



FoFC responses to NLHF survey  
UK heritage and Heritage Fund support  
[Survey available here until midday on 5 September 2022](#)

**What are the top 2 or 3 changes to heritage you would want to see in 10 years' time? Please focus on the heritage that you are responsible for.\***

1. NLHF to show a willingness to accept that, in some cases, repair or emergency protection of building fabric alone has public value and should be supported.
2. Change in what is understood by sustainable and viable for historic places of worship which may be rural and have very small communities. Understanding that these are some of our oldest historic buildings and are worthy of support from the nation's largest funder of heritage.  
Understanding that the burden of caring for thousands of the nation's most important buildings – undoubtedly the nation's greatest free heritage resources - falls on a tiny proportion of the public who are, for the most part, volunteers.
3. A change in how heritage is valued. We must acknowledge its intrinsic value and acknowledge that this value alone is worth support. Its value is not dependent on the number and type of people currently using it. The sector should take a much longer-term approach: sustained low-key, lower cost investment could help more places for longer.

**What would you most like to change in relation to heritage in the next 3-5 years? Please focus on the heritage that you are responsible for.\***

1. A higher proportion of lottery funds to go to places of worship
2. Simpler application forms that can be successfully understood and completed by community groups without the need to employ professional services
3. More grants but for smaller amounts. It needs to be acknowledged that often projects are remodelled to fit the HLF criteria for output, engagement, etc., while the amount that is truly needed is often far less. This puts huge strain on the applicant to raise the match-funding and can also impact unnecessarily/negatively on the building.

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## How can the Heritage Fund play a role in those changes?\*

The NLHF is the largest funder of heritage in the UK. They set the agenda. Unfortunately, despite making up the largest, and arguably most historically and culturally important section of the built historic environment, places of worship are not a priority. This was evidenced by the 2017 cutting, without consultation, of the dedicated stream of funding for places of worship.

Based on research published in July 2021 by the Historic Religious Buildings Alliance, 'since 2017 there has been a substantial fall in the annual investment in Places of Worship excluding Cathedrals. In 2017 the amount invested was £28m, lower than any previous year [in this series]. This was the year that the closure of the ring-fenced Grants for Places of Worship (GPOW) programme was announced. Since then, the amount has fallen by almost two-thirds, to about £10m.'

This is a dereliction of duty by the 'largest funder of heritage in the UK'.

The Heritage Fund failed to predict the effect this would have on the sector. Almost all funders base their policy and agendas on what the NLHF does. This is the present disaster for places of worship. The NLHF could change the fate of thousands of places of worship if it wanted to.

We need to adjust what viable and sustainable means for places of worship. Many are not going to be all singing and dancing attractions, venues, money-makers – and they shouldn't try to be. The sustainability model to which the sector (unconsciously) subscribes will not – does not - work for most smaller and rural places of worship. In this way they are destined to fail.

A change in approach to places of worship is now critical. We submit our responses with the backdrop of an increased rate of church closures and redundancies – see the Church Commissioners' 2021 consultation GS2222. There is no plan for what is going to happen to these buildings.

Furthermore, given that so many are highly listed and contain art and artefacts worthy of any national museum, many are unsuitable for extensive conversion and alternative use.

In championing community use of historic churches, NLHF should not assume (as it has done) that all Christian denominations can use their buildings for "wider community use". For example, Catholic churches are regarded as sacred spaces and cannot be so used. Historic England, for example, recognises that by virtue of being open to the public, places of worship have a major contribution to make. Focusing entirely on alternative uses/wider community use is too limited a way of looking at whether historic churches should be supported.

Historic places of worship should be protected as a cultural good. Any economic benefits are bonuses – not the main reason for offering support.

However, it is vital to acknowledge and celebrate the far-reaching benefits places of worship collectively offer the nation. Places of worship are the centre of many communities. They are the very essence of place-making. They provide enormous value to society, value that our country would be immeasurably poorer without, and value that is vastly greater and further reaching than anything the Heritage Fund could hope to achieve. For example, the National Churches Trust report, The House of Good, found that churches in the UK 'provided £12.4 billion worth of essential social and economic support to local communities during the twelve months up until May 2020. This averages out at approximately £300,000 per church'.

They do all this quietly, dutifully. To reiterate, places of worship form the biggest proportion of built heritage. They are maintained, supported by worshipping communities, a diminishing group, but a group which not only raises money to repair its historic building, but also raises funds for charitable causes not only within its own community and also across the world.

They do not need cafés and business plans, they need targeted financial aid from the Heritage Fund, so they can ensure every person in this country has free access to heritage and to enable them to continue the tireless, valiant work they do.

In summary, the Fund could play a role by helping to change attitudes towards heritage and sustainability, to provide low level investment to more places – to spread the wealth around and help more places in a more sustained manner. It could change the fate of many places of worship, which are closing their doors forever for the want of a few thousand pounds to mend a roof or overhaul a heating system.

**Beyond funding, what other support can the Heritage Fund provide that would achieve those changes? Examples include consultant support, sharing best practice across organisations, cohort learning and/or building partnerships with other funders.**

The issue at present is that so many funders just follow NLHF's priorities. We need NHLF to work with other funders to fill the gaps in funding needs.

Historic England, Cadw, Historic Environment Scotland and accrediting bodies are best placed to share best practice in the heritage sector. NLHF should not duplicate their efforts but should work with them to better understand the built historic environment and the issues it faces.

As noted in the Tailored Review (2017), the Heritage Fund should not "encroach on the roles of other heritage bodies by veering into direct policy making or to set priorities that may shape the heritage sector". NLHF's expertise 'predominantly sits in grant giving and project management' (Tailored Review 3.4).

**Tell us what you think about our existing priorities for heritage (landscape and nature, community heritage and heritage at risk) and our current funding approach as set out in our Strategic Funding Framework 2019-2024?**

I am disappointed by these priorities. I would like NLHF to support the small and most vulnerable parts of our built environment – not just the high profile or popular schemes. Until someone funds the most vulnerable parts of built environment, it will always be at risk.

In our sector (historic redundant churches), there are several factors which qualify places of worship as 'at risk'. These include the deterioration of building fabric, the neglect of places of worship, the closure of places of worship, the demolition of places of worship, the sale and development of places of worship and the threat of heritage crime.

In total, 6.2% (923 out of 14,785) of England's listed places of worship are on Historic England's 2021 Heritage at Risk Register. The Welsh outlook is even more bleak.

Looking ahead specifically with the Church of England, there are 16,200 Anglican churches in England. Of this, about 9,000 are rural. Of this 9,000, 8,200 are listed. Of this 9,000, more than 2,000 have congregations of less than ten people. In other terms, in rural areas 96% of people have no formal commitment to the upkeep of their church. Particularly damning is the Government's 2017 Taylor Review: Sustainability of English Churches and Cathedrals, which in essence declares rural church such as those mentioned as 'non-viable'. This becomes more acute in the post-Covid environment when the rate of closure is set to increase.

This is not an overt risk, but latent.

## Objectives and outcomes

In our current Strategic Funding Framework, we have six objectives and nine outcomes. We propose to revise the wording of the six objectives to – Ensure:

**a better future for the UK's heritage**

(current: continue to bring heritage into better condition)

**heritage is a source of inspiration and enrichment**

(current: inspire people to value heritage more)

**heritage is for everyone**

(current: ensure that heritage is inclusive)

**heritage is valued, resilient and sustainable**

(current: support the organisations we fund to be more robust, enterprising and forward looking)

**heritage enables people and places to thrive**

(current: demonstrate how heritage helps people and places to thrive)

**local economies are strengthened through heritage**

(current: grow the contribution that heritage makes to the UK economy)

Changes to the objectives may lead to subsequent changes in the nine outcomes.

Do you broadly agree with the revised objectives?

**Ensure a better future for the UK's heritage**

strongly agree

agree

neither agree nor disagree

disagree

strongly disagree

**Ensure heritage is a source of inspiration and enrichment**

strongly agree

agree

neither agree nor disagree

disagree

strongly disagree

**Ensure heritage is for everyone**

strongly agree

agree

neither agree nor disagree

disagree

strongly disagree

Heritage can be for everyone and should be available for everyone, but every heritage site doesn't have to be all things to all people. Expectations should be proportional. NLHF should also understand that people come and go, use will rise and fall, but if a historic building is important, it should be supported when it is fallow as well as when it flourishes.

**Ensure heritage is valued, resilient and sustainable**

strongly agree

agree

neither agree nor disagree

disagree

strongly disagree

**Ensure heritage enables people and places to thrive**

strongly agree

agree

neither agree nor disagree

disagree

strongly disagree

## Ensure local economies are strengthened through heritage

strongly agree

**agree**

neither agree nor disagree

disagree

strongly disagree

Heritage can play a role in this, but it is not the only component. Transport infrastructure, access to transport, other local amenities etc. are all needed for local economies to thrive.

**We expect to be doing more to prioritise and invest in places that have a greater need, opportunity and/or potential for heritage. What information should help us shape that emphasis? Select the three that are most important to you.**

**heritage needs**

social and economic needs

opportunities for the Heritage Fund to align with other funders and partners

**the potential of heritage in an area**

readiness of a place for partnership and investment (for example: existing delivery networks, stakeholders, etc)

low levels of engagement with heritage, especially among under-served groups

other (please state)

## Approaches to funding

We currently deliver the majority of our funding through our open programmes, National Lottery Grants for Heritage. Looking ahead, we are planning to make larger scale investments and direct some funding to issues or types of heritage where there is a strategic need.

**Do you agree we should invest at a larger scale (over £5million) where our investment will have a greater impact?**

Yes

**no**

don't know

**Do you agree we should direct more of our funding to specific issues or types of projects in line with specific strategic need?**

Yes

**no**

don't know

The cost-of-living crisis and rising inflation are resulting in increased costs for many heritage projects. Thinking about what would most benefit the heritage you support, what balance should we strike between investing in existing funded projects and supporting new projects over the next three years?

- keep the balance as it is currently
- re-balance to increase support for existing projects
- re-balance to increase investment in new projects
- none of the above (please specify below)
- don't know

With smaller, targeted grants the Fund could help and sustain more important places. Smaller schemes (repair of fabric) would enable NLHF to achieve its maximum reach – rather than channelling funds down one route, to one major project and place.

Obviously, more grants would result in more administration. NLHF should partner with other grant-giving bodies who have capacity and can administer funds quickly and effectively.

### Partnerships

We are looking to deliver our objectives both through our existing investment mechanisms (Lottery funding and Grant in Aid) and, where appropriate, through more partnership work with other organisations.

How do you think the Heritage Fund will need to change about how we work to shift from grant giver to partner?

As above in 9., if NLHF chose to offer more grants that would be easily available, they could partner with other grant-giving bodies, which would enable the Fund to reach even more places and people, and have a far greater effect. Both organisations could learn from each other and share any additional administrative burden.