



NHSF response to the Autumn Statement

NHSF press release 3 December 2014

Responding to today's Autumn Statement, National Heritage Science Forum (NHSF) Co-Chair Professor May Cassar, said: "NHSF welcomes the government's commitment to sustained investment in Britain's science base, in particular its investment of £3 billion in existing facilities to ensure they remain world class. Furthermore, NHSF welcomes the government's intention to launch a process of international peer review on further proposals received through the consultation, as this will demonstrate the UK's acknowledged leadership in heritage science research and the vital necessity of investment in heritage science infrastructure."

"At a time when national museums, galleries, libraries, archives and heritage organisations are contending with diminishing resources in heritage science research, there are signs in this Autumn Statement that heritage scientists are being listened to. NHSF has consistently been calling for Government to support infrastructure including facilities, instrumentation, equipment and resources in universities and in our great cultural institutions across the UK which would otherwise hamper our ability to contribute both directly and indirectly to economic activity. The investment in science infrastructure announced today shows that our call for more investment in capital infrastructure to drive economic growth has been recognised. Our concerns about potentially unequal distribution of investment among HEIs and non-HEIs need to be taken on board in the review of further proposals to be received through the consultation in forthcoming months. This would bring good news to hard pressed research institutions struggling to maintain the UK's world leading position in heritage science.

"By the end of this Parliament, heritage science funding in the last decade will have been restricted to two major programmes funded by the Research Councils. The next five years will be the toughest yet for institutions that use and rely on this vital research to protect and make accessible cultural heritage to visitors both local and international. So far institutions have worked hard to save jobs that people most value. But even these areas are now facing reductions so that without the necessary investment in infrastructure, the boost to heritage science research activity necessary to safeguard jobs will not materialise.

"The commitment to long-term support for science infrastructure is a valuable step in the right direction but as the NHSF has consistently argued, heritage science needs to be put on a sustainable financial footing or research, so vital to the UK economy will suffer."

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Notes to editors:

The National Heritage Science Forum (NHSF) has been set up to address the recommendations of the House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee Inquiry on Science and Heritage and to implement the National Heritage Science Strategy (NHSS) objectives.

The Forum provides a platform to support the policy, research and professional needs of institutions engaged in heritage science. The NHSF brings together many disciplines under the wide-ranging, interdisciplinary heritage science umbrella. Through working together, Forum members address the research and practice needs of institutions interested in or engaged with heritage science.

NHSF has seventeen members:

- Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery
- British Library
- Cardiff University
- English Heritage
- Historic Royal Palaces
- Historic Scotland
- Institute of Conservation
- National Galleries Scotland
- National Museums Wales
- National Trust
- Natural History Museum
- Oxford University
- Royal Armouries
- Tate
- The British Museum
- The National Archives
- University College London

See more at: www.heritagescienceforum.org.uk/