

Anne Young  
Heritage Lottery Fund  
7 Holbein Place  
London SW1W 8NR

3<sup>rd</sup> March 2006

Dear Anne Young

### **Heritage Lottery Fund consultation on 3<sup>rd</sup> Strategic Plan**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment at this stage on the Heritage Lottery Fund's 3<sup>rd</sup> Strategic Plan.

Heritage Link brings together 82 voluntary organisations concerned with the heritage in England. Between them they represent some 4 million members from volunteers to owners, specialist advisers, practitioners and managers to national funding bodies and local organisations such as archaeological societies, amenity societies and building preservation trusts. Since 2002 almost half of HLF funding has gone to organisations in the voluntary sector. Many of our members and their own networks of members are recipients of Heritage Lottery funding and thus represent a significant proportion of the HLF's clients. In relation to the voluntary sector HLF has not only invested heavily in the assets they own and manage for the public benefit but has also been instrumental in building capacity in the voluntary sector.

Since November, Heritage Link has encouraged all its members (and readers of Heritage Link Update) to reply to the National Lottery Consultation and the HLF's pre consultation. As their interests are many and diverse, we have not thought it useful to seek to identify any overall consensus, except in two areas - the broad strategic aims and their experience on Q3, access to funding, - and to report some strongly held feelings about two programmes.

#### **1. STRATEGIC AIMS**

Whatever their views on priorities within these, our members agree that the three strategic aims should remain unchanged for the third term 2008-13:

- to conserve the UK's diverse heritage for future generations to enjoy;
- to enable more people to be involved in and make decision about their heritage;
- to enable people to learn about their own and others' heritage.

There were however some concerns that the second and third of these could be unintelligently applied in circumstances in which they were not the heart of the matter

#### **2. ACCESS TO FUNDING**

We appreciate that Lottery money is public money and accept that rigorous standards of quality and financial control should continue. However balancing control with easier access to funding should be given a higher priority in the third strategic plan if the HLF is to ensure that voluntary organisations and in particular the smaller heritage organisations

can take up lottery money. Special measures may be required to give these smaller bodies as equitable access as larger organisations with highly experienced staff, especially in circumstances when lower levels of funding mean greater competition.

We welcome the statement that HLF plans a shorter application process with clearer and more concise application and monitoring materials. Our members' comments come under three headings, internal process, support to applicants, external transparency.

### **Process**

We agree that complex heritage schemes are demanding and that the HLF must ensure good value for lottery money but there is much anecdotal evidence that heritage groups struggle with the bureaucracy of heritage lottery fund application forms and processes, and that this deters applicants.

At present the complexity of the application process is broadly tiered to grant size and while this seems logical, some means of adjusting at least the initial stages to the resources of the applicant might be considered. 'This means' said one of our members 'would-be applicants are not daunted by massive application forms and financial forecasting requirements before they have even got to the starting line.'

Another issue raised is whether financial help, through project planning grants, should not be extended to business planning.

Although evaluation of successful applicants' experience is useful and the long term improvement welcomed, the views of those who did not complete the application process should also be tracked and analysed. In particular the reasons for fall out after pre-application advice and project planning grants should be monitored.

### **Support to applicants**

The role of project officers is critical to the success of an application. We have heard that the quality of project officers is variable, one even comparing succeeding officers on the same project. Where smaller organisations are very dependent on HLF guidance, this support is even more important.

Our members recommend better selection, training and/or management of project officers. It might be necessary to allocate more resources to increasing the number of case officers or giving specialist training tailored towards supporting smaller organisations. Many case officers have little or no experience of what life is like in the voluntary sector. Perhaps some secondment type arrangements might be contemplated?

Various ideas came forward about actively encouraging applications. The development of pre application advice and project planning grants are one means.

Support could also come from non HLF sources, through past applicants mentoring or sharing good practice with new or potential applicants, or through evening classes specifically designed to help would-be applicants who may not have previous experience of fundraising, charity law or project management issues involved in running an HLF project. Might HLF consider a scheme loosely based on CABE's enablers to act as client advisers and hence to improve the quality of applications from smaller groups who inevitable have less capacity than larger ones. If past applicants were "enablers" or "mentors", this would also capitalise on the capacity building resulting from the application process which can be wasted except in the case of serial applicants.

### **Transparency of outcome**

In circumstances in which good schemes are being rejected through lack of funds, there needs to be much greater transparency about the reasons, not just for rejection, but for relative failure.

### **3. PROGRAMMES**

Although we didn't look for a consensus here it is clear that members valued both the Townscape Heritage Initiative and the Local Heritage Initiative. Continuation and extension of the Townscape Heritage Initiative would support more projects that sustain local distinctiveness. The Local Heritage Initiative is valued especially for its accessibility. If it cannot be continued with the demise of the Countryside Agency, we support a similar programme which focuses on local heritage and community involvement with a simple application process.

I hope you will take these comment into account and we look forward to commenting on the Strategic Plan later in 2006.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthea Case'.

Anthea Case CBE  
Chairman, Heritage Link