



Press Release – For Immediate Release

Senior Heritage Peer Visits Battling Museum

Essex, July 22 2024: Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome in Essex, Europe's largest surviving First World War aerodrome, has welcomed Lord Mendoza, the Chairman of national conservation Charity, Historic England, as part of the aerodrome's campaign to secure its future and promote its cause on the national stage.

Historic England is the government's statutory adviser on the historic environment. Its role is to champion historic places and help people to understand, value and care for them.

The award-winning museum, still reeling from the financial fallout of recent lengthy water company works that closed their main access road, is going all-out to survive by enlisting the support of high-profile figures in the heritage community.

Lord Mendoza is a hugely respected member of the heritage community, being the Commissioner for Cultural Recovery and Renewal as well as having led the government contribution to two separate, independent reports on museums in the UK.

As Chairman of Historic England, he directly advises the government on important decisions in the heritage and culture environment.

Having successfully campaigned to have the access road to their site re-opened, the museum is now focussed on recouping tens of thousands of pounds of lost income and recovering their lost audience numbers.

With a packed special events calendar, a crowd-funding appeal that is gaining momentum and ongoing discussions with senior figures in Essex County Council and Essex & Suffolk Water, the Stow Maries team hopes that all their efforts will have a positive outcome.

Those public figures already offering their support include Maldon MP Sir John Whittingdale, who accompanied Lord Mendoza on the visit.

Sir John said: **“As a long-term supporter and patron of Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome, I was particularly happy to introduce Lord Mendoza to this highlight of the Essex – and national – heritage landscape.”**

On his tour Lord Mendoza saw the various buildings undergoing renovation, much-acclaimed exhibition displays and rare WW1 aircraft in the hangars before enjoying a lunch in the famous Airmen’s Mess Café – housed in the original 1917 Airmen’s Mess.

He enjoyed his visit very much, commenting: **“This was my first visit to Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome and I hope it won't be my last. The efforts of the team to save the site and tell its fascinating story are truly extraordinary. I look forward to seeing it being supported as widely as it clearly deserves.”**

Tony Calladine, East of England Regional Director, Historic England, escorted Lord Mendoza. He commented:

“Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome is a rare historic gem. It was a delight to meet the staff and volunteers and see their passion for this special place and its remarkable First World War story. Historic England is continuing to support Stow Maries with guidance and advice and I look forward to seeing the aerodrome go from strength to strength.”

Martyn Gill, Chair of Trustees of Stow Maries, is at the forefront of the fight to save the site. He leads a Board of volunteer trustee directors who have already contributed hundreds of extra hours of work since the current fight for survival began.

He said: **'We were very pleased to have the opportunity to welcome Lord Mendoza to Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome. Historic England has always been very supportive of our on-going building renovation projects and during his visit Lord Mendoza was interested to learn more about our future plans as well as the significant challenges currently facing our charity.'**

Ends

Further information from CEO Ian Flint on ian.flint@stowmaries.org.uk

Notes for editors:

- Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome, Hackman's Lane, Purleigh, CM3 6RN is open from 10am until 4pm, on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. To check out their packed events programme or to make a donation to their survival, visit www.stowmaries.org.uk
- A campaign to save the site in 2012 led to its purchase, following a generous grant from the Heritage Memorial Fund. It was placed in the care of Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome, a registered Charity.
- Today the museum, still an operational airfield, is supported and maintained by over 100 volunteers.
- More information about Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome can be found at www.stowmaries.org.uk
- Images Credit: SMGWA