

Association for Heritage Interpretation

Making the past work for the future Interpretation for regenerating places & communities

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'Interpret heritage – sustain its future'

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Summary

I will start by introducing the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), its role, strategic aims, grant programmes and the grant budget available. Building on the strategic aims I will highlight the mandatory 'learning' aim which all HLF projects must meet and the way that interpretation is a key factor in achieving that aim. I will continue by arguing that the sustainable conservation of our heritage can only be achieved if people participate in some way with that heritage. In order to develop the required interest in the past, people must understand the significance and value of the heritage asset. Interpretation is key to this process, both the development of interpretive material by the communities who value the asset and the use of this as an aid to greater understanding by everyone. Case studies will be used to illustrate good practice, and evidence from research will show the difference made.

Heritage Lottery Fund

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) was set up in 1994 to distribute money raised by the National Lottery to heritage projects throughout the UK. This year we will be celebrating 15 years of the Lottery and in that time HLF has awarded over £4.3 billion to over 29,000 projects. It's impossible to say how much has been spent on interpreting the heritage, however, as providing interpretation helps to meet our strategic aim on learning and that aim has been mandatory for all projects since 2002, then the majority of our projects have an interpretation element to them.

HLF's third Strategic Plan for the period 2008 – 2013, 'Valuing our heritage: Investing in our future', was launched in April 2008 and sets out HLF's vision as:

'The Heritage Lottery Fund is the UK's leading advocate for the value of heritage to modern life. The Fund sustains and transforms our heritage through innovative investment in projects with a lasting impact on people and places.'

(Link to Strategic Plan on HLF website: <http://www.hlf.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A004A1AC-6A34-4BC8-A17D-D8BF90A35DE7/0/ValuingourheritageInvestinginourfuture.pdf>)

It is important to note that HLF expects its grants to have an impact on people as well as places.

HLF's strategic aims for 2008 – 2013 are:

- To **conserve** the UK's diverse heritage for present and future generations to experience and enjoy;

- To enable more people and a wider range of people to **take an active part** in and make decisions about their heritage; and
- To enable people to **learn** about their own and others' heritage.

These are very similar to the aims in the previous strategic plan period as consultation indicated that HLF was doing the right things for places and people, the wording has just been slightly re-focused. The second aim (the 'participation' aim) seeks to encourage non-traditional audiences for heritage, such as young people, disabled people, those from BAME communities and from lower socio-economic groups. The third aim (the 'learning' aim) is mandatory and all projects have to meet this aim, along with one or both of the other two (e.g. conservation and learning, participation and learning, or all three!).

Funding and Grant programmes

In June 2006 the then Secretary of State announced that HLF would continue to distribute 16.6% of the 'good causes' money (Big Lottery distributes 50%, Arts and Sport distribute 16.6% each), which is 4.67p of every pound spent on the Lottery. It was also confirmed that HLF would continue to distribute Lottery money until 2019. So far, since the Lottery began in 1994, HLF has awarded £4.39bn in grants, an average of over £292m per year. However, we will have less money to distribute in new awards during our third Strategic Plan period.

All existing awards are safe and there will be £1.9bn to distribute up until 2019, so **with around £180 million a year HLF will still be by far the largest dedicated funder of the UK's heritage.**

HLF has three general (covering all types of heritage) grant programmes:

- Heritage Grants – over £50,000
- Your Heritage – £3,000 - £50,000
- Young Roots – £3,000 - £25,000 (which is targeted at young people aged 13 – 25)

Your Heritage and Young Roots now start at £3,000 which means that applicants will still have access to small amounts of funds as Awards for All ended in March 2009.

There are three grant programmes targeted at specific heritage sectors, including:

- Townscape Heritage Initiative - £500,000 - £2 million
- Landscape Partnerships - £250,000 - £2 million
- Parks for People - £250,000 - £5 million

All projects under these six grant programmes could have an interpretation element to them

There is also a grant programme called Repair Grants for Places of Worship which is just for high level repairs to places of worship and would not include an interpretation element. However, other projects in places of worship funded through Heritage Grants, Your Heritage or Young Roots could include interpretation.

These are the same grants programmes as were available in the previous strategic plan period.

The grant budget of £180m per year has been allocated to each of the grants programmes as follows:

Heritage Grants

- Grants over £5 million – **£20m**

- Grants £1 million - £5 million - **£38m**
- Grants £50,000 - £1 million – **£45m**

Your Heritage – £16m

Young Roots - £3m

Targeted programmes

- Parks for People - **£20m**
- Townscape Heritage Initiative – **£10m**
- Landscape Partnerships – **£10m**
- Repair grants for places of worship – **£18m**

The funding environment is becoming more competitive.

Application processes

Although consultation undertaken as HLF was developing its third strategic plan indicated that we were doing the right things for the heritage and people's engagement with heritage, HLF was asked to make its application processes simpler and quicker. So in relation to Your Heritage and Young Roots applications, there is now a simpler application form, assessments will now be completed in 10 weeks as opposed to the previous 13 weeks and there will be help with project delivery through mentor support available as part of, and paid for from, the grant.

As regards Heritage Grants there have been a number of changes. There is no longer a single or two-stage process, rather all applications will go through a two-round process with a development period between the two rounds. Applicants will apply earlier in their project planning process so less work is required prior to putting in the first-round application which requires less information and fewer supporting documents. There will be a three-month assessment period before the application is put to the Country or Regional Committee, or the Board of Trustees and they will agree up to 20% more than can be afforded at that time. Part of the first-round application will be plans for the development period for which both development grants and mentor help are available – there will no longer be Project Planning Grants as this work will be undertaken during the development period.

For the second-round application the same on-line application form will be used and all applications must include an Activity Plan (replacing the previous requirement for individual Access, Audience Development, Learning and Training Plans) and where appropriate a Conservation Management Plan. It is within the Activity Plan that all interpretation proposals will be detailed. An approximate 80% success rate is expected at the second-round. New guidance documents, including 'Thinking about interpretation' and 'Planning activities in heritage projects' are available on the HLF website, as will be case studies some of which highlight projects with good interpretation practice.

(Link to guidance document on HLF website:

<http://www.hlf.org.uk/English/PublicationsAndInfo/AccessingPublications/Helping+your+application.htm>)

Why is interpretation important?

So, why is interpretation important to HLF and to heritage generally?

As already stated HLF's learning aim is mandatory, and can be met by:

- holding events or activities to help the general public or particular groups learn about your heritage;
- creating opportunities for people to gain new or increased skills; or
- **providing information about your heritage and interpreting it for people.**

Conservation is not a once for always action – to repair and restore a building, site or other heritage asset is not enough on its own. A sustainable use has to be found for the building or site, otherwise it will again fall into disrepair. The new use is where heritage places and people come together - ensuring a sustainable future for the heritage requires people to participate in heritage as those who manage, volunteer, visit or use facilities at the sites. To encourage people to participate their interest must be stimulated by demonstrating the significance of the site, not just regionally, nationally and internationally, but especially locally to the community. Interpretation of the heritage will draw out this significance, enhance learning and lead to people valuing and participating in that heritage.

As English Heritage have described it in their heritage cycle:

- by **understanding** the historic environment people value it;
- by **valuing** it they will want to care for it;
- by **caring** for it they will help people enjoy it; and
- from **enjoying** the historic environment comes a thirst to understand more.

HLF evaluation of projects

HLF commissions evaluation of and research into the impact of its funding, such as the social impact through such methods as visitor surveys which ask a number of questions three of which are particularly relevant to interpretation:

Question	2008 survey result
Thinking about this site - how far would you agree or disagree that information and signage around the site is interesting?	85%
Thinking about this site – how far would you agree or disagree that exhibits and collections are displayed in a way that makes it easy for you to understand?	79%
Thinking about this site – how far would you agree or disagree that children can learn things here that cannot be learned in the classroom?	80%

One outcome of these satisfaction rates is that 60% said that they were 'likely to revisit this site in the next 12 months' and 92% said that they were 'likely to recommend their friends to visit this site'. These figures have been consistent each year since 2005.

As specific examples, for the Birmingham & Midland Museum of Transport the responses were:

Question	2008 survey result
Thinking about this site - how far would you agree or disagree that information and signage around the site is interesting?	97%
Thinking about this site – how far would you agree or disagree that exhibits and collections are displayed in a way that makes it easy for you to understand?	94%
Thinking about this site – how far would you agree or disagree that children can learn things here that cannot be learned in the classroom?	77%

How likely are you to revisit this site in the next 12 months?	59%
How likely are you to recommend your friends visit this site?	88%



For the Pontypool Museum the responses were:

Question	2008 survey result
Thinking about this site - how far would you agree or disagree that information and signage around the site is interesting?	84%
Thinking about this site – how far would you agree or disagree that exhibits and collections are displayed in a way that makes it easy for you to understand?	88%
Thinking about this site – how far would you agree or disagree that children can learn things here that cannot be learned in the classroom?	96%
How likely are you to revisit this site in the next 12 months?	84%
How likely are you to recommend your friends visit this site?	100%



Case studies

Nottingham Lace Market

Here an HLF funded restoration of a former lace warehouse and a Townscape Heritage Initiative project in the surrounding area had resulted in the regeneration of the whole area. The lace warehouse is now used as a College for 16-19 year olds and adult education, while the whole area is a vibrant creative and cultural quarter with residential developments in former warehouses, new employment at the college and in service industries such as shops, cafes and bars. As a response to this regeneration a Lace Market Trail has been developed which includes tactile plaques for people with visual impairments.



Tyne & Wear Museums – ‘Look, touch, listen & smell’

Tyne & Wear Museums (TWM) engaged local communities – people with sensory impairments and those from BAME communities – to help deliver a range of new interpretive techniques. People from these communities also became new audiences for the museums taking advantage of the interpretation to help them understand and learn about the collections and sites. Five museums and archaeological sites were involved and the interpretation included pre-visit information packs for people with sensory impairments; tactile ‘maps for all’, 3-D models and touch tours; audio guides suitable for people with visual impairments and in other languages for people whose first language is not English; listening posts; and smells as part of a sensory trail.

TWM commissioned an evaluation of this project and some of the responses included:

- ‘People commented on how the interpretations had increased their knowledge and understanding of the exhibits and the experience was educational and fun.’
- ‘Most visitors expressed satisfaction with the new interpretations [which] made them want to return’



Drake's trail

This Young Roots project engaged young people from the local community to:

- research Drake and his associations with places;
- visit these places on the trails; and
- create a series of downloadable podcasts available on <http://www.drakestrail.co.uk/>

Great Dunmow Maltings

This historic building was restored in 2000 and more recently the interpretation was refreshed to stimulate renewed interest and return visits. The local community, who already manage and make great use of the building as a community resource, were engaged to research and produce the new interpretation.

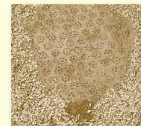


TURNING BARLEY INTO MALT

Following its passage along the length of the growing floors, the sprouting barley was spread across the kiln floor to a depth of some 9" (23cm) - the floor comprising a woven wire mat (recorded from C.1710 in documents on malting) tensioned via wooden pads and studs fixed on the outside of the kiln's four walls. At a later date, small kilns similar to this were fitted with special perforated terracotta tiles, examples of which can be seen on the display shelf.



Tension bar to wire floor cover - shown with sawn.



The circular flue above the kiln drew warm air up through the barley from the firebox below. This process arrested germination at the grain's highest sugar content - thus forming malt.



Section of kiln floor showing the long 'kiln-bricks' resting on the arch supports.

After kiln drying, the malted barley was cooled, sieved to remove roots and shoots and then bagged for storage prior to use by the brewery.



End bay ground floor was divided to allow malt - shoveled from the kiln - to be stored and bagged.



In conclusion

We have seen competition for all levels of grant funding increase over the past two years. Undoubtedly this will mean some of our applicants will be disappointed but overall we think the quality of what we fund will be higher and we hope our simpler application process will encourage you to 'have a go'. HLF is the largest dedicated funder of the UK's heritage and we look forward to receiving your ideas for innovative interpretation projects that will help us to sustain our museums, buildings, landscapes and cultures, and ensure they are relevant to modern society.

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