

THE HISTORIC TOWNS FORUM

RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE 'GOOD CAUSES' SHARES OF LOTTERY FUNDING

Proposal

On 1 April 2011, to increase the share apportionment for arts, heritage and sport to 18% each of the Lottery and reduce the Big Lottery Fund to 46%. Then on 1 April 2012, to increase the shares for arts, heritage and sport to 20% each of the Lottery and to reduce the apportionment share for the Big Lottery Fund to 40%.

Introduction

The Historic Towns Forum (HTF) represents the interests of historic towns across the UK. Established as the English Historic Towns Forum (EHTF) in 1987 by local a core of key heritage towns, its membership now includes 70 local authorities. The HTF supports conservation and prosperity in historic towns by promoting good practice, publishing guidance, providing a network for sharing experiences by running conferences and training events.

The HTF aims to demonstrate the value of our heritage as a national asset that delivers wide-ranging public benefits. It is not a direct recipient of Heritage Lottery Fund awards, but works in a field where such funding is crucial to its members in meeting heritage environment objectives.

The HTF welcomes the Coalition Government's intention to increase the shares to arts, heritage and sport in two stages, restoring the original share of 20% in 2012. The Forum also welcomes the Government's commitment to the principle of additionality embodied in this proposal at a time when other sources of public funding will be under greater pressure. The HTF believes that Lottery money should not be a substitute for funding that would normally be met by mainstream public sector spending.

Consultation Questions

Q1 How would the change benefit you or the sector you represent?

The nation's heritage has benefitted hugely from the Heritage Lottery Fund since 1994. Many projects benefiting historic townscapes and parks, Conservation Areas and industrial heritage would not have happened without Lottery support. The Townscape Heritage Initiative is particularly valued by the HTF. The investment successfully reflected the high value people place on the quality and distinctiveness of their cities, towns and villages. As well as the economic impacts, HLF investment demonstrates the social contribution heritage can make to local identity and community cohesion, as research by English Heritage (Heritage Counts 2009) has shown.

Restoring the contribution to the HLF will:

- a. conserve and enhance our heritage leading to environmental, social and economic benefits both locally and nationally;
- b. support proactive conservation by local authorities by expanding a potential base for match funding
- c. support a prosperous tourism industry, which relies heavily on heritage assets;
- d. increase public access to and understanding of our heritage;
- e. further develop community and voluntary sector engagement and skills in conserving our heritage; and
- f. support traditional and specialist conservation skills to meet the skills gaps identified by heritage bodies

Q2 How would the proposed change disadvantage you or the sector you represent?

The proposal reduces the proportion allocated to the Big Lottery Fund. The HTF is concerned that the reduction in BIG funding may adversely affect voluntary and community groups, which have an important part to play in conservation. Consequently, the Forum welcomes the intention that BIG should focus its funding on the voluntary and community sector. This approach will continue to develop the scope and reach of, and engagement with, the voluntary and community sectors.

For Lottery distributors:

Q3 What change, if any, would you expect to make to planned levels of grant budgets and payment forecasts.

Not applicable.

For voluntary and community sector organisations:

Q4 What impact would the changes have on member organisations' ability to deliver previously identified priorities or projects?

Not directly applicable, but see Q7.

Q5 In your view will the change have any adverse or positive impact on particular groups, taking into account race, gender, disability, age, faith/belief, sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic equality? How could adverse impacts be avoided or mitigated. Please provide evidence if possible.

It is anticipated that with properly structured objectives and application procedures all groups should benefit from the increased allocation to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The additional funding should improve take-up from priority sectors and make a positive impact.

Q6 I will arrange for an initial draft Impact Assessment to be placed on the DCMS website (link below) and would be grateful for any evidence to inform that.

The HTF welcomes the statement that, ‘the Government believes that a vibrant cultural, media and sporting sector is crucial for our wellbeing and quality of life’.

Q7 Do you have any other observations?

- a. The HTF is concerned about the way that HLF research resources are included in administrative costs. This is a valuable service and no other body produces robust statistics on social and economic outcomes that demonstrate the value of investment in heritage, e.g. the £20.6bn that heritage-led tourism generates. Other figures cover the voluntary and community sector, where the HLF uniquely has the data and professional expertise to distil out the community benefits of investment in heritage investment from a wide range of recipients. HLF research gives an important a national perspective. This must not be lost in an attempt to impose an unsustainably low level of administrative costs.

- b. The HLF does not directly grant aid private owners, although if private owners are involved, as in a Conservation Area, it expects the public benefit to be greater than any private gain. However, the proposed amendment to HLF funding highlights the inconvenient fact that much of our heritage is in private hands. Tourism contributes £20.6bn to the economy, but the responsibility for sustaining the quality of place - the townscapes, parks and gardens and distinctive local buildings and modest details rather than the trophy buildings – is at the discretion of many private owners, who derive no direct financial return. Grants to private owners are limited from English Heritage and almost nonexistent from local authorities – and funding from the latter will almost inevitably shrink in the forthcoming round of budget cuts. Instead, VAT at 17.5% or 20% on conservation works, but at 0% on new building, is a burden that discourages maintenance and good stewardship. It is timely here to urge the Government to explore fiscal incentives or refundable grant schemes that would support private owners in caring for our historic environment for national benefit.

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