



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	HMS Caroline
Date:	18 September 2012
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Ms Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	<p>At the meeting of the Council on 2nd July, 2012 the undernoted Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Kingston, seconded by Councillor McCarthy and referred to the Committee for consideration:</p> <p>“This Council recognises the historical significance of HMS Caroline as one of just two surviving First World War Royal Navy ships and the last survivor of the Battle of Jutland still afloat; notes the contribution which HMS Caroline has made to Belfast where she has been stationed for over 85 years; recognises the contribution which the development of this unique attraction can make to our tourism economy; and confirms its commitment and desire to work expeditiously with the Assembly Executive, the Ministry of Defence, the National Museum of the Royal Navy and other relevant bodies to preserve, develop and promote HMS Caroline as a key attraction and feature of maritime heritage in Belfast’s Titanic Quarter.”</p>
1.2	<p>HMS Caroline is a battle cruiser commissioned and built in 1914. She is the last surviving ship to have fought in the 1916 Battle of Jutland, the major naval battle of World War I. She also played a role in early experiments launching and collecting aircraft at sea. In 1923 Caroline came to Belfast as headquarters of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, having her guns removed and other conversion work carried out by Harland and Wolff.</p>
1.3	<p>In World War II HMS Caroline was the Royal Naval Headquarters and had a major role in the Battle of the Atlantic. Belfast Castle was a sub-station and the total complement of both men and women affiliated to the ship ran to many thousands.</p>

1.4	Post-war Caroline continued in her role with the Royal Naval Reserve until December 2009, at which time she was the second oldest ship serving, after HMS Victory. After a formal decommissioning ceremony at the end of March 2011 the ship became part of the core collections of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, from which the process of de-accessioning under the central government rules relating to museum accreditation would be difficult and complex.
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2	Key Issues
2.1	HMS Caroline was identified in the Maritime Heritage Study jointly commissioned by Council, Department of Social Development and Northern Ireland Tourist Board as one of the key potential assets in developing a wider maritime heritage offer. She is now and will remain in the ownership of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, as a key part of the national historic fleet.
2.2	Caroline was maintained as far as necessary to fulfil her limited operational role. The Royal Navy has paid for the removal of asbestos. Subsequent costs can be divided into two sections: necessary conservation and maintenance to ensure the ship's on-going survival and work related to her development as an accessible heritage attraction. These costs are not dependent on her location. It is understood that the National Museum of the Royal Navy has secured funding to address immediate maintenance issues and that this work is currently being carried out by Harland and Wolff.
2.3	Substantial additional sums would be required to prepare and transport the ship to another location which would only be possible within limited weather windows.
2.4	It is also understood that the Museum is submitting an application for c.£5m to the Heritage Lottery Fund November national board meeting. This will be the first of two stages necessary to receive a grant and could fund development work to inform the second stage in approximately one year's time.
2.6	The Minister for the Department of Trade, Enterprise and Investment met with the Rt. Hon. Andrew Robathan, Minister in the Ministry of Defence, to discuss HMS Caroline, following which officials met with National Museum of the Royal Navy. These discussions are ongoing to find a solution which would allow HMS Caroline to remain and be restored in Belfast.
2.7	The Titanic Foundation Limited, a not-for-profit body, is currently developing proposals for a co-ordinated approach to Titanic Quarter and maritime heritage, which will include the submission of an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for monies to support the safeguarding, public access to and development of a number of assets, not including Caroline. However all projects sit within the context of a Heritage Plan including HMS Caroline.

3	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
3.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.

4	Recommendations
4.1	It is recommended that Committee notes the current position regarding HMS Caroline and notes that further updates will be submitted in due course.