Thames tales gathered for historic harbour

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‘A Sense of Place’ will be led by Hermitage River Projects, a dynamic river-based charity located on a site of historical and archaeological significance, just downstream from Tower Bridge, in the heart of what was once the navigational centre of the City of London.

Together with Hermitage Community Moorings (HCM), Hermitage River Projects has created an historic harbour to ensure the preservation of traditional river- and sea-going boats including Thames sailing barges, tugs, fishing vessels and coasters. Some of the boats are over 100 years old; all are navigable ex-working vessels that have been lovingly restored.

Through the HLF-funded project, Hermitage will collect images, film, documents, archaeological finds and histories of the site, and the historic boats, to create an archive that will be a source of information for events in the Pier House (the mooring’s floating community space). Hermitage holds a number of public Open Days for various shore-based communities including schools, museums, history groups, and local residents.

In particular, children from nearby Hermitage Primary School, will get involved as part of their Upper Key Stage Two curriculum. A series of oral history training workshops will also be arranged for community volunteers so they can help in interviewing and recording the reminiscences of watermen and lightermen, and those working the tugs, barges and tourist boats, the fire, police and RNLI launches and the other varied craft that populate the river. Digital workshops will also be provided to train volunteers in how to edit, store and archive the material collected and recorded.

Hermitage is now part of the infrastructure of the River Thames and contributes to a vibrant river economy by supporting the essential ancillary services such as boatyards, dry docks, chandlers, diesel stations, marine engineers and shipwrights that are vital for the preservation of the historic vessels. Situated in the Upper Pool it is also close to the River Police headquarters and museum at Wapping. Also, the Upper Pool’s last remaining eel fisherman, Bruce Pope, maintains his eel pots adjacent to the Hermitage moorings.

For Hermitage River Projects Anne Wainwright, said: "This project will reassert this unique part of London’s river heritage for all to experience and enjoy".

For the Heritage Lottery Fund, Head of HLF London Sue Bowers, said: “This project will add a new dimension to the historic vessels moored here by gathering the stories of those associated with the working river that was the lifeblood of London as well as for those who lived on it and by it.”

The project will be launched on 11th September 2010 during the Mayor’s Thames Valley Festival.

Notes to editors

Hermitage Community Moorings (HCM) is a co-operative which owns and operates a mooring on the Thames at Hermitage Wharf, Wapping. The mooring provides berths for up to 20 vessels: enabling a mixture of live-aboard, recreational and visitor use. HCM provides well-managed river access for local people, including educational and recreational facilities. The infrastructure is designed to create a small, close-knit community of people committed to boat

use and the preservation of historic craft.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

Further information

HLF Press Office, Vicky Wilford on 020 7591 6046 / 07973 401937 or vickyw@hlf.org.uk or Phil Cooper on 07889 949 173.

Sarah Byrne, Project Leader, Hermitage River Projects on 020 7481 2122.