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For immediate release

MEDIA RELEASE

Working heritage celebrated in new project REVISED DRAFT

The valuable contribution of settlers from Ireland to life in Luton will be documented in a project made possible by a £50,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The settlers often worked in the same industries, helping to build up the town's economy in the years following the Second World War.

Run by Luton Irish Forum, *Catching the Boat* will look at the common experiences of incoming communities in Luton. The project will focus on the working heritage of the Irish community from 1940 to 1960 by exploring themes such as industries in which people were employed, their methods of travel to the UK and their uniforms or work clothing.

Members of the community will be encouraged to get involved by sharing their personal memories and stories at reminiscence workshops. A team of volunteers, including students from Barnfield College, as well as members of the community, will be recruited and trained to collect and catalogue the oral histories. These accounts will be used, alongside existing recordings, images and artefacts, to produce an exhibition and fully accessible community archive to increase understanding of this heritage.

A highlight will be the construction of a carnival float based on the ship Princess Maud, which played a vital part in the Dunkirk rescue and was then in service during the 1940s – 1960s, regularly crossing the Irish Sea between Dun Laoghaire and Holyhead, to bring Irish people to the UK. The float will be showcased at the Luton Carnival and St Patrick's Day Festival to raise public awareness and celebrate the contribution of the Irish communities to Luton.

More than 100 local schoolchildren will be involved in the project, learning more about this heritage by taking part in a series of workshops and creative activities. They will produce artwork and creative writing pieces to tell the story of the contribution of Irish community, which will form the basis of an exhibition at Stockwood Discovery Centre.

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said; "This project will help to show how different communities settled in Luton and then made their own special contribution to its development. It's a story of shared endeavour and achievement."

Tom Scanlon, Public Relations Officer for Luton Irish Forum said "This is a timely opportunity for a generation of people forced from their native countries in search of employment. It will allow them to tell their own individual stories often harrowing; sometimes amusing in hindsight before they are lost to us for ever. We are proud to be part of this great project."

For further information

Please contact Roland Smith at the Heritage Lottery fund, on 020 7591 6047 / 07713 48 64 20 or rolands@hlf.org.uk, or Phil Cooper on 07889 949173

Luton Irish Forum contact: Noelette Hanley (Chief Officer), on 01582 720 447 / 07934 442 861

Notes to Editors:

1. Heritage Lottery Fund uses money raised through the National Lottery to fund a wide variety of projects including archives, community history, local culture and traditions, wildlife and green spaces, archaeology and museums. We have awarded more than £308million to the East of England.
2. Heritage Lottery Fund is always looking for new projects to fund, especially from Luton and surrounding areas. If any group has an idea for a project, they should visit the HLF website www.hlf.org.uk or call 01223 224870 and ask to speak to the Development Team.

POLLY MOYLETT & JOE WARD 26/10/1957

