

LGA response to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) 2018 consultation

March 2018



About the LGA

1. The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice of local government. We work with over 370 councils in England and Wales, to support, promote and improve local government.
2. We are a politically-led, cross-party organisation which works on behalf of councils to ensure local government has a strong, credible voice with national government. We aim to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to councils so they are able to deliver local solutions to national problems.
3. Our member councils are directly involved in over a third of Heritage Lottery Fund projects and support many more. The LGA is therefore pleased to contribute to the HLF consultation on its future role and funding priorities and for the opportunity to work with the HLF in the development of its Strategic Funding Framework.

Key messages

4. Local government, as custodians of a significant percentage of the UK's historic buildings, monuments, parks and open spaces, have long recognised their value and importance in helping create vibrant, healthy communities; and in creating attractive destinations for domestic and international visitors.
5. However, councils will have lost 75p in every £1 of core funding by 2020, leaving an overall funding gap of £5.8 billion, which is needed to provide adult social care and children's services. These financial pressures have meant that councils are not always able to invest as much in our heritage as they would like. The Heritage Lottery Fund therefore has a key role in ensuring our communities continue to have access to quality heritage assets and experiences, and in increasing that access.
6. Despite council funding pressures, councils still have a core role as convenors of partners around a place, including acting as a seed-corn funder to allow other investors to contribute with confidence in local projects. This means councils will continue to be essential partners for the HLF in delivering its new Strategic Funding Framework.

Submission

7. The new Framework will need to be designed to be flexible enough to accommodate this new role, recognising that in-kind support can count as match-funding – particularly essential given the loss of European funding, which has so often supported larger bids.
8. There has also been a decline in resources available to support applications, both within councils and across the voluntary sector generally. The application process for funding will need to be kept as simple as possible, with clear criteria for application, so that potential applicants can make realistic assessments of their likelihood of success - allowing them to prioritise their very limited resources at the most appropriate funding streams. This will also reduce the administrative burden for the HLF.
9. Finally, councils' experiences of placemaking, further evidenced by the Arts Council England's Creative People and Places projects, demonstrates that local understanding and definitions of heritage vary significantly across the country and can be very personal to that community. We believe the HLF's broad definition of heritage, allowing communities to define what it means for them, has been a particular strength of previous programmes and should be retained in future funding programmes.

Heritage Lottery Fund's role in the future

10. The LGA welcomes the proposal by HLF to move towards inspiring, leading and resourcing the UK's heritage to create positive and lasting change for people and communities. This fits well with councils' role as leaders of place and convenors of investment, and a shared approach will enable a more sustainable and impactful investment to be made.
11. The HLF has already taken positive steps by collaborating with other funders, particularly lottery-based funders, and this approach should be explored still further. For instance, the collaborative investment in Hull in the run up to being City of Culture enabled much greater activity, with risks shared across funders to allow more innovative initiatives to take place.
12. The LGA believes the HLF proposal to support the development of capacity and resilience amongst the sector would be particularly valuable, helping councils to protect the heritage in their localities. Investment in networks and professional development has been particularly affected by funding pressures and support from HLF, including through the sharing of expertise, would provide a welcome boost to a stretched sector.
13. Sharing learning is equally important. The LGA has worked with the Arts Council England to establish a Culture Hub, featuring case studies of how councils have continued to invest in arts and culture during a difficult financial climate. We have also commissioned research into culture-led regeneration and how that can be replicated in different localities. We would be happy to work with HLF to develop similar approaches for the heritage sector.

Strategic priorities for heritage and people and measuring HLF impact

14. We believe the HLF's broad definition of heritage, allowing communities to define what it means for them, has been a particular strength of previous programmes and agree that this should be retained in future funding programmes.
15. Each community/local authority area has its own unique features and a key success of the HLF has been its flexibility in supporting heritage projects defined and developed by localities. However, within that, there are some identifiable themes and subjects which do not find it easy to secure funding from other funders and these should continue to be invested in by HLF. The clearest example of this has been HLF's investment into public parks, which has been critical to revitalising and sustaining public parks, and an end to this programme would leave many parks facing an uncertain future.
16. The LGA welcomes the HLF's proposals to prioritise funding based on meeting a range of outcomes. It is important that funded projects can demonstrate the value that the investment has made, especially towards improving the local economy, people developing greater skills and learning more about heritage and developing greater well-being. However, requirements from applicants should not be overburdening and be proportionate to the level of funding they receive.
17. The loss of heritage infrastructure (organisations/staff) may also lead in future to a reduction in applications to the HLF from certain parts of the country. We would welcome greater focus on the monitoring of future funding within different regions and localities in England and Wales, to ensure that there is a fair distribution of funding, including amongst different council types (district, county, unitary), and rural, urban and coastal areas.
18. Ensuring that as many people as possible are engaged or are enjoying the benefits of the heritage around them is vital, and the HLF needs to work in partnership with councils and their partners to identify and develop innovative ways to increase participation in heritage. While we agree that the new Framework should set out clear expectations for grant recipients to engage with as wide a group of beneficiaries as possible, the hardest to reach groups will be best identified locally.
19. The strategy and resulting grant agreements should not themselves set out a requirement to engage a particular group, instead requiring recipients to use local data to ensure they are targeting those parts of the local community that are least engaged in heritage. HLF

should also support grant recipients to make use of this local data to inform their engagement strategies.

Strategic interventions and partnerships

20. Councils are place leaders and have a key role in supporting the HLF to embed heritage within the placemaking agenda, whether this is through heritage projects that the council leads on or through the council supporting others in their heritage bids. The LGA supports the notion of the HLF focusing on putting heritage at the heart of placemaking across England and Wales.
21. The LGA supports the notion of the HLF supporting innovative projects that support local economic growth, such as the HLF 'Heritage Enterprise' scheme. This provided the opportunity for councils and others to regenerate areas through the use of underutilised heritage assets. We suggest that local industrial strategies would prove a good way to embed this, and encourage the HLF to engage with LEPs and councils to recognise this approach to heritage-led regeneration.
22. We also support the testing of a more diverse portfolio of investments, including loans – although we encourage the HLF to learn from similar investment approaches led by the Office for Civil Society and the Social Investment Bank to ensure an appropriate blend of loans and grants.
23. Many councils are using digital technology to engage more diverse populations to enjoy and experience heritage. For example, Manchester City Council's Archive Service uses the latest touch screen technology to bring alive the city's past to new audiences of all ages. The LGA welcomes the HLF's efforts to encourage more innovative ways to present the heritage around us.
24. Many of the Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisations have expertise in the digital arena that is not readily available to smaller, regional or local organisations or groups. The HLF could usefully work with Arts Council England to ensure skills and expertise is shared across and between sectors.
25. Heritage is one of the most often cited reasons for visitors to come to the UK, and we strongly endorse HLF's plan to engage internationally, although we believe this should be through partners like VisitEngland and VisitBritain rather than investing direct resources in this work.
26. In doing so, HLF should focus on supporting the development of regional products and local destinations outside of London, as is happening with the Great Places scheme. HLF should particularly invest in rural areas, including market towns, where there is a particular challenge for achieving economies of scale.

HLF portfolio

27. The LGA welcomes the approach to simplify the grant programmes on offer and would support the flexibility that the HLF has in providing a range of grants from under £10,000 to over £5 million as well as the strategic campaigns, partnership initiatives and innovation funds. We also support keeping as many of the grant programmes open to all types of applicant, so that the best placed partner in an area can lead on the application.
28. The LGA also supports the proposal to increase the upper ceiling of single round applications from £100,000 to £250,000 and the requirement to have proportionate requirements and processes for each of the grant levels.
29. The ability to have 'in-kind' funding contribution should be maintained, although we would support having no minimum contribution for funding up to £250,000 and a reduction in the cash or 'in-kind' contribution for funding above £250,000. In a challenging financial climate, including the potential loss of European funding, this would help councils continue to support worthwhile heritage projects.
30. The LGA does not support setting an upper limit on the awards. Whilst we acknowledge that the HLF annual budget has reduced, we still see merit in funding projects to a level that will make the project happen. The LGA recommends that each project is assessed on its merits in terms of what the heritage outcomes will be to the locality and funded accordingly.

Improving the experience for customers

31. The application process for funding will need to be kept as simple as possible, so that potential applicants can make realistic assessments of their likelihood of success - allowing them to prioritise their very limited resources at the most appropriate funding streams. Having clear guidance documents and help notes, coupled with the ability for applicants to receive advice would be recommended.
32. The LGA welcomes the proposal to introduce a simple, formal Expression of Interest screening stage for grant applications over £250,000. This will enable applicants not to devote too much of their valuable time and resources on a potentially unsuccessful application. We would also recommend that those applicants that are successful at the Expression of Interest screening stage are provided with specific support and guidance, so that they only spend time collating and providing the necessary information that is required for a good application.

Final comments

33. Councils value the support that the HLF has provided through the awarding of grants towards many areas of heritage provision that councils are responsible for, be it parks, museums, maintaining historic buildings or libraries. The LGA requests that this commitment to helping councils maintain provision and heritage assets continues

to be funded through the HLF through its targeted and open funding programmes.

34. The LGA recognises that financial challenges councils have faced has led to difficult decisions being made in how heritage assets, including parks and provision are managed. The LGA is keen to work with councils and the HLF to identify further innovative ways in which the country's heritage assets and provision can be sustained in the longer term.
35. Despite the financial challenges, councils continue to be the biggest public sector investor in culture and heritage, spending over £2.0 billion every year supporting the regeneration of parks, heritage buildings/facilities and libraries/museums, which have all led to increased exposure for the public to heritage in these localities. Councils also lead on the spatial planning, regulation and infrastructure that underpins the thriving visitor economy, within which heritage is often a major component.
36. However, much of this £2.0 billion relates to essential running costs of service. The HLF has a critical role in investing to upgrade these facilities, supporting them to transform to new and sustainable business models, and helping them to reach substantially new audiences with the consequent improvement in long-term sustainability.
37. Parks are regularly used by over 37 million people each and councils have valued the funding provided by the HLF and the Big Lottery Fund towards the regeneration of the UK's parks. The LGA is a member of the Government taskforce on parks and is working with partners to develop more robust solutions to ensuring our parks heritage continues to be enjoyed by many more millions in the future. The LGA requests the HLF to continue to invest in the renovation and sustainability of parks and open spaces.
38. Finally, the LGA welcomed the findings of the [Mendoza Review](#), but we are concerned that it identified local authority-run and supported museums as most vulnerable to funding pressures. The HLF should work with Arts Council England to ensure this critical part of the heritage sector, often housed in historic buildings as well as showcasing key heritage, is supported through a particularly challenging time.