



National Heritage Science Forum

Briefing Note: Heritage 2033 – National Lottery Heritage Fund Strategy

Introduction

The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) is the UK's largest dedicated provider of grant funding for heritage projects. The NLHF is funded by National Lottery ticket sales and it is a non-departmental public body associated with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

In March 2023, the NLHF released their new 10-year strategy, Heritage 2033. This strategy was produced following a comprehensive [engagement survey](#) and extensive [strategy development research](#).

[Read the full NLHF Strategy, Heritage 2033, here.](#)

The NLHF's new vision is:

For heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone's future.

Heritage is defined as "anything from the past that people value and want to pass on to future generations".

Based on this vision, the NLHF have defined four principles that will guide their investment decisions over the next 10 years and have announced some shifts in their approach to funding delivery.

This briefing note will provide an overview of the strategy and identify significant points of connection with the [Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK 2018-2023](#).

Strategy Summary

The strategy consists of the four investment principles followed by a summary of the implications for the NLHF's funding portfolio and new strategic interventions.

Investment Principles

Where the previous [NLHF Strategic Funding Framework 2019-2024](#) only had one mandatory outcome all projects needed to achieve ('a wider range of people will be involved in heritage'), Heritage 2033 asks that future projects take all four of these principles into account.

1. *Saving heritage*

"Our support will ensure heritage remains accessible, relevant, sustainable and valued".

This involves:

- Protecting heritage that is at risk
- Investing specifically in local places

- Inviting proposals that will help to sustain and manage heritage, including those related to digital heritage resources

2. Protecting the environment

“We will support natural heritage and environmentally sustainable projects that help the UK meet its nature recovery targets and mitigate the impact of climate change on heritage”.

This involves:

- Supporting landscape-scale projects
- Investing in partnerships that will reverse habitat and species decline
- Supporting projects that reduce our environmental footprint and help heritage adapt to a changing climate
- Mitigating climate risks to heritage

3. Inclusion, access and participation

“We will support organisations to ensure everyone has opportunities to learn, develop new skills and explore heritage, regardless of background or personal circumstances”.

This involves:

- Involving a more diverse range of people in heritage in terms of workforces, leadership and audiences
- Helping organisations to remove barriers to access and participation
- Encouraging all communities to explore their heritage
- Using digital technology to make heritage more accessible

4. Organisational sustainability

“We will support organisations to develop the skills and capacity to ensure a sound long-term future and encourage new heritage investment that benefits communities and economies”.

This involves:

- Enabling organisations to build financial resilience
- Finding opportunities to support heritage skills development
- Providing flexible funding models
- Championing the use of more diverse income sources

Funding Portfolio

The NLHF will be raising their previous funding cap of £5 million to £10 million to allow for larger-scale investments.

Strategic Interventions

There will be an initial focus on:

- Place-based investment
- Large-scale landscape and nature projects
- Addressing heritage that is particularly in need or at risk
- Ensuring that NLHF grants are rapid, flexible and responsive

Key Points for Heritage Science

With Heritage 2033's clear emphasis on protecting heritage at risk, climate change mitigation, and digital technology, there are opportunities for the heritage science sector to design and partner with projects that will align with the NLHF's new investment principles and priorities.

1. Saving heritage

The NLHF is committing funding to:

- **“Protect, conserve and revitalise** heritage of all kinds that is in poor condition or at risk of loss, decline, damage, neglect or of being forgotten”.
- **“Develop the skills, capacity and innovation to sustain and manage heritage”.**

By 2033, they will have:

- **“Improved the condition, viability** and public understanding of thousands of heritage sites, collections, habitats, species and intangible cultural heritage”.
- **“Measurably reduced the amount of heritage identified as ‘at risk’**, whether through loss, facing extinction, assessed as being in poor or unfavourable condition or at risk of being forgotten”.
- **“Ensured that the digital heritage resources** we support are **open, accessible and discoverable** by future generations”.

Connections to the Strategic Framework for Heritage Science

- One aspect of the NHSF Strategic Framework is to encourage the heritage science sector to define their research priorities in accordance with the present needs and future requirements of heritage. Heritage 2033 articulates some of those priorities: demonstrably protecting, conserving, and revitalising heritage that is at risk, and creating accessible digital heritage resources. The heritage science sector is already conducting research in alignment with these priorities, and it will be helpful to understand that the NLHF is committed to funding projects that achieve these goals.
- The NHSF is actively working to build heritage science capacity to sustain and manage heritage now and into the future. See ‘Organisational stability’ below for further details.
- The Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science (RICHeS) programme will help to ensure that digital heritage research resources are open, accessible and discoverable for future generations. See ‘Inclusion, access and participation’ below for further details.

2. Protecting the environment

The NLHF is committing funding to:

- “Strategic and **landscape-scale** projects – both rural and urban – that **help habitats and species thrive, reducing and mitigating the impacts of climate change**”.
- “Help **halt and reverse the loss and decline of habitats and species**”.
- “**Reduce adverse environmental impacts** and help heritage to **adapt to our changing climate**. If projects involve construction, we will encourage **restoration, conservation and reuse**, rather than new build”.
- “**Bring natural, built and cultural heritage stakeholders together** to identify and mitigate climate risks to heritage and involve people in bringing about positive behaviour change”.

By 2033, they will have:

- “**Put landscapes and habitats** in both urban and rural places **into recovery**”.
- “**Reduced the negative environmental impact and carbon footprint** of our funding portfolio”.
- “**Improved the ability of natural and cultural heritage to plan for and adapt to a changing climate** and **helped projects take action for the environment**”.

Connections to the Strategic Framework for Heritage Science

- The NHSF Research Working Group have identified [five societal challenges](#) as important areas of focus and collaboration for heritage science research. One of these is ‘climate emergency’. Like the NLHF, the heritage science sector is eager to extend its understanding of the impact of a changing climate on heritage whilst also using knowledge derived from the study of heritage assets to address the climate emergency.

Heritage science can play an integral part in meeting all the NLHF's goals listed above. For example:

- Carbon mitigation – e.g. reducing the carbon footprint of the historic built environment, promoting a culture of re-use, guiding the siting of renewable energy, promoting low carbon land use patterns.
- Adaptation – e.g. contributing to disaster risk reduction, reducing vulnerability
- Dealing with loss and damage – e.g. preparing for loss, managing the process of physical loss, and quantifying ‘non-economic losses’
- Climate science and communication – e.g. heritage science can help understand how climate has changed over time and past adaptation efforts

3. Inclusion, access and participation

The NLHF is committing funding to:

- “Support greater use of **digital technology** to make heritage more accessible and enjoyable, and **promote better access to heritage information**, enabling projects to increase impact and reach”.

By 2033, they will have:

- **“Supported people to creatively use digital technology in heritage** to promote access and reach”.

Connections to the Strategic Framework for Heritage Science

- The NHSF is committed to increasing equality and inclusivity in the heritage sector, specifically within the field of heritage science – this is another of the identified societal challenges.
- The NHSF also recognises ‘Digital society’ as a societal challenge, encouraging the heritage science sector to use technological innovation and data science to transform the way that collections, buildings and archaeology are managed, accessed and understood. This, as in the NLHF Strategy, would be done with the aim of promoting better and more equitable access to heritage information.
- One practical way that the NHSF is supporting increased access to heritage information is through its support for the Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science (RICHeS) programme. Currently under development, this will be a network of facilities and expertise that will bring UK heritage and research organisations together, providing them with access to state-of-the-art research and innovation infrastructure to analyse, and preserve the UK’s treasures. [For more information about RICHeS, click here.](#)

4. Organisational sustainability

The NLHF is committing funding to:

- **“Build capacity, skills and expertise in heritage,** to contribute to thriving communities and economies”.

By 2033, they will have:

- **“Supported the development of skills and capacity** in the heritage sector”.

Connections to the Strategic Framework for Heritage Science

- A goal of the NHSF Strategic Framework is to foster ‘a skilled and diverse heritage science community (workforce and volunteers) that is well placed to respond creatively to future change’. There are two particularly relevant outcomes attached to this goal:
 - Technical skills and knowledge to address present needs and future requirements of heritage
 - A range of accessible apprenticeships and postgraduate opportunities

This demonstrates that, like the NLHF, the heritage science community is eager to grow skills and capacity in the heritage sector.

- There are 3 practical ways that the NHSF has been helping to achieve this:
 - [Networking and support initiatives](#) for students and early career researchers, such as a mentoring programme.
 - Drawing attention to [training opportunities](#) and running [technical skills workshops](#).
 - Conducting [research into careers in heritage science](#).

[Read the full NLHF Strategy, Heritage 2033, here.](#)

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About the National Heritage Science Forum (NHSF): The National Heritage Science Forum facilitates collaboration and knowledge-exchange to enhance the contribution that heritage science makes to society. The Forum is a charity and membership organisation that connects communities of practice. Find out more at: www.heritagescienceforum.org.uk.