

# Strategic initiatives

We support and invest in heritage in multiple ways. Find out more about some of our planned interventions and how we'll deliver them.

We want to create the greatest impact and benefit from our funding for the UK's heritage.

Our strategic initiatives are a way for us to address long-standing heritage issues at scale, support coordinated cross-territory approaches and accelerate new ideas and innovations.

Over the life of [our 10-year strategy, Heritage 2033](#), we expect to deliver various initiatives. The ones we're working on right now include:

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## Heritage Places

We want to boost pride in place and connection to heritage across whole places rather than individual projects. Our aim is to make heritage integral to plans and approaches that are making local areas better places to live, work and visit.

In October 2023 we announced the first nine of up to 20 places across the UK where we'll invest £200million:

- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon
- County Durham
- Glasgow
- Leicester
- Medway
- Neath Port Talbot
- North-East Lincolnshire
- Stoke-on-Trent
- Torbay

### Considerations for a Heritage Place application:

- core project activities must be located in one of our heritage places
- projects should be part of a wider ambition to improve or transform the area, supported by local partners and organisations
- projects should be collaborative and will need to demonstrate evidence of support from local partner(s)

## If you are applying from one of our identified Heritage Places:

- [contact your local team](#) to get advice on your heritage project before applying
- [Submit a Project Enquiry](#) (for applications up to £250,000) for additional advice. For applications over £250,000 you must [submit an Expression of Interest](#) before applying.
- follow our [National Lottery Heritage Grants](#) guidance to prepare and submit your application
- start your project title with the hashtag '#HP' so we can identify it's a Heritage Places application

[Find out more about our Heritage Places strategic initiative](#) and [explore our Thriving Places hub](#) for place-based case studies, stories and blogs.

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## Landscape Connections

We want to help designated Protected Landscapes and other world-class landscapes across the UK to become better for nature and more able to welcome people from all backgrounds, including those who rarely visit them now.

We will invest £150million in around 20 long-term projects in:

- National Parks and National Landscapes in England and Wales
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Northern Ireland
- National Parks and other equally important world-class landscapes in Scotland

Our aim is to support those who care for these places to strengthen them as working landscapes, which are alive with nature and provide space for people to relax and connect with the environment. We'll support whole landscapes to bring about significant and enduring improvement.

Read more about the [ambitions of this strategic initiative](#).

## Considerations for a Landscape Connections application

Your project delivery phase can last for up to eight years (increased from our usual five years), and as such, we will support flexibility in confirming partnership funding during the delivery phase.

In addition to the standard requirements of our National Lottery Heritage Grants, including responding to all four [investment principles](#), your project application should:

- have an area of designated Protected Landscape at its core although flexibility will apply in Scotland
- explain why a particular boundary has been chosen, ensuring the size of the area is compatible with the grant request so that delivery, engagement and impact is consistent across the whole project area

- follow our [guidance for producing an Area Action Plan](#) during the development phase, with the main focus to produce a project vision and blueprint for project delivery, within the context of any broader statutory management plan and nature recovery strategy
- allocate resources to join quarterly cohort working sessions, contribute to cohort working and attend in-person visits to learn from other projects
- Allocate resources to measuring the impact of your project for both nature recovery and engaging people so the contribution of this investment in meeting UK nature recovery targets can be assessed. Where they exist, government outcomes frameworks should be used. We may also ask grantees to report additional data through online data collection tools.

We are updating our guidance on using agri-environment scheme funding as partnership funding for projects and it will be available soon.

Large land acquisitions are unlikely to be supported by Landscape Connections.

Our ambition by 2033 is to have supported around 20 projects that:

- enable everyone in the UK to have access to landscapes rich in nature, clean water and fresh air, places that are inspiring in their beauty and cultural heritage
- help these landscapes to become better for nature and more able to welcome people from all backgrounds, including those who rarely visit them now
- deliver longer-term projects that are bold in ambition and create measurable outcomes for Protected Landscapes and equivalent outstanding landscapes in Scotland
- support those who live in and care for these places to strengthen them as working landscapes based on a clear diagnosis of why the landscape is currently failing to deliver for nature and people and how that will be addressed
- accelerate systemic and lasting nature recovery across whole landscapes, creating and sharing exemplars for how landscape conservation and nature recovery can be delivered with, by and for people who live and work there
- create innovative frameworks for ways in which communities, landowners, organisations and those that manage the land can work equitably together to agree how to influence and drive change to ensure a lasting legacy

We recommend reading our [good practice guidance on Land, Sea and Nature](#) when preparing your application.

## **Branding and acknowledgement**

Projects should use our [acknowledgement guidance for Landscape Connections](#).

## **Who can apply**

Applications are open to not-for-profit organisations, and partnerships led by not-for-profit organisations, from across the UK.

Protected Landscape management bodies must be a key partner within any application relating to the landscape where they operate and where the works will be taking place, though they do not need to be the applicant or lead partner of an application.

If private owners or for-profit organisations are involved in the project, we expect public benefit to be demonstrably greater than private gain.

We are unlikely to fund more than one project from a single Protected Landscape.

## How to apply

You can apply for a grant up to £10m through our [National Lottery Heritage Grants £250,000 to £10m](#). Start your project title with '#LC' and include 'Landscape Connections' in the title, for example [area name] Landscape Connections.

If you are interested in developing a Landscape Connections project but are not yet ready to apply for a large-scale grant, you should consider undertaking preparatory work using our [National Lottery Heritage Grants £10,000 to £250,000](#).

This funding could be used to help you prepare for a larger application by, for example:

- bringing in additional expertise and resources
- supporting the creation of a new partnership
- undertaking initial feasibility work
- supporting engagement with local communities and organisations
- helping to articulate the initial project vision

For grants up to £250,000, you can submit an optional [Project Enquiry](#) to get feedback on your project idea.

For grants over £250,000 you must first submit an [Expression of Interest](#).

## How we make decisions

In addition to our processes under the National Lottery Heritage Grants programme, we will assess how your project addresses the ambitions of the strategic initiative.

We may also consider issues such as achieving a geographical spread of our funding.

For this strategic initiative, for grants of less than £250,000 decisions will be made on a monthly basis by the senior investment or engagement staff of your nation or area. For grants above £250,000, recommendations will be made by nation/area committees, with final decisions made on a quarterly basis by our Board of Trustees.

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## Heritage in Need: Places of Worship

We want to help places of worship across the UK tackle heritage challenges systemically. We want to see them become more sustainable, share their heritage and welcome people from all backgrounds, including those who rarely visit.

We will invest a minimum of £15million in projects that have a strategic impact at a regional or national level for places of worship over the next three years.

Rich in culture and collections, places of worship tell the story of the religious, social and economic changes of the people of the UK. We recognise the scale of the challenges facing places of worship and those who care for them, and we are committed to supporting them through that change.

The needs and funding gaps we have identified and want to address through this initiative are:

- repair listed buildings, particularly those in more rural areas
- workforce and volunteer capability to manage heritage
- heritage in places of worship that is currently inaccessible, at risk or under used

Find out more about other ways we support [places of worship](#).

## **Considerations for a Heritage in Need: Places of Worship application**

Our aim is to support strategic projects in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that have the potential to make an impact at a regional or national sector level and will:

- proactively tackle long-standing heritage issues at a large scale
- enable a coordinated cross-territory approach that will strengthen delivery
- address gaps where proposals are not coming through our National Lottery Heritage Grants programme
- accelerate new ideas and interventions where a deliberate approach is needed

Our ambition for this strategic initiative is to address some of the identified aims and needs of places of worship by investing in work such as:

- strategic projects at scale that develop the processes, systems, guidance and infrastructure needed through a change in use, management or ownership?

- strategic projects at scale based on an understanding of the needs of heritage and owners of heritage schemes that build capacity among smaller denominations and faith groups to develop large projects
- strategic projects that establish the cultural and heritage significance of places of worship where that may be at risk of loss?
- capacity-building projects that can provide broader support, advice and guidance for owners and managers of historic religious buildings and sites across geographies and types such as funding for support officers?
- initiatives that bring together many organisations, faith groups and funders to collaborate and find solutions to issues facing places of worship and heritage?
- schemes that provide funding for exploring feasibility for more sustainable options for existing or new uses for places of worship
- developing schemes that share learning and support for volunteers managing and caring for heritage and to make that more accessible to wider audiences?
- strategic projects that trial different approaches to managing places of worship at an area scale
- projects that explore the heritage of places of worship to support and contribute to the local and visitor economy at a national or regional level?
- thematic projects that might use innovative technologies to open access to heritage and collections

## Who can apply

Not-for-profit organisations and partnerships led by not-for-profit organisations from across the UK can apply.

Individual places of worship are not eligible for funding through this strategic initiative, nor single site applications for capital works-only projects. We will continue to award funding for these through our [National Lottery Heritage Grants programme](#).

## How to apply

If you have an idea for a Heritage in Need: Places of Worship project, start by contacting your [local Heritage Fund office](#).

For grants up to £250,000, you can submit an optional [Project Enquiry](#) to get feedback on your project idea.

For grants over £250,000 you must first [submit an Expression of Interest](#) before applying. Start your project title with #PW.

Follow our [National Lottery Heritage Grants](#) guidance to prepare and submit your application for a grant of up to £10m.

## How we make decisions

In addition to our processes under the National Lottery Heritage Grants programme, we will assess how your project addresses the needs and funding gaps identified, and the aims and ambitions of this strategic initiative. We may also consider other factors such as achieving a geographical spread of our funding.

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## Nature Towns and Cities

### Important

We are no longer accepting Expressions of Interest (EOI) for Nature Towns and Cities. We aim to be in touch with all applicants by 31 January 2025 to let you know the outcome of your EOI.

Everyone should have access to public parks and urban green spaces which are full of natural and cultural heritage close to where they live. Evidence shows that we all feel the benefit when nature is part of our daily lives.

Nature Towns and Cities will bring organisations together across the UK to focus on improving the quality of, and access to, historic parks and urban green spaces in whole towns and cities while supporting new ways to engage local communities and generate greater investment.

Through a package of support including £15million of funding to build capacity and partnerships, peer networks to share learning and practical solutions, and schemes to attract investment, we will inspire, resource and incentivise organisations to realise nature's benefits in creating greener, healthier and thriving communities.

Nature Towns and Cities is a partnership initiative between Natural England, the National Trust and the Heritage Fund. In addition, we are working closely with NatureScot, Natural Resources Wales and the Northern Ireland Environmental Agency.

## **Our ambition**

Nature Towns and Cities aims to support local authorities, their partners and communities with capacity and resources to put public green and blue spaces at the heart of their thinking. Visit the [Nature Towns and Cities website](#) to find out more about our plans and wider ambitions.

By 2028 we want to have supported places across the UK with grant investment, together with expertise and resources from our partners, to:

- place access to nature and nature recovery at the heart of local placemaking so that its benefits can be realised for health, prosperity, nature, heritage and local pride
- co-create with communities and partners ambitious green space strategies and improvement plans
- create strong and diverse partnerships between the local communities, businesses and local authorities that focus on the role of urban green and blue space in delivering better outcomes for health, wellbeing, heritage, transport, planning and nature
- Develop implementation plans that will transform the way public green spaces are utilised, managed and funded for the benefit of people and nature. This should include developing costed project plans and exploring how to unlock new investment from a wide range of investors and funders beyond just the National Lottery.

## **Considerations for a Nature Towns and Cities application**

There will be one round of funding with grants available from £250,000 up to £1m. Your project can last for up to three years and will require a single application following completion of a successful Expression of Interest (EOI).

The deadline to submit an EOI was 12noon on 12 November 2024.

If your EOI is successful, you will be invited to submit a full application from February 2025. Funding decisions will be made in summer 2025.

In addition to the standard requirements of our [National Lottery Heritage Grants programme](#), including responding to [all four investment principles](#), your project application should:



- Focus on all the public urban green and blue spaces across an entire place. It is for you to determine the boundary of the place – it might be a local or combined authority administrative area, a town, a city, a city region or several towns or boroughs working together.
- Set out how you will lead for ambitious change that will deliver against our desired outcomes and ensure green space provides more for people and places.
- Show how a cross-disciplinary team and partnership working will ensure breadth in your thinking and active working across heritage, planning, transport, health, community and nature sectors.
- Identify what resources or support you will need. This might include for example investing in additional expertise and capacity to: engage local communities, develop new strategic partnerships, establish new bodies such as a foundation or trust, design new financial models, incentivise and unlock new investment, develop a project pipeline and replicate learning from the [Future Parks Accelerator initiative](#).
- Allocate resources and capacity to join regular online network events and cohort learning sessions, to contribute to cohort working and to attend in-person visits to learn from other projects. We anticipate network and cohort events will involve between six and 10 events each year and be a mix of in-person and virtual.

All funded projects will receive free expert support from partners on topics such as green infrastructure planning, community engagement and green finance.

This initiative will not fund capital works. If you wish to apply for funds to regenerate a historic park or improve an existing site for nature, please apply through our [National Lottery Heritage Grants programme](#).

## **Branding and acknowledgement**

Projects will be expected to use the branding and acknowledgement guidance for Nature Towns and Cities. This will be shared with successful applicants in 2025.

## **Who can apply**

Applications are open to not-for-profit organisations, and partnerships led by not-for-profit organisations, from across the UK.

We encourage you to work with other people to develop and carry out your project.

If you plan to work with any other organisations to carry out a significant proportion of your project, you must formalise your relationship with a partnership agreement.

If you are making a joint application, you will need to decide which organisation will be the lead applicant. The lead applicant will complete the application, and if successful, receive the grant and provide project updates.

We usually expect the owner of the heritage (the public green space) to be the lead applicant. If the lead applicant is not the owner of the heritage, we usually ask them to sign up to the terms of grant.

If private owners or for-profit organisations are involved in the project, we expect public benefit to be demonstrably greater than private gain. We are unlikely to fund more than one project from a single place.

## **How to apply**

The deadline to [submit an EOI](#) was 12noon on 12 November 2024.

A review panel will use the information you provide in the EOI to decide whether to invite you to submit a full grant application. The review will consist of staff from the Heritage Fund, National Trust and from the four statutory environment agencies: Natural England, NatureScot, Northern Ireland Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales. We use this step to identify priority projects early on, as we recognise the work that goes into preparing a full grant application. An invitation to apply does not guarantee a grant from us but does indicate that we see potential in your initial proposal.

We will aim to respond to all EOIs by 31 January 2025. If successful, you will be invited to submit a full application. Further information on how to apply will be provided at that time. Funding decisions will be made in summer 2025.

## **How we make decisions**

In addition to our processes under our standard National Lottery Heritage Grants approach, we will assess how your project addresses the ambitions of this initiative.

We may also consider issues such as achieving a geographical spread of our funding.

For this initiative, funding decisions will be made by a Joint Partnership Board including a Trustee from the Heritage Fund and representatives from the partner organisations.

## **Contact Us**

If you have a question about our funding, please [get in touch](#) with your local engagement team.

## **Heritage in need and other opportunities and emergencies**

We remain committed to flexibility and responding swiftly when required. This could mean supporting acquisitions of exceptional heritage, marking significant events or supporting heritage areas and organisations dealing with an unforeseen emergency.

We're also exploring opportunities for targeted funding for heritage that is at risk and in need of conservation. Alongside funding discrete projects, we want to support organisations to build capacity, develop approaches to project planning and diversify income streams.

## **Decision-making**

Our approach to making decisions on strategic initiatives is the same as our processes under the National Lottery Heritage Grants programme.

For grants of less than £250,000, decisions are made on a monthly basis by the senior investment or engagement staff of your nation or area. For grants above £250,000, decisions are made on a quarterly basis by the committee of your nation or area or by our Board of Trustees.

We may vary our decision-making process for specific initiatives, but we will update our website when this happens.

## **More to come**

Our teams are working hard to develop these initiatives and opportunities and we'll share further details as we have them.

[Sign up to our newsletter](#) to get our latest news and announcements delivered direct to your inbox.