need for these works is evident to conserve the ship for future generations. HLF is pleased to give initial support to this worthwhile project.”

Built in 1955 for Glasgow Corporation as a coastal tanker with, unusually, day-excursion passenger accommodation. She is a twin-screw sea-going vessel of 1,972 gross tons with a length overall of 268 feet (82 m) powered by two 800 HP (596 kW) triple-expansion steam engines.

The Solent Steam Packet Limited (Exempt Charity No 26065R) was set up by a group of enthusiasts to buy and run the SS Shieldhall in 1988 and, following restoration, obtained MCA UK Class VI Certification permitting carriage of up to 200 passengers on coastal sea-going excursions.

All UK passenger ships are subject to stringent certification by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA) to ensure the safety of passengers and crew. An essential part of this is a rigorous inspection of a ship’s hull in dry-dock on a regular basis.

The ship is crewed by fully qualified but unpaid volunteers and relies solely upon revenue from fares and donations for

survival. Over the past 20 years, approximately 25,000 passengers have enjoyed not only the smooth and peaceful nature of steam propulsion but also the opportunity for supervised access to SS Shieldhall's bridge, engine and boiler rooms thus providing a unique maritime heritage experience.

Since restoration to full working order in 1991, SS Shieldhall has provided the public with unparalleled heritage maritime experience through sea-going cruises in the Solent and along the south coast of England. The ship is operated by a fully qualified crew together with a shore-based support staff, all of whom are unpaid volunteers.

SS Shieldhall not only provides a unique opportunity for the general public of all ages to visit her and see her in action, she also supports the community of Hampshire in many different ways by providing:

- A realistic training platform for Hampshire Fire and Rescue service.
- An opportunity for air/sea rescue exercises with the RNLI and HM Coastguard.
- A training facility for members of the Sea Cadet Corps and Sea Scouts aged between 12 and 25 years from all different backgrounds.
- A working example of 19th and 20th century industrial technology to school children and youth organisations, historical societies and local groups aged from 9 to 90 years.

**Notes to editors**

*A first-round pass means the project meets HLF criteria for funding and HLF believes the project has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award.

On occasion, an applicant with a first-round pass will also be awarded development funding towards the development of their scheme.

**Further information**

Contact Managing Director Graham Mackenzie on 07751 603 190 / graham@ss-shieldhall.co.uk. Or contact Master Captain Peter Roberts on 07879 848 594 / master@ss-shieldhall.co.uk.