



**PRESS RELEASE (EN/3/2008/06)**

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008**

**FLAGSHIP AWARDS CEREMONY HIGHLIGHTS HERITAGE FOR ALL**

On Thursday night (12.06.08), against the stunning backdrop of Durham Cathedral, the Europa Nostra Award Ceremony will take place.

The European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage/Europa Nostra Awards were launched in 2002 when the European Commission and Europa Nostra began a fruitful partnership to celebrate winning projects and achievements in the cultural heritage field, and to raise awareness of the need to protect and enhance Europe's treasures of built and natural heritage. The awards are an instrument to promote high standards and conservation skills and to stimulate cross border exchanges in the cultural heritage field. This year's award winners range from an archaeological site in Greece to a swimming pool in Finland, and from a Conservation Centre in Romania to a photographic experience in Spain. This year there is a UK winner, which is a conservation project in Ramsgate, Kent which successfully restored the home of influential architect Augustus Pugin.

The keynote address at this year's award ceremony is to be given by Dame Liz Forgan, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund. In her speech she will praise cultural organisations, such as EUROPA NOSTRA, for ensuring a future where *'the identification of heritage value is no longer solely a matter for experts, where the management and care of our heritage is in the hands of the communities who value it, not just of those who may own it.'*

Dame Liz will highlight a number of projects that the Heritage Lottery Fund has been involved with, including the Upper Horfield Estate in Bristol where there were 600 council houses built in the 1920's about to be demolished to make way for new homes.

In her speech she comments:

*'Well and good we might think. But the collective memory of that community, many whose families had lived in those houses since they were built, was inextricably bound up in those buildings where children had been born, in the patterns of the streets where coronations and weddings had been celebrated, in the open spaces where courtships had taken place.*

*'The ties that bound the residents of that estate together, that provided the social capital on which communities sink or swim, were interwoven back through the years. It was a living heritage - the memories, stories, histories - bound up in the place that for those people had more meaning than any stately home ever could have.*

*'In his case, it was not a matter of saving a building. The buildings were undistinguished, no longer fit for purpose and properly destined for demolition. The heritage here was an intangible one. That project enabled those people whose built environment was about to be swept away to come together and to collect the stories of their lives in an archive that would live on in the local record office.*

*'We're not a regeneration agency, nor are we social workers. We fund great buildings and magnificent designed landscapes, works of art and precious manuscripts but we also fund intangible heritage projects like these across the country because they say to people, 'heritage is for you, it is yours.'*

Following the ceremony and speeches John Sell, Chair of Europa Nostra UK, said:

*'This evening we have celebrated a wonderful diversity of cultural heritage and highlighted those projects which model excellence and imagination. In her speech Dame Liz set out an exciting and challenging agenda in relation to how we ensure all our communities have a stake in identifying and securing our cultural heritage.'*

**ENDS**

**Note to Editors:**

- Media are invited to Durham Cathedral for the Awards Ceremony, which begins at 7:00pm

- Head and shoulders photo of Dame Liz Forgan, Chair Heritage Lottery Fund, is attached to the email
- John Sell is available for further comment or interview. Please contact James McArdle on 07966 595075

EUROPA NOSTRA was founded in 1963 and is dedicated to putting heritage and its benefits in the mainstream public arena and to making heritage a priority for public policies both at European and national levels. **The Grainger Town Project, Newcastle upon Tyne**, was a top Prize winner in 2003 of the EUROPEAN UNION PRIZE FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE / EUROPA NOSTRA AWARDS, in the Category of Cultural Landscapes, recognised for the extraordinary achievement of transforming the historic core of a fine 18<sup>th</sup> century city.

**For full details of the EUROPA NOSTRA Congress go to:**

<http://www.europanostra.org/newcastlegatesheadcongress.html>