



## **PRESS RELEASE: National Transport Trust Awards 2024**

### **Michael O'Brien announced as Preservationist of the Year**

Having just completed a very complex and very expensive conversion of an industrial building into a home, our Preservationist of the Year Michael O'Brien decided to own a wooden boat. He found one in a field in Essex and bought it, a 30ft motor cruiser built in Kingston upon Thames in 1937. The seller thought it might have been a Dunkirk little ship – it was certainly a sister ship to L'Orage , the boat owned by the late Raymond Baxter who founded the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships.



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His new purchase arrived at a boatyard in Shepperton in October 2021, without decks, without propulsion, without a wheelhouse. Once she was under the cover of a marquee work could start on stripping out what remained of the interior. The Association of Dunkirk Little Ships was able to say categorically that she was not a Dunkirk Little Ship, and this gave Michael the freedom to redesign the interior to suit his own requirements. If she had been a Dunkirk Little Ship he would have felt obliged to restore her to original specification.

National Transport Trust Chairman Stuart Wilkinson comments: "During the 10 years Lockheed had been out of the water, she had sustained a lot of deterioration and a twist to her hull, all of which now needed to be dealt with, plus a new transom wheelhouse and decks. In 1937 Lockheed would probably have been fitted with a single petrol engine, and this in time would probably have been replaced by a

single diesel engine. Since she came to Michael with no engine at all, the question of propulsion would obviously have to be tackled. Michael decided on battery power and designed a system which would give the boat 2 propellers rather than one, resulting in greater manoeuvrability, not to mention silence, almost no vibration and absence of fumes. The National Transport Trust is not keen on electrifying classic cars, but with a boat the sound of its engine is not as much a part of the experience as it is with a car, and the judges felt that this was a brave move which many boaters are going to have to consider.

As the build continued Michael wired up the boat, built the control panels, and installed the electric drives, each with a 10Kw motor. Lockheed has a 93.4kWh battery pack arranged in a 48V configuration, and a separate 12V domestic battery. It was estimated the propulsion battery will take Lockheed from Shepperton to Oxford, and back on a single charge. This has not been tested, but it is hopefully going to be attempted in the summer of 2024.

Michael says that the boat has exceeded all his expectations, but adds “When I set out on the project I got it all wrong. I got the budget wrong, significantly wrong. I got the timescale wrong. I got my own abilities wrong. I got the mental picture of the finished boat wrong. During the project, I learnt many things and developed many new skills. I met many supportive and knowledgeable people, and I was exposed to a strong and very positive community of classic boaters.”

## Photographs

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## The National Transport Trust

Founded in 1965, (as the Transport Trust), the National Transport Trust is the UK's only national charity established to promote and encourage the preservation and restoration of Britain's unique transport heritage in all its forms – by air, land (road and rail) and water (sea and inland). The Trust is managed within a very streamlined structure, with the Board of Trustees representing the wider interests of the nation, for whose benefit the Trust exists.

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## National Transport Trust

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