

Press release: Government invests in Leeds' Royal Armouries Museum acquiring catering and events arm to unify operations at major Yorkshire tourist attraction

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Royal Armouries (International) plc (RAI) have reached an agreement for the sale of RAI's shareholding to the DCMS, on behalf of the Royal Armouries (RA).

The move will benefit the Royal Armouries museum in Leeds and help further support culture in the city.

The Royal Armouries Museum (RA) houses one of the oldest collections of arms and armour in the world and is the United Kingdom's oldest museum. Originally housed in the Tower of London from the 15th century it was the first museum in Britain. It moved to Leeds in 1996.

RAI assets include the cafe and catering arm, events business and carpark. The business will continue to trade and the offer will continue in its existing form, with all current bookings being honoured.

By bringing both operations together (Royal Armouries and RAI) it will enable the museum to consolidate its position as one of the leading cultural and business tourism attractions in the North.

Both the DCMS and RAI directors are delighted that a deal has been reached. The £11.2 million acquisition will enable the Royal Armouries museum to take ownership of the commercial offer at its site in Leeds and unify and concert all museum operations, aligning its services with the highly successful model used at other major DCMS-sponsored national museums.

The relationship between the Royal Armouries, a DCMS-sponsored national museum, and RAI has, since the establishment of the museum in Leeds. It has helped the Royal Armouries to establish itself as a must-see attraction in the heart of Yorkshire and the RAI to develop a successful events and catering business.

Michael Ellis, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, said:

"This deal begins a new chapter for the Royal Armouries, bringing the museum and commercial arms together to evolve the full offer of this fantastic cultural institution in the heart of Yorkshire. The move will help this world-class museum go from strength to strength, attracting new visitors from home and abroad. It is a clear statement of the government's continued commitment to arts and culture across the North of England."

Chair of the Royal Armouries board of trustees Lord (Richard) Dannatt said:

“The Royal Armouries museum has established a very strong cultural presence within the North of England over the past twenty years. I am delighted with this landmark deal for the Royal Armouries which will enable it to continue to flourish and grow for many years to come. I extend my deep thanks to the DCMS for their commitment and support and to the outgoing directors of the Royal Armouries International for their contribution to our story in Leeds “

Managing Director of RAI, James Vincent said:

“The Directors of RAI have been involved at Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds for over 20 years. It is now the right time for the catering, corporate hospitality and event arm to be brought closer to the museum and for the Directors to stand to one side. We wish the RAI team and this wonderful national museum, here in the north of England every success for the future. “

Notes to Editors:

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