



Media Release

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**Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust former Chief Executive honoured
with CBE in Queens Birthday list**

Bill Ferris OBE DL, recently retired Chief Executive of Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, has been awarded a CBE for services to heritage in the Queen’s Birthday Honours list.

Bill held the position of Chief Executive of Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust for almost 20 years before retiring in August 2020, during which time he led the transformation of the former Naval Dockyard through its pioneering strategy of “preservation through reuse.”

Trained as an accountant, Bill gained a 1st Class Honours Degree in Managerial and Administrative Studies. His involvement in the heritage sector commenced in 1988 when he became the first Commercial Manager of the Yorkshire Mining Museum (now the National Museum of Coalmining for England) before running a series of commercial projects for Heritage Projects Ltd. His experience of maximising commercial return while delivering high operational standards from educational and landmark projects became a particular strength and led to him being appointed Chief Executive of Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust in December 2000.

When Bill arrived, the Trust was facing significant financial challenges and its reputation was at an all-time low. He replaced the original “living museum” concept of the Dockyard with a more “serious” museum/heritage approach. Through a careful

balance of commercial tenancy, tourism and residential coupled with substantial preservation projects, the once dilapidated, post-industrial, former Naval Base has been transformed into a flourishing mixed-use heritage estate, at the heart of Medway's regeneration.

Whilst now retired from his role at Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, Bill continues to hold the positions of Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Kent, Chairman of Visit Kent and Go to Places; Committee Member of the London & South Committee, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Trustee of London Transport Museum. He is also on the Board of Trustees for Medway City of Culture 2025; and a Kent and Medway Ambassador.

Commenting on his accolade, Bill said: "I am incredibly honoured to receive this award but it is in recognition of the hard work and dedication of the brilliant team at Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust that I had the privilege to lead for nearly twenty years. The award is for services to heritage, which reflects the incredible achievement of the people involved with this great place, along with the spirit of partnership and mutual support across the sector. The Historic Dockyard Chatham has become a leader in the field of heritage led regeneration and education within a superbly restored heritage environment. To me, CBE can only stand for one thing - Chatham's Brilliant Effort."

Sir Trevor Soar KCB OBE DL, Chairman, Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust said: "After nearly twenty years at the helm, Bill steered the Trust through a period of great change and he played an instrumental role in making the Trust the leading heritage charity that it is today. Bill's drive for excellence and entrepreneurial thinking, underpinned by carefully considered charitable choices, was central to our development. Throughout his career he has been a strong leader, mentor and advisor as well as a supporter to many across the heritage sector and this has been rightly recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours. On behalf of the entire Board of Trustees I would like to congratulate Bill on this much deserved achievement."

ENDS

MORE PRESS INFORMATION

Please contact Lynnette Crisp on 07816 296387 or email lcristp@chdt.org.uk for further information

Notes to Editors

About Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust

The Historic Dockyard Chatham has over 100 buildings and structures, including 47 Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The site is in the stewardship of the independent charity, Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust (No. 292101).

The Trust's dual objectives of education and preservation are achieved by a strategy of preservation through reuse. Some of the buildings are open to visitors; others are occupied by residential tenants, businesses, and faculties of the University of Kent.

As a fully accredited museum, the Trust collects, preserves, researches and exhibits objects and materials connected with the history of the dockyard and its people. It studies the development of Royal Navy warship design, construction and the use of the River Medway by the Royal Navy. The Historic Dockyard Chatham presents unrivalled status as the most complete and best-preserved dockyard of the Age of Sail anywhere in the world. It immerses audiences in a mighty feat of preservation, innovation education and heritage. It offers access to the ships that shaped the world, from a Victorian antislavery sailing ship, to a Second World War Destroyer and a Cold War submarine as well as the stories of the people who made them. From historic buildings, including the Commissioner's House and officers' quarters to the remarkable Victorian ropery, where the rigging for HMS *Victory* was made, to its collection of maritime archaeology, the Dockyard forms an indispensable part of Britain's naval history and its national heritage.

Visitors to and users of The Historic Dockyard Chatham are fundamental to its purpose and the economic reuse of the site and its buildings. Its staff and volunteers play a vital role in providing a high level of service and customer care. The Trust is also involved in the ongoing regeneration of Medway and The Thames Gateway, with Culture and Heritage at its heart.

As part of the Trust's strategy of "Preservation through re-use" recent projects have secured the long-term financial sustainability (on a revenue basis) of the wider Historic Dockyard site. The economic outputs from the new uses of the recently opened Fitted Rigging House as well as other activities across the site will bring the total annual contribution made to Medway's economy to £26.3m in 2019, building on the 2012 estimate of £16m (64% growth).