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6th

September 2014

D. B. L.

Thank you again for your letter of 20 July. In my reply of 13 August, I indicated that you would receive a substantive response as soon as the MOD was in a position to do so.

I am pleased to be able to tell you that DCMS and MOD are satisfied that, subject to minor points of confirmation, the Maritime Heritage Foundation (MHF) has met the Government's criteria to enable the project to move forward.

Consent is therefore given, consistent with the Deed of Gift, for MHF (or its agent) to recover at risk surface artefacts, as described in Stage 3 of the February 2014 Project Design, with the following conditions:

- that the necessary Maritime Management Organisation (MMO) licence is obtained; and
- that while the MMO licence application is being processed, and before work on site can commence, MHF provides more information to the MOD about the UK conservation facility and museum that it intends to use.

At this time consent is only given for Stage 3 work and consideration of further phases will be made in light of reported progress and continued funding assurances. As per the Deed of Gift, such consent shall not be unreasonably withheld.

I hope you will receive this decision as a positive step.

You are, of course, aware of the Parliamentary and public interest in HMS Victory (1744). In response to several Freedom of Information requests and questions in the House, most recently Lord Astor's reply of 29 July to Lord Renfrew of Kaimsthorn's written question, the Government has given commitments to make information publicly available once a decision on the way ahead had been taken. We are, therefore, at that point and, while recognising confidential aspects of the arrangements, MHF will now need to work with my officials to agree how best to

Lord Lingfield Kt DL

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announce progress. As before, your main contact should be Giles Ahern, Command Secretary, Navy Command Headquarters.

I recognise that it has taken some time to reach this point but I am pleased that the necessary assurances and plans are now in place. I look forward to hearing about the results of the next stage.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Ed Vaizey, who, on behalf of DCMS, supports this decision.



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THE RT HON MICHAEL FALLON MP