

Press Release



Fermanagh District Council

12 November 2007

£600,000 Investment to Enhance Enniskillen's Most Historic Building

AFTER A SUCCESSFUL SUMMER OF MEDIEVAL BANQUETS, COSTUMED CHARACTERS AND LIVING HISTORY EVENTS, THERE IS MORE GOOD NEWS FOR ENNISKILLEN CASTLE. OVER £600,000 WILL BE INVESTED TO ENHANCE THE EXHIBITIONS SHOWING THE EARLY GAELIC HISTORY OF THE CASTLE AS WELL AS THE LATER PLANTATION AND MILITARY STORY. FROM THE 1ST OF DECEMBER, THE KEEP EXHIBITIONS WILL UNDERGO A MAJOR REFURBISHMENT. THE REVITALIZED CASTLE KEEP WILL BE OPEN TO VISITORS NEXT SUMMER.

The funding has been obtained by Fermanagh County Museum and the Inniskillings Regimental Museum and the museums will seek to develop the castle in a holistic and coherent way. Fermanagh County Museum will develop the story of this castle from its Gaelic Maguire origins in the 15th century in tandem with the Inniskillings who will develop new displays to explain the history of their two famous regiments.

Overall, the Inniskillings Museum have raised approximately £500,000 to develop its story in the upper two floors of the Castle. They are delighted to have obtained £225,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund and £194,997 from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. In the past few years the museum has been raising match funding from its own members, local businesses and other supporters to enable this redevelopment to take place.



Fermanagh County Museum has been awarded grants of £50,000 from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board; £25,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund; £5,000 from the Association of Friends of Fermanagh County Museum alongside funding of £20,000 from Fermanagh District Council to refurbish the ground floor displays of the Castle Keep.

Fermanagh County Museum has begun the process of appointing a designer to undertake the development of the Medieval Maguires and Gaelic story of the Castle and the Inniskillings have appointed the National Army Museum to design a new layout for their exhibitions.

The Castle Keep will be closed from 1 December until Summer 2008 to allow the refurbishment to take place. However, visitors will still be able to visit the County Museum, all temporary exhibitions and events, undertake education programmes, visit the barrack buildings and view a virtual tour of the Inniskillings Museum in the intervening period.

Next year when the refurbishment is complete a series of special openings will be held to show visitors, supporters and funders the new displays and interpretation.



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Notes to Editor:

Quotes:

Speaking about the planned redevelopment, Mark Scott, Vice Chair of the Trustees of the Inniskillings Museum said: ***“It is the aim of both Museums to appeal to all sections of the community and to make them aware of the rich heritage we enjoy in Enniskillen – the only town in the UK to give its name to two regiments – the Inniskilling Fusiliers and the Inniskilling Dragoon Guards. These regiments were raised in 1689, one as a foot regiment, the other as cavalry. Which regiment a volunteer joined was probably based on whether or not they brought a horse with them on the day they volunteered. Those with a horse would have joined the cavalry – those without would have joined the fusiliers as foot soldiers. Both regiments have served with distinction throughout the world ever since. The modern day Inniskillings, now known as the Royal Irish Regiment and the Royal Dragoon Guards, continue to uphold the traditions of their forebears in maintaining their links with the town and wearing their green trousers with pride.”***

Speaking about the forthcoming investment, Sarah McHugh, Manager – Museum Services said: ***“We are delighted to have secured funding to enable us to highlight the early history of Enniskillen Castle. Alongside the redevelopment of the Inniskillings Museum, this project is the first phase in the revitalisation of the Castle as the heritage gateway to Fermanagh. The ground floor of the Keep is the oldest remaining part of the Castle complex, built over 600 years ago by the ruling Maguire chieftains. The new displays will focus on making sense of the history of the actual building through an innovative and imaginative approach incorporating hands-on activities and interactive technology.”***

These sentiments were echoed by Cllr Alex Baird, Chairman of Fermanagh District Council who said: ***“It is wonderful to see such funding coming to Enniskillen’s most prized monument. It is heartening to see such a joined up approach to telling the story of this site – to see the Fermanagh County Museum and the Inniskillings Museum working together to achieve such funding. Enniskillen Castle has a place in all our communities in Fermanagh. The castle has***

a long and proud Gaelic history and this funding will be able to enhance this story in a way never seen before.

Later, the town of Enniskillen was built as a Plantation town by William Cole who was Constable of the Castle. In 1689 the Inniskillings Dragoons and Fusiliers were raised in Enniskillen and over the centuries the castle was used as a barracks. The castle has something to interest everyone.”

Speaking about the funding, a Northern Ireland Tourist Board spokesperson said:

“The Northern Ireland Tourist Board is delighted to support the refurbishment of Enniskillen Castle by funding grants to both Inniskillings Museum and the Fermanagh County Museum from the Tourism Development Scheme. We recognise the importance of both attractions in delivering world class tourism products and their significance in reflecting Fermanagh’s rich history, culture and environment. Support offered by NITB does not stop at financial assistance. We also offer support to tourism products and events in the area through marketing, public relations and publications.”

Paul Mullan HLF Country Manager said,

“Enniskillen Castle has a long and varied historic story to be told, and this new development will really bring it life for visitors. The refurbishment and enhanced exhibitions will make it easier for the public to immerse themselves in the tales that the Keep has to tell.”