



Belfast City Council

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| Report to: | Development Committee |
| Subject: | Belfast Titanic and Maritime Heritage Study |
| Date: | 11 August 2010 |
| Reporting Officer: | John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470 |
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Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that there are a number of exciting developments underway, including the construction of the Titanic Signature Project, (on schedule to open by April 2012), the restoration of the Nomadic and the opening of the barge 'Confiance' by the charity Lagan Legacy as an interpretative centre in early September. There are also a number of significant tourism initiatives which are making Belfast's Titanic and wider maritime heritage more accessible to visitors.

HMS Caroline is about to be decommissioned as a Royal Navy ship and her future is under consideration.

Titanic Quarter in general is a scene of active construction, including a new Public Record Office and campus for Belfast Metropolitan College.

Council, in partnership with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and the Department of Social Development, commissioned a study to map current assets and provision in the area of maritime and Titanic heritage, but also to look at possible future developments and provision. The terms of reference are provided as Appendix 1. The contract was awarded to a consortium of CHL Consulting, Colin Stutt Consulting and FM Planning, whose expertise covers a wide range of areas.

A draft report has now been received. Suggested measures include:

- Ensuring Titanic related projects provide a coherent visitor experience by 2012
- The development of a more co-ordinated approach, including possible joint-ticketing among attractions;
- Small-scale development of certain key locations, to improve both access and understanding – particularly Clarendon Dock and Sailortown where earlier and more diverse stories can be told;
- More emphasis on animating the river itself; to be recognised as a Maritime

Heritage destination Belfast must offer more water-based experiences, including the completion of SS Nomadic, the barge 'Confiance' and possibly HMS Caroline.

- The development of an integrated signage strategy, with improvements to Titanic Quarter access, crucially including public transport.
- Longer term actions possibly including the preservation of shipyard steam cranes, access to Samson or Goliath cranes, a water taxi service and a footbridge linking Abercorn Basin with Clarendon Dock

The consultants made a presentation of their work to a group which included the commissioning bodies and the permanent secretaries of the Departments of Trade and Industry and of Culture, Arts and Leisure. Both the work itself and the underlying approach were enthusiastically welcomed in a very positive manner.

Key Issues

HMS Caroline is due to be decommissioned and passed into the ownership of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, the trustees of which will make a decision as to whether the ship should remain in Belfast or be transferred to Portsmouth. In either case it is intended that the ship becomes a heritage asset and tourist attraction.

HMS Caroline has been in Belfast since 1924 and is of very considerable historical importance being ranked second on the navy's list to HMS Victory. She fought in the only major naval battle of the World War I and whilst in Belfast played a key part in World War II's Battle of the Atlantic. Her centenary and that of the start of World War I are coming up in 1914.

The draft Maritime Heritage Study recommends that HMS Caroline remains in Belfast however acknowledge there are associated capital and annual revenue costs. Belfast City Council has written to the National Museum of the Royal Navy to explain that work has commenced on the Maritime Study and that time is required to reach a decision on whether or not a request will be made to keep the ship in Belfast.

We have requested until March 2011 to allow for central government and the Council to consider this in the context of strategic priorities and budget availability. We are awaiting confirmation that this is an acceptable timeframe.

Resource Implications

Human Resources

The proposals would be carried out within current staffing resources.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee :

1. notes of the draft report recommendations, being aware that a final version will be submitted for agreement;
2. agrees that officers continue the collaboration; and
3. agrees that officers investigate the feasibility of retaining HMS Caroline in Belfast, by what mechanisms involving a range of stakeholders and what costs might be involved, with a view to submitting a report in December 2010

