

Heritage Lottery Fund statement - support for religious buildings

04/04/2017

Time and resource-stretched congregations have been telling us that they want to access our funding more easily, so we are bringing in a more flexible and lighter-touch way of distributing much-needed funding support from the National Lottery.

From September 2017, the current GPOW programme will close to new applications. In its place, funding for repairs to religious buildings will be available through HLF's existing Our Heritage (up to £100,000) and Heritage Grants (up to £5million) programmes.

This introduces a faster, single-stage application for grants up to £100,000, rather than the old two-stage process under GPOW. It will also be more flexible, allowing for a wider range of activities and capital works than under the current scheme, although projects that have a focus on much-needed repairs will still be welcomed.

In addition, under the new arrangements, 100% of works and activities can be funded with no requirement for partnership funding; and with 50% of the grant paid up front, congregations can get on with their work immediately, helping with cash flow.

For larger schemes, more money will be available. GPOW awards were limited to £250,000 per application. Under Heritage Grants, applicants can apply for up to £5m per application, and can receive help to develop their final proposals between the first and second rounds.

Congregations often do not have access to the professional fundraising skills that some larger heritage organisations can draw upon. We will therefore be closely monitoring our awards to ensure that places of worship continue to be at least as successful as they are under existing funding arrangements, offering support and advice on applications when it is needed.

They are among the oldest and most cherished buildings in the UK and we are fully committed to supporting them. This year we will spend a guaranteed £20m minimum and it is likely to be far more than this. If similar projects continue to apply for National Lottery funding at similar levels, we fully expect to spend equivalent amounts in subsequent years, in proportion to our total grants budget.

We will be discussing the details of how we implement these changes with stakeholders to ensure we address any concerns.

In Scotland, we will continue to work in partnership with Historic Environment Scotland, and funding will continue to be available from both HLF and Historic Environment Scotland through the Our Heritage and Heritage Grants application processes.

Further information

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