

BRITISH POSTAL MUSEUM & ARCHIVE SUBMITS PLANNING APPLICATION TO PRESERVE UNDERGROUND RAILWAY

London, 10 October 2013 – The British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA) has submitted a planning application for the development of a section of the old Post Office Underground Railway (Mail Rail). The planning application, made to the London Borough of Islington, seeks approval for the repurposing of ground level workshops, the car maintenance depot and part of the underground tunnel network around Mount Pleasant, home of the world's oldest mail centre, allowing public access to the site for the first time in its history.

The application forms part of the BPMA's major project to deliver a new postal museum and archive for the nation, and follows an application submitted by Royal Mail for the wider development of some parts of the Mount Pleasant site that are no longer needed for its operations.

Brought into service in 1927 and in constant use until 2003, Mail Rail is the world's only purpose-built underground mail transit system. A narrow gauge railway, the electrified, driverless cars were used to convey mail across London from Whitechapel to Paddington via six stations. At its peak, the network operated for 22 hours a day, during which time it would carry up to 4 million letters.

Under the BPMA's proposals, the exciting new development will showcase this unique and important engineering and transport system. Alterations to the space will be sympathetic to the existing fabric of the building, preserving the original character and industrial appearance of the site.

Exhibition space will highlight the industrial heritage of the railway and how the Mail Rail system operated, relating it to the wider story of moving the mail by rail and the links it provided to the rest of the country and beyond. In addition, the development will include an event space for functions and conferences and a Family Zone for children and parents/guardians that will be available for all members of the community.

Planning permission will mark a significant step towards the BPMA's goal of opening up a new museum and visitor experience at Mount Pleasant, with plans for a new

museum at Calthorpe House previously approved in July 2012. A major fundraising campaign is currently underway to secure the shortfall in funding for this project.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- **The British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA)** is the leading resource for all aspects of British postal history. It is a combined museum and archive, bringing together The Royal Mail Archive and a Museum Store. With collections ranging from staff records to stamps, poster design to photography and from transport to telegrams, it cares for the visual, written and physical records from over 400 years of innovation and service, illuminating the fascinating story of British communications. Records in the Royal Mail Archive are Designated as being of outstanding national importance. For more information see www.postalheritage.org.uk.
- To find out more about the BPMA's project to deliver a new postal museum in Central London, please visit www.postalheritage.org.uk/calthorpehouse