



Third Sector Review Team  
Charity and Third Sector Finance Unit Questionnaire  
HM Treasury  
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29<sup>th</sup> September 2006

Dear Sir,

### **Heritage Link response to the Third Sector Review**

Heritage Link brings together 80 voluntary organisations<sup>1</sup> concerned with heritage in England representing interests from specialist advisers, practitioners and managers, volunteers and owners, to national funding bodies and local building preservation trusts. Much of the historic environment is cared for - supported, managed or owned - by these not-for-profit organisations. They are supported by some 4 million members making it the biggest alliance of heritage interests in England.

Heritage Link welcomes the Review which demonstrates growing understanding of the contribution the third sector makes to contemporary society. The heritage sector is characterised by the high proportion of voluntary bodies, national, regional and local. Our members believe that the nation's heritage is central to economic and social regeneration, liveability, local quality of life and community cohesion and that their role should be better reflected in policy making.

As much of the current debate focuses on public service delivery, we are concerned that the questionnaire is aimed at social and health care charities. While we recognise and appreciate the work they do, we stress there is more to the third sector. Heritage organisations have a significant presence in local communities through for example the Civic Trust, CPRE and Council for British Archaeology. Many of our members and their own members participate in the democratic planning process and thus have a long standing function in empowering communities and campaigning. We hope that this aspect of the third sector will be taken into account in your findings.

In support of this I attach a draft summary of the findings of our latest research *How We Do It: the scale and scope of the voluntary heritage sector*<sup>2</sup> which illustrates the range of activities and their aspirations. We will forward you the complete document shortly.

We can not comment on all the questions but on two specific themes:

#### **Cohesive communities and building voice for citizens.**

*Making Consultation Matter*, (Heritage Link 2006) our survey through member organisations of local amenity groups' experience of local planning consultation may have resonance with replies from other elements of the Third Sector. It finds that central government policy towards greater community involvement is not always evident at local level.

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- > Influencing policy

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  - > Underpinning advocacy

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  - > Increasing capacity
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## Recommendation on skills development

The Planning Delivery Grant should be used to improve skills of local authority staff to engage with local communities (of all sorts) in planning consultations and that potential of the Local Government Bill to support engagement and empower local communities and the voluntary sector to contribute on heritage issues should be realised. The full recommendations are enclosed<sup>3</sup>.

## Partnership working to deliver a shared agenda

Our latest research *How We Do It: the scale and scope of the voluntary heritage sector* (Heritage Link 2006) demonstrates that partnership working is fundamental to the sector. *Heritage Dynamo: how the voluntary sector drives regeneration* (Heritage Link 2004) showed how collaboration with voluntary heritage organisations can bring added value in terms of funding, expertise, skills and community engagement that are central to creating sustainable communities and securing urban and rural regeneration. The case studies illustrate that partnership with voluntary heritage organisations often act as the catalyst in getting a project off the ground.

## Recommendations for fostering partnerships with the voluntary sector

Supporting social and economic regeneration as well as community uses in historic buildings, we are now discussing a VAT concession with HM Treasury that would enable all registered charities to reclaim VAT (17.5%) on repairs and maintenance to the listed buildings they own. This would help the Third Sector deliver environmental, social, educational, and economic benefits as well as promoting repair and maintenance as part of the Government sustainability agenda. It will promote the long term care of many of our listed buildings, bring vacant listed buildings back into use and is a means of addressing the cumulative backlog of repairs to charitably owned buildings. Not least it will make much more effective use of public funds.

One of the most welcome political initiatives this year was the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Community Assets Ownership Work Group. The Group's report, *Community assets: the benefit and costs of community ownership* DCLG 2006 <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1502504> strongly supports the concept of community groups being given a 'first right of refusal' over the purchase and use of redundant public buildings, following the model established successfully for land and buildings in Scotland.

The DCLG is considering the report and how to take this policy forward, and we support the introduction of further legislation to allow locally-based organisations to make the best use of the buildings and the assets they represent for their communities.

## Evidence based policy making

Data collection hampers our efforts to influence policy making. Numbers of visitors to heritage sites are relatively easy to compile but because heritage is the most freely accessible form of culture and many of the voluntary organisations running activities are small and/or completely voluntary, robust data is difficult to gather. This year's sector wide campaign *History Matters – Pass it On* has added to qualitative data but measuring engagement, appreciation and enjoyment is always difficult.

DCMS new Taking Part Survey has however given us heritage volunteering figures, 400,000 per annum, which far exceeds previous estimates. It confirms the significance of volunteers in the sector and can now be taken into account in formulating policy.

Recommendation

Further government investment in this area would benefit both government and the heritage voluntary sector.

If you have any queries relating the points we have raised please do not hesitate to contact us. We are content for Heritage Link's name and/or the substance of our response to be publicised at a later date but the draft summary of findings of our research *How We Do It* is not yet published and should at present remain confidential.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthea Case', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Anthea Case CBE  
Chairman, Heritage Link

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1. Heritage Link membership list
  2. *How We Do It: the scale and scope of the voluntary heritage sector* draft summary of findings - confidential
  3. Making Consultation Matter: recommendations