Maritime Greenwich celebrates 20 years of UNESCO World Heritage Site status with spectacular lighting event

Maritime Greenwich is marking 20 years since it was awarded World Heritage Site status with a stunning lighting event, illuminating the sites that represent over 500 years of Greenwich’s cultural heritage.

A programme of special anniversary events will take place throughout the year, commencing with the lighting event on World Heritage Day, Tuesday 18 April. After the lights are switched on at 8:30pm, visitors to the World Heritage Site will see famous Greenwich landmarks illuminated in spectacular fashion, showcasing the culturally and architecturally significant buildings that form Maritime Greenwich.

The much loved London landmarks that will be lit up include the Royal Museum Greenwich sites; Cutty Sark, the Queen’s House, National Maritime Museum and Royal Observatory Greenwich; as well as the Old Royal Naval College. The dazzling lighting event will be the first time the buildings have been lit up in unison in Maritime Greenwich’s history and will take place for one night only.

Greenwich Park and the grounds of the National Maritime Museum and Old Royal Naval College will be opening late until 10pm for the occasion, giving visitors more time to view the spectacular event and witness the beauty of historic Greenwich as it has never been seen before.

Inscribed by UNESCO in 1997, Maritime Greenwich was given the prestigious World Heritage Site status due to its role in the progression of English artistic and scientific endeavour in the 17th and 18th centuries. The culturally significant buildings that form the site reflect two centuries of Royal patronage, as well as the preservation of the works of great architects Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren, which represents an important point in the evolution of European architecture.

Maritime Greenwich has also obtained global significance due to its association with the development of navigation and astronomy. For over 250 years it was the national centre for research into astronomy, time-keeping and early solar and magnetic astronomy, leading to the Greenwich Meridian being named as the Prime Meridian of the World in 1884.

Cllr Denise Hyland, Chair of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site Steering Group and Leader of the Royal Borough of Greenwich, said:

“Greenwich is renowned around the world as the home of time and a place with a rich royal and maritime history. A lot has changed in our borough in the twenty years since Maritime Greenwich became a World Heritage site but one constant that has remained is the appeal
that it has with visitors from around the world. Each year 18 million people visit our borough spending £1.24 billion in the local economy. As we reach this momentous anniversary, the celebrations we have planned will help to reinforce why people keep coming back here time after time.”

Kevin Fewster, Director of Royal Museums Greenwich, said:

“We take great pride in being part of Maritime Greenwich, one of the most significant World Heritage Sites in the United Kingdom. The 20th anniversary event is a fantastic opportunity for us to bring people together to see the architectural beauty of Maritime Greenwich, centred on The Queen’s House and the Grand Axis that it defines, and celebrate the heritage that played such a significant role in British and World history.”

Brendan McCarthy, Chief Executive of the Old Royal Naval College and Chair of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site Executive Group said:

"This is a unique opportunity to showcase this very special place, raise awareness of World Heritage and give people a chance to appreciate our internationally significant architecture in a way that hasn't been done before. It has been a privilege for the Old Royal Naval College to work closely with World Heritage Site partners in bringing this event to fruition."

Maritime Greenwich is located a short walk from the Cutty Sark DLR, and Maze Hill and Greenwich train stations. The closest tube stations are North Greenwich (to change to local buses) and Canary Wharf (to change to DLR), both on the Jubilee line.

This event is being made possible by the kind support of SLX, a division of Stage Electrics Partnership Limited.

**Visitor Information**

**Dates:** Tuesday 18 April 2017  
**Venue:** Maritime Greenwich  
**Times:** 8.30pm – 11.00pm. Greenwich Park and the grounds of the National Maritime Museum and Old Royal Naval College will be open late until 10pm. *Cutty Sark* will be lit up until 11pm  
**Age:** Suitable for all ages  
**Admission:** Visitors can enter the grounds to view the lights free of charge. Please note none of the buildings will be open to the public outside of normal opening hours.

- Ends -
Notes to editors

Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site was inscribed by the World Heritage Convention in 1997 and comprises the historic town centre, Royal Park and related institutional buildings including the Queen’s House, Royal Observatory Greenwich, National Maritime Museum and the Royal Hospital for Seamen (today the Old Royal Naval College).

The management of the WHS ensures that the conservation and protection of the area balances with the development of new infrastructure, products and services to encourage tourism to be delivered in a sustainable way for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. For more information about the outstanding universal values that make Maritime Greenwich a World Heritage Site, visit www.greenwichworldheritage.org

To plan a visit and find out more about things to see and do in Maritime Greenwich in its 20th year, see www.visitgreenwich.org.uk

The theme for World Heritage Day this year is “Cultural Heritage & Sustainable Tourism”, chosen by ICOMOS in relation to the United Nations International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development and celebrates the positive outcomes of a deepening partnership between sustainable tourism development and cultural heritage conservation. For more information about World Heritage Day and this year’s theme of Sustainable Tourism Development, click here

For images please visit: https://bigfilebox.nmm.ac.uk/lwt/25531-a4ylQalnVeANLFJa639mB1Rq

To view drone footage of the Queen’s House, visit https://goo.gl/QwkvwT

For further information or images please contact:

Royal Museums Greenwich - Press Office
Tel: 020 8312 6789/6545/6790 | 07960 509802
Email: press@rmg.co.uk

Visit Greenwich - Al Barker, Content and Media Manager
Tel: 020 3040 2267
Email: Al@visitgreenwich.org.uk

- Ends -