

EVALUATION OF THE HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND'S DEVELOPMENT WORK

Executive Summary

1. INTRODUCTION

In April 2004, HLF commissioned an evaluation of the development work. A full report has been produced and this summary only covers the main findings of the evaluation study (completed in December 2004), and its conclusions and recommendations.

The methodology drew on current evaluation theory to ensure that the evaluation process was independent, rigorous and practical, and that it focused on learning from experience. An advisory group was established, chaired by HLF Trustee Catherine Graham-Harrison and including HLF adviser Alison Millward, as well as HLF senior staff. There was also consultation with HLF Development Managers at an early stage. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used including a detailed analysis of existing internal statistical data, visits to interview Regional and Country Managers, Development Managers and some Development Officers (in four regions / countries), attendance at an HLF workshop for potential applicants, discussions with some Grants Officers and interviews with grant recipients (for the life stories). Draft reports on the evaluation have been checked for accuracy with all relevant HLF staff.

2. HLF DEVELOPMENT WORK IN PRACTICE

HLF development work was introduced in its Strategic Plan 2 (SP2), 2002 - 2007, which has four aims:

- to encourage more people to be involved in and make decisions about their heritage
- to conserve and enhance the UK's diverse heritage
- to ensure that everyone can learn about, have access to and enjoy their heritage
- to bring about a more equitable spread of our grants across the UK.

By October 2002, most development staff were in post in the regional and country offices (usually one Development Manager and one or two Development Officers).

HLF development work focuses mainly on the 72 geographical Special Development Areas (SDAs) across the UK, sometimes called 'cold spots'. The SDAs were agreed in 2002 by regional and country committees and are almost always areas with historically low investment from HLF and suffering from social and economic deprivation (as required in SP2).

The six main strands of activity by development staff are as follows.

- **Publicity and promotion** of HLF's grants and activities, including through 'roadshows', publicity leaflets and placing articles in magazines and newsletters. Development staff have to strike a careful balance between encouraging groups to apply for funding for good projects, and ensuring groups have realistic expectations of their chances of success given the more competitive current environment for HLF funding.

- **Outreach work** with new audiences, especially workshop events (almost always run in partnership with other organisations). Development staff also set up exhibitions, local survey events, and the production of materials to prompt discussion of 'what is heritage?' (e.g. the card game, board game and picture postcards).
- **Pre-application advice.** Development staff spend 50 - 80% of their time giving advice on specific projects, by phone, email, letter or in face-to-face meetings in HLF offices or on the project site.

A pre-application form may be used by some applicants. Development staff dealt with over 800 pre-application inquiries from the SDAs alone in 2003-4.

Development advice is designed to increase the quality of good applications to HLF, which helps create better quality projects. The development advice focuses on the actual application process, and does not tell people what they should do in their projects. Help with the application process is not just about filling in the application form, it is about helping the applicant think through what they want to do with HLF funding and what they want the money for. It is precisely this focus on the application (which is HLF's business) and not the project (which is not) that gives HLF development work such clarity and enables the ownership of the project to stay with the applicant. This approach also helps to reduce the number of ineligible or poor applications which are likely to be unsuccessful: saying 'no' is a core element of the development role. The advice is also designed to support less confident and experienced groups, especially first time applicants from special development areas.

Some advice work is undertaken with local authorities and other repeat applicants to help them prioritise multiple applications (e.g. South West and West Midlands regions bringing together different departments in a local authority, or several organisations in the same area). Other advice methods include encouraging grantee ambassadors that can help new groups by passing on their experience, producing information materials (e.g. leaflets on what makes a good application or specific projects), and the outreach events described above.

- **Networking and partnership activities.** Almost all outreach development work is done in partnership with other organisations which helps HLF to reach the existing contacts of those organisations easily, and ensures that HLF can share the work in providing help to groups with more local bodies which already have responsibility for long term in depth support.

Some specific HLF development programme partnership initiatives include growing links with other Lottery Distributors (e.g. the new regional forums for development staff, cross-Lottery Distributor initiatives and close liaison with local authority Lottery officers), themed events to bring together potential applicants and funding partners (e.g. on parks and on aviation heritage in the South West region, and on biodiversity in the North West), and 'training the trainer' events at which HLF 'trains' staff from other organisations so they can give advice on HLF grants at a more local level (e.g. the South West region workshops for training trainers from black and minority ethnic community groups).

- **Input to grants assessment.** A record is kept of the pre-application contact and advice that has been given. These notes are passed to grants officers when the application is made, and informal briefings are also provided, so that development work can be taken account of during the assessment.
- **Research and development.** A range of research and evaluation projects are currently underway regionally, partly to increase understanding of good practice of development work, partly to demonstrate achievement, and partly to identify where future development work should focus its efforts.

3. 'LIFE STORIES' OF HLF DEVELOPMENT WORK

Life stories have been used in the evaluation to illustrate how development work operates in practice in some very different projects, groups and locations.

Four projects were examined in detail covering applications to Your Heritage (two projects), Heritage Grants and the Project Planning Grant programme. The projects were the Grade II listed Durlston Castle project by Dorset County Council (part of the UNESCO World Heritage Coast), the Kilmadock Community History Project covering the villages of Doune and Deanston near Stirling, an exhibition and archive of the social history of Blackpool's Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgendered community, and the 15th century Grade II* listed Cradley Village Hall restoration near Malvern. Projects generally took at least a year from first contact to formal application; some significantly longer.

The feedback from applicants on the help given by HLF can be summarised as follows (including quotes from applicants):

- The advice given by HLF development staff was very "practical", "concrete", "clear" and "straightforward". Both detailed heritage advice and project planning advice (e.g. timing, target audiences and numbers) were highly valued by even the most experienced and well-resourced applicants.
- All the applicants interviewed stressed how the advice had helped them to "focus" their projects on to activities that were of heritage and community value, and that the group could actually deliver. The advice helped groups get away from "long wish lists" to develop a practical and feasible project.
- The approach and style of the advice given by HLF development staff was as important as the content of the advice. Staff were "interested", enthusiastic and very "encouraging", which was important to all applicants. Staff were not "over-personal" but very "approachable", supportive and "very professional". There was "no faffing around" just clear helpful guidance, and groups "really valued their support".
- The rigour of the application process, although demanding (especially for small voluntary groups) was appreciated by applicants. All found making the application required them to put in a great deal of work, but they felt their efforts were appreciated by HLF and that their projects were greatly improved as a result. The rigour of the process also contributed to the "fantastic sense of achievement" when the application was successful.

4. THE UNIQUE ROLE OF HLF DEVELOPMENT WORK

HLF works in situations where there are other organisations which may also be supporting heritage activities and/or giving grants and advice to local groups doing projects. The evaluation examined what was unique about HLF development work.

4.1 HLF development work's specific contribution

HLF development staff work closely with many other organisations, especially heritage and conservation bodies, regional and local government, voluntary and community organisations (especially umbrella bodies). HLF's development work has some common features with work by these agencies, but has three distinguishing features which make its contribution unique:

- **A broad heritage focus.** HLF's remit is not limited to any specific types of heritage. HLF development work can therefore engage with heritage conservation, learning, interpretation, access and participation across a wide range of heritage assets ranging from traditional heritage priorities to local communities' own heritage concerns. This diversity and breadth allows potential applicants (and others) to easily understand connections into the wider community benefits of heritage (e.g. to regeneration, community cohesion, local pride and confidence).
- **A flexible and responsive approach.** As a funding body, HLF is outside the statutory duties of heritage lead bodies so development work can be more flexible and responsive to applicants' own interests and values for heritage, and can support genuinely innovative heritage work.
- **Focus on HLF funding.** The most obvious unique characteristic, but also important. HLF development work focuses on HLF grant applications, and is closely integrated with grant assessment processes. HLF development staff do not attempt to provide in depth community capacity building or general advice to potential applicants, but do provide links to existing services offered by other local organisations where deeper and longer term support is needed.

4.2 Overall qualities of HLF development work

The evaluation shows that HLF's development work conforms to good practice in development work. It has three particular characteristics which contribute to its strength:

- **Clear and coherent approach,** with a priority on targeted areas and groups (special development areas and first time applicants), the focus on developing good quality applications (and thus good quality projects) and reducing the number of poor and/or ineligible applications, and working in partnership with existing organisations.
- **Investment of appropriate staff resources.** Successful delivery of the development programme has only been feasible because of the staffing resources dedicated to the programme, which has allowed high calibre specialist staff to be recruited and based at region / country level. As a result, these development staff have been able to focus on advice, outreach and partnership work separately from grant assessment processes.

- **Diversity of methods in different places.** Although there are strong similarities in the approach to HLF development work across the UK, the actual activities and methods are very different in different places, reflecting the characteristics of the regions and countries where it is done.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO HLF'S AIMS AND TARGETS

HLF's development work has only been operating since October 2002, so it is still very early to assess its impact on the SP2 aims and targets, especially given the length of time it takes groups to make a formal application (usually at least one year; often much longer).

The development programme was expected to be of particular value in enabling HLF to achieve its fourth overall aim of a more equitable spread of HLF grants across the UK, and to play a role in assisting delivery of the other aims (see page 1). Its performance to date is outlined below.

5.1 SP2 aims

There has been a significant increase in HLF grants to the special development areas (SDAs), which previously had below average HLF spend: in the two years from 2002 to 2004, 412 awards were made in SDAs, worth £118 million, compared to an annual average of 62 awards worth £18.5 million in the previous eight years. This shows a more equitable geographical spread as previous 'cold spots' are now receiving funding.

5.2 SP2 targets

The SP2 targets relevant to the development programme are identified under the 'Capacity building and outreach' activities in SP2. Development work is not the only delivery vehicle for meeting these targets, and a whole range of other factors outside HLF's control can influence success. However, development work can be seen to have contributed significantly to meeting these targets.

5.2.1 **Target:** Between 370 and 430 projects to be supported during 2002-3.
This target was **met**. 390 Your Heritage projects alone were supported in 2002-3.

5.2.2 **Target:** Percentage of applications through small grants programmes from first time applicants under that programme (Awards for All – 50-70%, Your Heritage - 30-50%).

This target was **met**, and exceeded in both 2002-3 and 2003-4 by all regions and countries in relation to Your Heritage. On average, 87% of applications to Your Heritage were from first time applicants over the two years. Data is only available for 2003-4 for Awards for All, and that average is also 87%.

5.2.3 **Target:** First time applicants to small grants programmes to be no less successful than other applicants to those programmes, based on the in-year UK-wide success rate.

There is **good progress** towards meeting this target. In 2002-3, two regions / countries of the 12 met the target in relation to Your Heritage; in 2003-4, six regions / countries met the target for Your Heritage.

5.2.4 **Target:** Number of applications from the five local authority areas targeted for special development work in each country and region to reach the annual per capita average for the country or region by April 2007.

There is **very good progress** towards this target. In 2002-3, 18 special development areas (SDAs) met the target (out of the total of 72 across the UK); in 2003-4, 33 SDAs met the target and 15 further SDAs were closer than the previous year.

5.2.5 **Target:** Applications from the areas targeted for special development work to be no less successful than other applications, based on the in-year UK-wide success rate.

There is **good progress** towards this target. In 2002-3, 29 SDAs met the target; in 2003-4, 35 SDAs met the target and 7 further SDAs were closer than the previous year.

5.3 Meeting the objectives for the development programme

HLF's development work is also already meeting the six original objectives set out for the development programme in 2002: to raise the profile of HLF in the territory and to promote awareness of HLF grant programmes and activities; to reach new audiences and generate interest in heritage; to increase the number of applications from profile raising areas; to encourage first time applicants; to promote good practice and improve the quality of applications; and to develop opportunities for joint working with other lottery distributors and heritage partners.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Development work in HLF was launched in October 2002, and is already operating very effectively in meeting its own original objectives. Although direct cause and effect is hard to prove, development activities have certainly contributed significantly to HLF's performance in meeting and exceeding two of the SP2 targets for capacity building and outreach, and in making good progress towards the remaining three SP2 targets. It has also contributed to SP2 aims especially helping achieve a more equitable spread of HLF funding across the UK.

Development work has been particularly effective in reaching new audiences for heritage, improving the quality of applications (and thus helping to improve the quality of projects), and working in partnership with other agencies to reach and provide advice and support to potential applicants (which they value highly).

The success of the development programme to date is largely due to three particular characteristics of HLF's development work: a clear and coherent approach, investment of appropriate staff resources, and a diversity of methods in different places. Unlike other development support offered by heritage, government and voluntary bodies, HLF's development work has a particularly broad heritage focus, a flexible and responsive approach, and a focus on HLF's own funding programmes (rather than general capacity building).

No significant gaps in service provision have been identified in assessing progress on either targets or objectives. However, a range of opportunities for the future have been identified for further discussion within HLF, particularly around more effective continuous research and analysis on HLF development work, a more detailed review of the work in special development areas to identify the most effective approaches, increased sharing of good practice in development work among HLF staff (and more widely), a continuing strong focus on proactive work in which HLF facilitates heritage interests to work together (e.g. helping organisations prioritise multiple applications), and more effective links to capacity building organisations locally, so that potential applicants can be signposted easily to in depth and longer term help and advice.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is not the purpose of this evaluation to make detailed recommendations, but rather to describe and interpret current practice and draw out lessons, which it has done throughout the main report and this summary. Only two specific recommendations are therefore proposed:

- Development work had only been operational for 18 months when this evaluation started. It is clearly working and developing well, and it would therefore be premature to consider any major changes at this stage, before any longer term impacts could be fully tested. In the meantime, continued investment in dedicated development staff resources based at region / country level is likely to continue to make a significant contribution to HLF aims and targets.
- The full findings of this evaluation should be presented and discussed with HLF staff and others to identify where good practice can be built on, and where further work and investment is needed, as part of future strategic planning.

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