

# HOW THE HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND CAN HELP



Recording underway as part of the Defence of Britain project. The 1928 pre-radar sound mirrors at Denge, Kent, are inspected by the Volunteer Coordinator for the south of England. Photograph David Mansell

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has taken a cautious approach to archaeology, but now the scope of projects in which public interest can be developed through research and conservation is expanding. This is a good time to look at what is being achieved, and how future projects can be designed that will meet the varied criteria of HLF.

Since the first lottery income began to flow in 1994, HLF has made more than 13,700 grants and committed nearly £2.5 billion to heritage projects of all kinds. There has been a transformation of urban parks, museums have been given a new lease of life, buildings have been taken off the 'at risk' registers by bringing them back into use, and key areas of landscape have been improved and given new heart to attract and sustain a diverse wildlife. At the same time, HLF has learned a great deal about making grants of all sizes and types. We have also extended the range of how people think and talk about heritage.

HLF's objectives are to use our income of around 4.7p in every pound staked on the National Lottery – which together with interest on awards we have

committed but are not yet claimed comes to between £270 and £280 million a year – on projects which promote access and learning, which conserve the heritage and which seek to involve and engage people with it. Since 1994 the powers and activities of the fund have altered. Some of these changes have been through new legislation, and others brought about by HLF responding to directions from the Secretary of State. Because of our policy directions, for example, we need to consider carefully how to use grants to meet the needs of the heritage, to reduce social and economic deprivation, to promote access for people from all sections of society, to promote knowledge of an interest in the heritage by children and young people. In addition, projects need to be time-limited, financially viable, meet the objectives of sustainable development, and deliver an element of partnership funding.

In HLF's early days, the Fund only had the power to fund heritage 'objects' such as buildings or purchases of land, and this was one of the early adjustments which needed to be made to

the legislation under which we worked. By the time this deficiency was rectified, HLF had already had to consider how to approach funding of archaeological work. Following a widespread consultation during 1996–7 a number of priority areas were identified and agreed. Five specific areas of priority incorporated longstanding 'problem' areas within archaeology, where funding was slight or non-existent. These include non-destructive survey work, excavation of sites threatened by natural erosion, enhancement of sites and monuments records, thematic assembly of data from past excavations, and the working up and publishing of excavations where original excavators are no longer able to do the post-excavation work.

This is a restricted field, so it is not surprising that there has not been a widespread array of projects which HLF has funded, but the following is a sample of projects we have been able to support.

*Defence of Britain* was an ambitious scheme designed to capture information through documentary records (where they existed) and surveys of sites and



The Ringlemere Cup, found through the use of a metal-detector in November 2001, near Sandwich, Kent, in a context which now suggests a focus of prehistoric ceremonial activity. This Bronze Age gold cup was declared treasure trove, and purchased by the British Museum with a number of grants, including an HLF award of £185,000. Photograph HLF Photographic Library

structures which are the remaining evidence of the defensive measures put in place to protect Britain during the major twentieth-century conflicts, primarily the 1939–45 war. Now completed, a grant of £428,000 was awarded to the Council for British Archaeology for this, and the

information gathered is readily available on the *Defence of Britain* website.

The *Portable Antiquities Scheme* was an initiative of the British Museum and other partners – including DCMS – to answer the growing problem of (principally metal-detector) finds which were not being recorded throughout the country. After a number of pilot grant awards in selected counties, a countrywide scheme has now been agreed which, in combination with a number of museum and local authority partners acting under the umbrella of *Re:source*, will translate this into a wider programme. HLF has awarded just under £2.5 million to the delivery of this scheme for a three-year period, on the understanding that it will be continued in future. DCMS is fully behind this scheme, which contributes to the implementation of the Treasure Acts, and there have been a series of annual reports recording the constant stream of additional information – including the occasional haul of real treasure – which it is uncovering.

We have funded some excavations, too, although in limited numbers. At Howick, in Northumberland, we provided grants totalling £116,000 in partnership with English Heritage, for the excavation and survey of a Mesolithic settlement site. This included considerable local involvement in the work, plus feedback of the findings to the community.

To date we have agreed to fund

enhancement of six sites and monuments records, in Cheshire, Durham/ Northumberland, Essex, Herefordshire, Somerset and Warwickshire. These grants have provided between £100,000 to £175,000 for improvements to public access through physical improvements, internet access, educational uses, or touring exhibitions. Qualifying SMRs/HERs have to meet an existing data quality standard to form the platform on which this enhancement can build.

Another of our major grants to archaeology has been to the *Mary Rose* in Portsmouth, which has been receiving grants both from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and now HLF for some considerable time. In addition to the grants of nearly £4.7 million for work on the long-term conservation of the hull, we have also agreed to fund, with £300,000, the publication in five volumes of the definitive account of the excavation and artefacts. This will be an academic account of this iconic vessel, will enhance the museum's website, and will generally increase access to this rich store of data.

Our strategic plan, published in 2002, now allows us to loosen this agenda by giving it a different focus, based on our priorities. The context for this must continue to take account of archaeology's position within the planning system, and the current reviews of planning guidance, which should result in a revised and integrated approach to conservation.



The hull of the *Mary Rose* undergoing spraying treatment in its housing in Portsmouth Harbour; HLF has awarded a grant of £4.17 million toward the current phase of conservation work which is expected to continue for some years. Photograph HLF Photographic Library



Hadrian's Wall near Steel Rigg, showing erosion caused by walkers on the wall. Two major awards from HLF, totalling more than £3 million, have helped the Countryside Agency establish the Hadrian's Wall path, which will provide access to the Wall from end to end, but also ensure that the impact of visitors on the wall and its surroundings will be managed. Photograph HLF Photographic Library

We can also reflect the recognition of archaeology's place within or as a backbone to the historic environment, our approach to joined-up thinking about heritage issues in our conservation and management plan guidance, our knowledge about local research agenda which are being developed, and of course the popularity of archaeology through its airing on television and as a participatory activity. Our strategy sets out three broad aims – conservation, learning and access, and involvement – and HLF will wish to show that it is able to deliver benefits in all three areas.

### Conservation

Much of the UK's approach to and statutory provision for archaeology is based in identifying, protecting and conserving precious sites, not exploiting them. But whilst protection is the task of statutory agencies, HLF's task is to get the balance between protection and use (for learning, tourism, enjoyment, volunteering, engagement) as right as we can. This can be a difficult and contentious area, but HLF takes decisions on funding on a case-by-case basis on the merits of what is put before us, and on the

basis of the extent of benefits that each project promises.

If archaeological work or analysis is necessary as part of any project that we fund, we include this and cost it as part of the scheme. Any revised version of planning guidance is unlikely to alter radically the current obligations on those proposing change to the historic environment to manage that change properly, but areas still remain where funding is not normally available. This includes recording sites threatened by natural causes, archaeology's research contribution to knowledge about the past, particularly where this has widespread popular appeal, or (in some circumstances) where information or artefacts of great significance need conservation work if they are to be handed on to the future.

### Learning and access

Broadening access to and developing the educational potential of the heritage, including archaeology, is at the core of what we are seeking to do with lottery money. We are prepared to work alongside other sources of funding to maximise the public appeal and impact of work already

taking place. One example is a recent *Your Heritage* grant for access to a city-centre excavation in Canterbury, to maximise the education/learning opportunities of an existing excavation programme.

The key to this area of work is to get the balance between public involvement and academic study right, and to make sure that information and access to data is as widespread as possible. Archaeological projects are good at collecting and recording data, but that is only part of the story; for lottery funding there must be a lively and active programme of making the information available to different sections of society and different audiences.

### Involvement

Archaeology has become increasingly professionalised in recent decades, and few university departments do their principal research work in the UK, so opportunities for newcomers to gain experience in archaeology are reduced. Community archaeology is beginning to reinvent itself, through means which are not just related to excavation work, but this needs local galvanisers and leaders.

This arena of public involvement is a natural area for HLF to respond as positively as we can: we have recently funded *Your Heritage* schemes aimed at engaging different audiences, and the Portable Antiquities Scheme aims to build awareness and involvement of groups who already have a keen interest in archaeology. HLF is aware that in all such approaches there is an issue about professional standards, and the production of a code of conduct – as suggested by the All-Party Parliamentary Group – would help address this need.

In summary, HLF's strategic plan sets out a broad platform for our approach to heritage projects. We cover a broad range of needs, taking account of the widest possible definition of the historic environment, and the priorities we have set can apply to archaeological projects as much as to any other aspect of heritage.

In fact, the more we probe, the more we find that archaeology is not a separate subdivision at all, but part of our approach to a shared understanding of the past. If we can help to encourage that, we will all be the gainers.

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