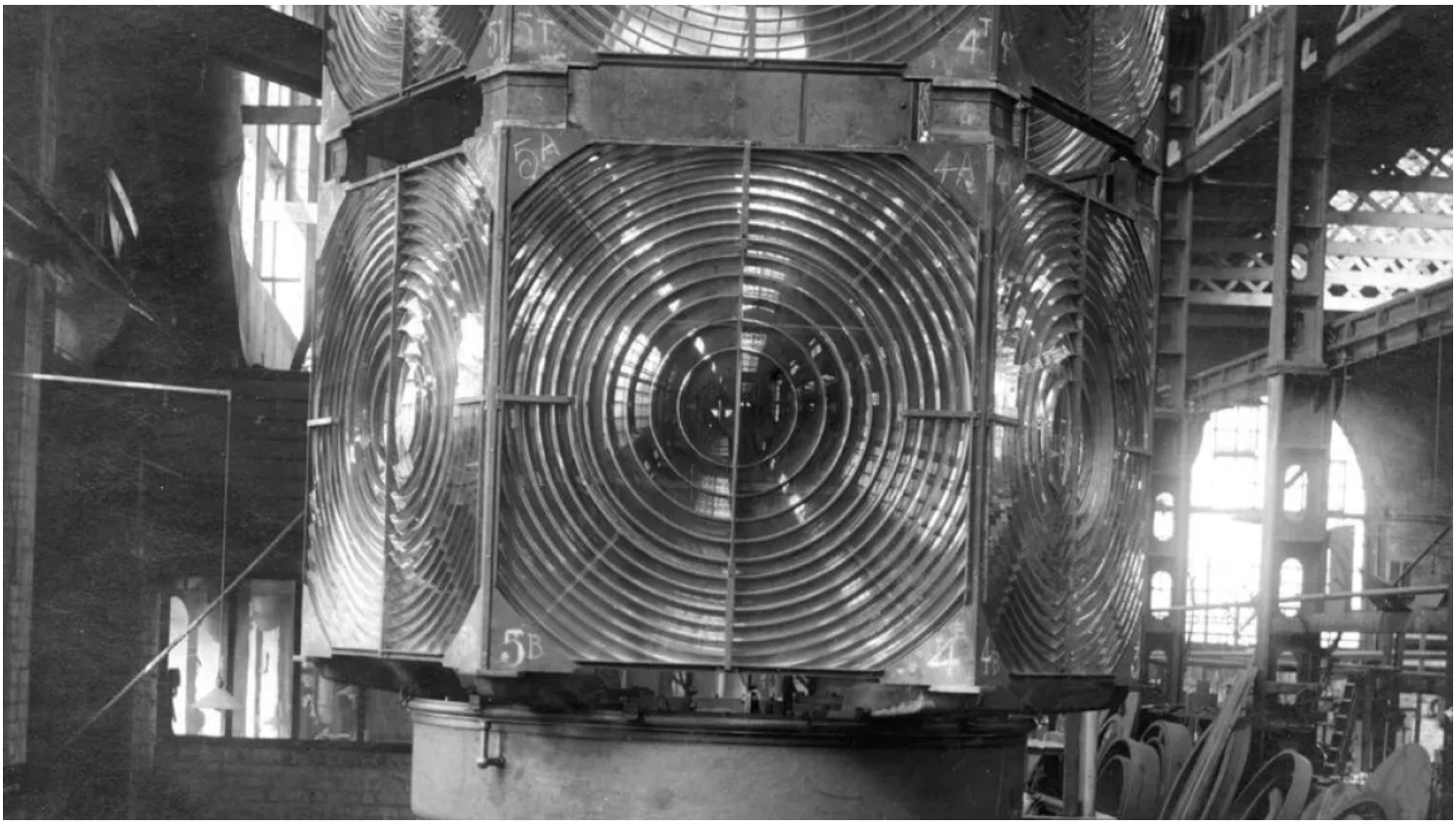


The Mew Island Lighthouse Optic is a rare hyper radial Fresnel lens. Titanic Foundation

This award, along with early support from Ulster Garden Villages, will allow the project to progress to the second stage of the HLF application process.

If the second stage is successful, the optic, which is a very rare hyper radial Fresnel lens, will undergo full restoration. The optic will be housed in a new interpretive structure, made to resemble a lighthouse lantern room, where it would add an iconic element to Belfast's Titanic Quarter. With free public access, it will tell the story of lighthouses, their technological development, their lightkeepers and the lighthouse's role in the proud maritime and industrial heritage of Belfast and Ulster.

Mew Island Lighthouse

Mew Island Lighthouse, on the outermost of the Copeland Islands, is one of the tallest lighthouses in Ireland. It is an important aid to navigation at the southern entrance to Belfast Lough, built at a time when Belfast was the world centre of linen production, rope making and ship building, and one of the most important ports in the world.

The lighthouse optic is the internal apparatus which gave Mew Island Lighthouse its traditional revolving light. Made in Paris in 1887, it is possibly the largest ever constructed, at a staggering seven metres high, nearly three metres wide and weighing up to 10 tonnes. The optic is one of 29 of the largest optics ever made, with only 18 still in existence. It is

one of only three similar optics in Ireland, none of which are now operational. As technology developed, the Mew Island optic was lit with town gas (derived manually from coal on the island), vaporised paraffin and electricity.

Kerrie Sweeney, Titanic Foundation Chief Executive, commented: "This remarkable object is an amazing piece of industrial and scientific heritage and our proposal has really captured the public's interest. We've received letters of support from the World Lighthouse Society as well as the UK Committee of the International Year of Light 2015.

"We are delighted to have secured support from HLF and Ulster Garden Villages; this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to save and restore an artefact of national and international significance and create a legacy Belfast landmark which will inspire future generations."

[quote=Paul Mullan, Head of HLF Northern Ireland]"The Mew Island optic is of great scientific and heritage value so we were delighted to receive these ambitious plans to restore and put it on public display."[/quote]

Paul Mullan, Head of HLF Northern Ireland, said: "The Mew Island optic is of great scientific and heritage value so we were delighted to receive these ambitious plans to restore and put it on public display. The project has the potential to create a truly unique and wonderful heritage attraction in the heart of Belfast's maritime quarter and we look forward to receiving the full proposals in due course."

Irish Lights, recognising the importance of the optic within Belfast's maritime heritage, has been working for more than three years to find it a suitable home. Barry Phelan, Irish Lights Project Engineer, said: "This project will ultimately develop a brand new tourist attraction in Belfast, and will provide a permanent home for the magnificent Mew Island Lighthouse Optic beside a very worthy neighbour - Titanic Belfast.

"The project will also shine a light on the wonderful Great Lighthouses of Ireland nearby, which offers you a chance to stay in, visit or learn about lighthouses and the Irish Lights at Blackhead Antrim, St John's Point Down, Rathlin Island, or further afield."

The optic, which was replaced by a modern solar-powered, flashing LED in March 2015, has already been transferred from Mew Island to Irish Lights' offices in Dun Laoghaire where initial restoration works are being carried out.

Further information

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Find out more on the Titanic Foundation website or check them out on Twitter and Facebook.