

## The National Lottery Heritage Fund Q&A regarding Places of Worship

Anne Jenkins, Executive Director, Business Delivery, the National Lottery Heritage Fund gave a presentation by Zoom on 24 September 2024 to a webinar organised by the HRBA. Some thirty questions were raised during and after the webinar, and we chose the fifteen which we thought of most general interest, editing them lightly in some cases. We are grateful for her helpful responses.

Anne's presentation is on the HRBA website, at [www.hrballiance.org.uk/resources/talks/](http://www.hrballiance.org.uk/resources/talks/). An essential part of this presentation is the slide showing the four investment principles, which the Heritage Fund use to appraise grant applications.

How the Heritage Fund's strategy applies to places of worship is explained at [www.heritagefund.org.uk/news/how-well-help-secure-future-uks-places-worship](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk/news/how-well-help-secure-future-uks-places-worship). In summary, the Heritage Fund anticipates awarding grants worth around £85m over the next three years to support its ambition for places of worship. In addition, a further £15m is being made available over the same period for large strategic projects with partners.

The detailed material you will need if you are thinking of applying for a grant for a place of worship is at [www.heritagefund.org.uk/our-work/places-worship](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk/our-work/places-worship).

Anne emphasised the value and importance of early, informal contact with local Heritage Fund offices if you have questions after reading the material mentioned in the previous paragraph. The contact details for local offices of the Heritage Fund are on its website [www.heritagefund.org.uk/in-your-area](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk/in-your-area).

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*We asked Anne to assume the four investment principles of the Heritage Fund have been taken into account in every question. The investment principles are set out in her presentation (see above).*

*Questions in black, Anne's answers in red.*

1. PERMISSIONS. Previously when an NHLF grant was being applied for in respect of a Church of England church, no faculty permission was needed in order to apply or be awarded a grant, but a Notification of Advice was needed. Is that still the case? Do letters of support from a DAC also carry weight?

*As with all statutory and other permissions, we would need to see a faculty (or other relevant permissions and approvals dependent upon the faith/denomination of the place of worship or its current ownership and use) had been granted before we gave Permission to Start the project but this is not required at application or decision stage. A Notification of Advice is helpful but not essential. We ask for evidence of support for the project at application stage and a letter from the DAC is useful as part of that evidence.*

2. GRAVEYARDS. Are appropriate works to historic graveyards in scope, especially if they benefit the community?

*Yes, we are interested in supporting projects that relate to historic graveyards.*

3. CATHEDRALS. I understand that Simon Thurley confirmed at the London DAC conference that cathedrals were not included in the £85m, and Trevor Cooper implied as much when he was hosting

the meeting. This makes sense, as cathedrals could gobble up a good deal of the £85m very quickly, which would reduce the encouragement you're aiming to give to smaller churches. There doesn't seem to be anything on your website about this, or if there is I've missed it. Can you confirm that cathedrals are not included in the £85m?

The strategic initiative for places of worship and our aspiration to commit £85m to them over the next three years, especially focussing on repair needs, does not include cathedrals. However, we will still be funding cathedrals and we continue to welcome applications from them through our National Lottery Heritage Grants programme.

4. WALLPAINTINGS - UNCOVERING. In general, would uncovering wall paintings be eligible, if they were of sufficient heritage interest and met your other criteria?

Yes.

5. PILGRIMAGE ROUTE. Would you consider funding development of a pilgrimage route to our church, to include many other heritage religious buildings?

Possibly – it would depend on the detail and focus of the proposal – worth getting in touch with your local National Lottery Heritage Fund office to discuss.

6. REORDERING FOR WIDER USE. In principle if they fulfilled your criteria might you fund reordering works within listed churches which may enable the church to develop wider uses and increase its activity, but which don't involve repair to historic fabric and fittings per se?

Yes, that might be possible – worth a discussion with our local team.

7. NET ZERO. I have a 50 year old, gas-fired, heating system to replace in a thriving church. Net zero is greatly increasing the cost of replacement (compared with like for like replacement). Would a project for a heat pump be eligible?

This would depend on the strength of the case that could be made for the heat pump in the context of all four of our investment principles. Worth putting in an enquiry to our local team and asking to discuss.

8. EXTENSIONS. Might you fund extensions, if they form part of a wider project scheme which includes project components focused on fabric repairs and conserving historic objects?

Our approach to any projects involving construction is to encourage restoration, conservation and reuse rather than new build if possible for environmental reasons. If an extension is the only realistic option to deliver the wider project, then we can consider supporting them. We would want to understand the purpose of the extension, what other options might have been considered to achieve the same ends, whether there were other buildings in the location that could support the function of the proposed new build amongst other things. We would also need to understand any impact on the character of the historic building which could be demonstrated by providing statements of significance and need. Worth a discussion with our local team to consider.

9. DEFINITION OF PLACE OF WORSHIP. Can you please say more on how the Heritage Fund is defining places of worship? Will there be any requirements for the regularity or frequency of worship?

The strategic initiative takes in historic places of worship that are still used for worship and those which need to be, or have been, repurposed for other uses. There are no requirements for the regularity or frequency of worship.

10. EMERGENCY FUNDING FOR OPERATIONAL COSTS. Is emergency funding available to support operational costs while sustainability projects are brought forward, which will bring future sustainability and resilience.

As a project funder, we aren't able to support ongoing operational costs.

11. CHURCH HALLS. Can these grants also apply to Church Halls?

Projects at church halls can be supported under our normal National Lottery Heritage Grants programme if they are listed buildings or have some other heritage significance.

12. ASSISTANCE. Can you provide help in making an application?

We can give some support to applicants through our local engagement teams in terms of providing guidance about our application requirements and processes and signposting. This may include one-to-one conversations on your project idea. We are unable to write applications. You may be able to access assistance through a local Church Buildings Support Officer – there is now a network across parts of the UK. We would encourage you to contact your relevant diocese if this question relates to a Church of England building, as they will often be able to provide advice and support.

13. ACTIVITY BASED INITIATIVES. Will there still be an interest in funding activity-based initiatives that promote public engagement or is this more a capital investment fund?

Yes, we remain very interested in supporting activity based projects that promote access to and engagement with the heritage.

14. EXISTING ACTIVITIES. Can existing activities be accepted when making the case for a grant, on the basis that the building needs to be put into good condition to sustain them?

We want to support projects that are realistic and appropriate to the individual place of worship. Capital projects that enable existing activities to continue can be considered although we would want to understand what those activities are and how they would be directly sustained and enhanced by the project. All applications will need to be clear about how they address our Inclusion, Access and Participation investment principle in a way that is appropriate to the applicant, project, local circumstances etc.

15. PROPORTION. Is there any rule as what proportion of total costs would you fund?

We can support 100% of project costs where the grant request is up to £250,000; 95% between £250,000 and £1m; and 90% over £1m. We do ask that applicants make a case for the level of grant that they are requesting and what other fund-raising has been considered because we want to achieve good value for money for the National Lottery player.

The Historic Religious Buildings Alliance  
[www.hrballiance.org.uk/](http://www.hrballiance.org.uk/)

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