

**PHOTO/ INTERVIEW  
OPPORTUNITY  
&  
NEWS RELEASE**



- WHO:** Bristol MPs Rt. Hon Kerry McCarthy, Dr. Roger Berry and Stephen Williams, with Brunel's ss Great Britain Steward Bob Evans, shortlisted for the EnjoyEngland Excellence Awards for 'Outstanding Customer Service'
- WHAT:** Helping to celebrate the importance of museums and visitor attractions to the country's economic success for British Tourism Week. MPs will be 'going back to the floor', when they put on their wellies and help prepare the ship for visitors and a wedding, by cleaning the ship's glass 'sea'
- WHERE:** The glass 'sea', at the stern of the ship, Brunel's ss Great Britain, Great Western Dockyard, Bristol BS1 6TY
- WHEN:** 2.15pm, Friday, March 27, 2009

**POLITICIANS WALK ON WATER FOR BRITISH TOURISM WEEK**

For immediate release

POLITICIANS will be walking on water when they help Brunel's ss Great Britain prepare for visitors and a wedding – as part of British Tourism Week (March 23 to 29).

Bristol MPs Kerry McCarthy, Roger Berry and Stephen Williams will join the crew on board Brunel's ss Great Britain on Friday afternoon (March 27).

They are taking up the challenge from VisitBritain, the UK's tourism body, to 'go back to the floor' – in this case made of glass. The MPs will be taking time out of their busy parliamentary schedule to help prepare Brunel's ss Great Britain for visitors and a wedding party.

Replacing smart shoes for Wellington boots, they will step on to the glass waterline plate surrounding the ss Great Britain and, using a giant squeegee, give it a clean!

The glass 'sea', forms the roof of the giant dehumidification chamber, and gives the impression that the Victorian ship is afloat. Visitors descend below water as part of their visit to Brunel's ss Great Britain, before stepping back in time in the Dockyard Museum and boarding the historic ship.

After they have helped clean the glass 'sea', the ss Great Britain Trust's Director Matthew Tanner MBE will take the MPs on a private tour of the multi award-winning visitor attraction, and treat them to afternoon tea and cake in the Dockyard Café.

It is part of a series of events organised by Brunel's ss Great Britain to celebrate this year's British Tourism Week.

Steward Bob Evans, who features on this year's British Tourism Week poster, will be interviewed by EnjoyEngland as he is shortlisted to win gold or silver at the tourism body's EnjoyEngland Excellence Awards 2009 for 'outstanding customer service'.

Bob will be on hand to share some of his experiences with the MPs and his tips on good customer care.

Brunel's ss Great Britain is also organising a sumptuous showcase event for marketeers, PAs and event organisers during British Tourism Week. And 'Mr Brunel', an actor in character and costume will be joining tourism colleagues to promote Bristol at the 'Best of Britain and Ireland Show' in London.

British Tourism Week this year focusses on the economic impact of tourism, worth £86 billion to the UK.

Destination Bristol, the city's tourism body, estimates the sector is worth just under £1 billion to Bristol per annum. There are an estimated eight million visitors to the city per year.

As an independent museum and visitor attraction Brunel's ss Great Britain receives no central or local government funding. The registered charity relies on visitors, venue hire, weddings and civil ceremonies, to care for the historic ship.

The ss Great Britain Trust employs 50 staff, in addition to contractors from Bristol and the south west. Brunel's ss Great Britain attracts 170,000 visitors and venue hire clients per annum, and with a third of visitors coming from outside of the region, it also helps to bring money into the city of Bristol.

The ss Great Britain Trust's Director Matthew Tanner commented: "I am personally delighted to welcome the Members of Parliament on board Brunel's ss Great Britain during British Tourism Week.

"It gives us the opportunity to show the MPs the work and high standards of customer service which go into running a successful museum and visitor attraction."

Mr Tanner added: "This year's British Tourism Week theme focusses on the economic value of tourism. As well as employing staff and contractors from the city and the south west, Brunel's ss Great Britain draws people to Bristol from across the UK, who spend money in the city. Brunel's ss Great Britain alongside other visitor attractions and museums play a significant role in the local economy."

Stephen Williams MP commented: “I first visited the ss Great Britain over 20 years ago. I’ve watched its transformation since into a multi-award winning tourist attraction. I enjoy visiting historic attractions all over Britain and am proud that one of the best of them is in my constituency.”

Dr. Roger Berry MP said: “I am delighted to be joining the British Tourism Week celebrations on board Brunel’s ss Great Britain.

“Tourism plays such a major role in the local, regional and national economy. It will be quite an experience to help clean the glass ‘sea’ in preparation for visitors and a wedding party!”

Destination Bristol’s Marketing Executive, Kerrie Grist, remarked: “Bristol is a currently the seventh most visited UK city for international tourists and also very popular as a short break destination for UK residents.

“Brunel’s magnificent ss Great Britain plays a significant role in attracting these visitors. We are naturally delighted to have their support in showcasing the city at key events such as the forthcoming ‘Best of Britain and Ireland Show’.”

- For more information on British Tourism Week please log on to [www.britishtourismweek.com](http://www.britishtourismweek.com).

## **ENDS**

For further information or pictures please call the ss Great Britain Trust’s Head of Marketing & Communications Dagmar Smeed on 0117 926 0680 ext 219. Journalists can receive up-to-date news alerts by registering online at [www.ssgreatbritain.org](http://www.ssgreatbritain.org).

## **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

**1. Brunel's ss Great Britain** is the world’s first great ocean liner. Launched in 1843 to provide luxury travel to New York, the iron-hulled steamship revolutionised travel and set new standards in engineering, reliability and speed. Today Brunel's ss Great Britain, is one of the UK’s most exciting museums and visitor attractions.

Visitors step back in time in the new Dockyard Museum, before boarding ship as Victorian passengers, to explore the beautifully recreated spaces – from the First Class Dining Saloon and Promenade Deck, to the Engine Room and Steerage. Passengers’ and crew members’ stories are retold through handheld audio companions. The smell of newly baked bread, musty travellers, a smoky engine room and even vomit help bring the 19<sup>th</sup> century onboard experience alive.

But it is the ss Great Britain’s glass ‘sea’ which is proving the greatest wow factor for visitors. In true ‘Brunelian’ spirit, the ship appears to be afloat on what is the roof of a giant dehumidification chamber. Technological innovation, inspirational design and some truly revolutionary features were key to the ship’s early success, and remain essential to her ongoing conservation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Admission costs £10.95 for adults (child, family and concessions prices available) and allows FREE and unlimited return visits for 12 months making Brunel’s ss Great Britain good value for money. Over the last year Brunel’s ss Great Britain has welcomed more than 170,000 visitors.

Special exhibitions are shown in the Baker Gallery, and the events calendar ranges from children's drama and craft workshops to sumptuous Victorian banquets (please log on to [www.ssgreatbritain.org](http://www.ssgreatbritain.org)). Brunel's ss Great Britain also welcomes school visits and runs National Curriculum linked workshops.

The ss Great Britain Trust is working in close partnership with Linden Homes Western to create the 'Brunel Institute: Learning and Conservation Centre' – due to be completed in 2010 – as part of the Great Western Dockyard redevelopment next to the ship.

The process of conservation can never stop and costs more than £1 million per year. The ss Great Britain Trust receives no funding from central or local government and relies on visitors and events held on board as well as the generosity of members and supporters to fund work.

2. **Award recognition for Brunel's ss Great Britain** to date includes: **Winner:** South West Tourism Excellence Award, 'Winner of Winners' and 'Outstanding Customer Service'; **Winner:** Heritage Education Trust, Sandford Award; **Winner:** RIBA Crown Estate Conservation Award; **Winner:** US Society of Technology's Dibner Award for outstanding museum work; **Winner:** European Museum of the Year Award's (EMYA) 'The Micheletti Prize' for 'Best Industrial or Technological Museum 2007'. **Winner:** 'Large Visitor Attraction of the Year 2007' in the EnjoyEngland Excellence Awards; **Winner:** The Gulbenkian Prize for Museum of the Year 2006 - the Biggest Arts Prize in the U.K.; **Winner:** Museum and Heritage Awards for Excellence 2006 - Restoration/Conservation; **Winner:** Museum and Heritage Awards for Excellence 2006 - Permanent Exhibition; **Winner:** South West Tourism Excellence Awards: Large Visitor Attraction of the Year 2006; **Winner:** Civic Trust Award for Architecture 2006 - with special commendation for its access systems; **Winner:** ADAPT Trust Award for 'Excellence in Access' 2006; **Highly Commended:** Best UK Tourism Project, British Guild of Travel Writers; **Winner:** The AHI Interpret Britain and Ireland Awards.

Issued by the ss Great Britain Trust, Great Western Dockyard, Bristol BS1 6TY  
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