

NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND: AREAS OF FOCUS

YEAR 5 FINAL REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2024

RSM UK CONSULTING LLP

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

In August 2019, RSM UK Consulting LLP (RSM) was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of The National Lottery Heritage Fund's (The Heritage Fund) five-year Strategic Funding Framework (2019-2024) and its impact on 13 'Areas of Focus' (AoF). This report is the fifth annual report aiming to provide key learnings and recommendations that can be incorporated into the delivery Heritage 2033 strategic initiatives, in particular the delivery of the 20 new Heritage Places 2023 - 2033. It also aims to further consolidate our understanding of the AoF programme, testing if the Theory of Change (ToC) is still valid.

Key objectives of the Strategic Funding Framework focus on overcoming perceived challenges around investing in heritage projects in particular deprivation contexts. The Strategic Funding Framework aimed generate investment in projects across 13 AoF. AoF are defined as areas which have received less than average levels of funding from The Heritage Fund, and that are located within the 25% most deprived wards in the UK. The 13 AoF are listed below:

- Brent (London & South);
- Corby (Midlands & East);
- Enfield (London & South);
- Inverclyde (Scotland);
- Knowsley (North);
- Luton (Midlands & East);
- Neath Port Talbot (Wales);
- Newham (London & South);
- North East Lincolnshire (North);
- North Lanarkshire (Scotland);
- Rhondda Cynon Taf (Wales);
- Tendring (Midlands & East); and
- Walsall (Midlands & East).

Note: Corby became part of a wider North Northants Local Authority in 2021.

Evaluation Approach

The 6-year evaluation has the following aims:

- understand the effectiveness of processes involved in delivering support to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations with respect to capacity building, networking, partnerships development and volunteers' recruitment;
- assess short and medium-term outcomes, capturing indications of impacts wherever possible; and
- establish 'what works'; enablers and barriers that affect impact and delivery.

The evaluation approach is built around the ToC which shows pathways through which the programme is expected to deliver activities and achieve its intended outcomes. The ToC details short and medium-term outcomes that are hypothesised to lead to long-term impacts and the delivery of five higher level impacts, namely:

1. increased inclusivity.

2. increased investment in areas of focus.
3. improved environment and heritage preserved.
4. increased economic impact of heritage; and
5. more vibrant places.

Evidence in this report is derived and synthesised from multiple strands of evaluation activity, namely:

- desk-based review of key documents, policies, strategies and research papers;
- analysis of performance and investment data across five financial years (FY2018-19 to 31st January 2024);
- samples of projects from five selected AoF (as agreed with the Heritage Fund):
 - Newham;
 - North East Lincolnshire (NEL);
 - North Lanarkshire;
 - Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT); and
 - Walsall.
- consultation with the Heritage Fund's staff representatives, strategic stakeholders (x2) and project delivery partners(x8) to inform the development of the report (January – March 2024).

Evaluation Findings

Programme Performance

The following details key findings from an analysis of performance of the AoF programme as of January 2024:

- there has been a steady decline in the number of enquiries per financial year. As of January 2024, annual enquiries have decreased by 39% since FY2019-20;
- in relation to applications, across the 13 AoF, there was a 10% increase in applications in FY2023-24 from the baseline, however, the majority of AoFs show a mixed picture in change from the baseline year, reflecting the challenge of the local context, as well the persistent impact of Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis. Nevertheless, there is also evidence to suggest that the quality and relevance of applications is improving, reflected by an increase in the proportion of successful applications (increasing from 57% successful applications in FY2018-19 to 65% over the course of the AoF programme to date);
- a review of spend per capita shows that, in the majority of cases (n=11/13), there has been an increase compared to baseline values, and for eight AoF, spend per capita is exceeding the national average; and

- qualitative feedback provided on programme delivery was positive, indicating that support activity provided by the Heritage Fund is effective.

Impacts

Increased inclusivity was found to be one of the strongest areas of emerging impact. Qualitative findings demonstrate evidence of increased inclusivity as a direct result of funded activity in all five sample areas, whereby a wider range of people are engaged in heritage. Analysis of programme data from a stakeholder event in Newham reiterates this, whereby data gathered on resident's views on heritage in the area related to increased inclusivity more than any other impact.

Although most projects in the sample areas are still ongoing or in development, the potential for increased economic impact through AoF funded projects is strong, and evidence from North East Lincolnshire and Walsall. Grimsby's Horizon Youth Zone Project and Walsall's Heritage Strategy indicates they have been pivotal in leveraging further funding into the areas for the development of the new Youth Zone and Creative Industries Enterprise Centre respectively. As well as the provision of education, training and employment opportunities, both developments will have significant positive knock-on-effects for businesses in the local area.

Increased Investment across the AoF is apparent through the analysis of wider secondary data which saw an upwards trend in the amount of grant funding distributed to the AoF over the last six years. Rhondda Cynon Taf and Newham saw the largest increase in investment from 2020-23, whilst other places like North Lanarkshire saw more modest increases in investment due to a range of external and internal factors noted in previous reports.

Levelling Up funding awarded across the AoF equated to £267 million across the three rounds, with each AoF receiving an average of £22 million in funding. This increased funding is likely to have contributed to and will continue to contribute to more vibrancy in these areas through the regeneration of town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets. This aligns with qualitative findings which indicate that interviewees observed increased vibrancy in their areas and that funded projects are resulting in more vibrant places. This is most prevalent in Newham, which received the largest total of Levelling Up funding. The restoration of the Grade 2 listed Alice Billings House building into a creative sector hub for artists represents a significant transformation from a previously derelict asset associated with anti-social behaviour and has acted as a catalyst for further change in the area.

Whilst evidence toward Improved environment / heritage preserved was less robust across the projects sampled, this does not take into account that the Heritage Fund does not currently generate useable metrics around heritage conservation. Improved heritage identification or condition is a foundation requirement of most Heritage Funded projects from £10k to £10m. As such, this outcome is likely to have been achieved, but not yet robustly quantified. Despite this, the evaluation found the delivery of a Heritage Strategy on behalf of the Walsall local authority to be a significant breakthrough for Heritage in the Walsall area. The creation of a Heritage Forum, dedicated Heritage staff, and incorporation into the Walsall 2040 and Walsall Economic Strategy's is likely to provide a long-term boost for Heritage in the area.

What Works?

Findings from this evaluation report suggest that across the majority of the anticipated impacts, the Heritage Fund has positively contributed, although the extent to which varies across specific areas. Key enablers in meeting these objectives and crucial in further achieving impacts are listed below:

- **Strong working relationships:** qualitative findings from this evaluation and previous iterations of the annual reports suggest particularly strong lines of communication between Fund staff and beneficiaries. This primarily relates to being approachable, flexible, easily contactable, and prompt with responses;
- **Application process support:** Fund support was found to be particularly useful in providing advice and guidance to applications. A hands-on approach was reported to be useful in bringing together different partners for applications, as well as idea generation and recommendations for application submissions.
- **Collaboration with other funders:** Fund activity has been effective in raising awareness and interest in projects across other funders and therefore increased the Heritage Fund's influence over the role that heritage has and has seeped into other national funders objectives. The deployment of Heritage Spark Grants in Walsall through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is an example of this. Other key organisations that the Heritage Fund have collaborated with and leveraged further funding into AoF include: DCMS, Arts Council England, UK Shared Prosperity Fund, The Architectural Heritage fund, Historic England, Cultural Development Fund and UKRI.

What needs Improvement?

Areas of improvement have been highlighted through the evaluation. These are summarised below:

- **Lack of data in relation to some outputs** – data is currently limited to nine AoFs in relation to the number of knowledge sharing events and funding advice sessions. Figures relating to the number of volunteers supported and strategic partnerships is not available and, therefore, quantitative analysis could not be undertaken for those outputs.
- **Resource constraints:** Engagement Team capacity was reported to be stretched whereby the absence of senior engagement managers within countries is a contributing factor. This was reported to be a barrier to local delivery, effecting the ability to work in cross-partnership with other engagement teams, and resulting in the need to prioritise workloads at times between AoF programme priorities and wider Heritage Fund strategic framework priorities / priority audiences.

Recommendations to Inform Future Learning / Development

The AoF programme is beginning to show emerging evidence of achieving the impacts expected at this stage of the programme, whilst identifying a number of areas for improvement. These findings validate the current iteration of the ToC; however, this will be reviewed in the final annual report (2025).

Key considerations from this report are profiled below:

- in relation to data, it is recommended that the Heritage Fund continue to review and update data recording processes, automating where possible and aiming to align processes across all regions to allow for comparisons;
- further collaboration with other funders such as Historic England, Historic Environment Scotland, and Cadw (Welsh Government's historic environment service) could lead to increased support, awareness raising, signposting and advice for eligible funding applications and may help lead to reductions in HAR sites;
- given that **improved environment** and **heritage preserved** are identified as separate principles in the Heritage 2033 strategy, consideration should be given to how the Heritage Fund embeds the monitoring of heritage identification, conservation and collections work in the process;
- further dissemination activity and showcasing of projects in the AoF could lead to raised awareness and idea generation for potential project applicants, leading to increased numbers of applications and higher quality projects. This could be done through utilising the Heritage Fund's YouTube channel that has existing subscribers and playlists. Collaboration with those responsible for the channel could lead to effectively marketed and easily accessible AoF project case study videos; it was reported that various stakeholders are promoting heritage in the AoF which can lead to a complicated funding landscape. The Heritage Fund might consider taking on a coordinating role to simplify the landscape for future beneficiaries. A central website or depository with information and promotional activity might help to address this; and
- more consistent staffing structures and delivery approaches across the Heritage Fund's nation and regions teams may result in increased sharing of resources and may help to reduce staff pressure. A more collaborative approach and knowledge sharing and learning could lead to efficiencies.

Table 1: Theory of Change for Areas of Focus

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes 0-3 years	Medium-term Outcomes 3-5 years	Impacts +5 years
Appointment of local AoF engagement lead	Ongoing direct (one-to-one) support to build bid writing confidence	Increased number of events sharing knowledge about AoF agenda between VCSE, The Heritage Fund, local government	The Heritage Fund / ETs report increased capacity to engage VCSE	Increased confidence in applicants	Increased inclusivity
Creation of AoF network of delivery partners	Capacity building to VCSE sector including micro-organisations	Funding advice sessions raising awareness of funding opportunities	VCSE report increased capability to apply for funding	More applications	Increased investment in AoF
Grant funding disbursed to VCSE sector to contribute to The Heritage Fund's strategy	Schools provide a community hub	Increased number of volunteers and community groups supported	Greater visibility of The Heritage Fund on partnerships	Raised profile of AoF across other funders	Improved environment / heritage preserved
Creation and funding of heritage LA community post	Targeted Heritage Strategy communications locally and nationally	New strategic partnerships	Better focus on deliverable projects	More heritage training, volunteering and employment opportunities	Increased economic impact of heritage

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes 0-3 years	Medium-term Outcomes 3-5 years	Impacts +5 years
Volunteers' time including community groups and residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing local training and advice sessions • Ongoing cross boundary engagement to build partnerships • Funding bid review and support • ETs build the knowledge on barriers to apply for funding and AoF challenges 	Increased number of quality and relevant heritage proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased prioritisation of heritage • Increased understanding and acceptance of notion of heritage • Improved signposting between funders • Volunteering skills contribute to local employment and economic recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to new sectors • Increased national and local expertise on Heritage and contributions to local strategy and interventions in areas 	More vibrant places

Assumptions (Inputs)	Assumptions (Activities and Outputs)	Assumptions (Outcomes and Impacts)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other funders offer wide ranging complementary support: skills formation including digital and volunteer recruitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective digital campaign undertaken by the Heritage Fund delivers against its objectives • Projects objectives are aligned with AoF outcomes • Sustained engagement with the Heritage Fund's Strategy framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Heritage Fund remains UK trusted entity and regarded as thought leader with respect to heritage • Evidence from single AoF / projects is incorporated into learning feedback loops and influences the Heritage Fund's strategic work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information and guidance documents from the Heritage Fund are relevant, timely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects reach out to underrepresented organisations and individuals • Volunteering positively contributes to supporting economic recovering post-Brexit and Covid-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is motivation from VCSE to promote the heritage agenda and incentives help sustain this • AoF and local heritage work remain a priority • Private sector relationships develop

Assumptions (Inputs)	Assumptions (Activities and Outputs)	Assumptions (Outcomes and Impacts)
and useful (place framework approach)		

Risks (Inputs)	Risks (Activities and Outputs)	Risks (Outcomes and Impacts)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Heritage Fund's Strategy is not suitable to address AoF objectives or relevant to VCSE organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AoF programme not delivered on time Projects objectives do not align with AoF objectives resulting in inconclusive evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heritage is not clearly defined and challenging to measure (absence of baseline / monitoring data) Heritage is not adopted by targeted VCSE organisations Evidence and insights are ignored by stakeholders Projects work with limited numbers of people, so scale of change is limited and difficult to infer general findings of 'what works' Limited time and Covid-19 disruptions result in inconclusive evidence of impact

1. INTRODUCTION

Report Scope and Context

In August 2019, RSM UK Consulting LLP (RSM) was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the National Lottery Heritage Fund's (The Heritage Fund) five-year Strategic Funding Framework (2019-2024) and its impact on 13 'Areas of Focus' (hereafter referred to as the AoF programme).

This report is the fifth annual report aiming to provide key learning and recommendations that can be incorporated into the delivery of the Strategic Funding Framework. It also aims to further consolidate our understanding of the AoF programme with through refining the programme's Theory of Change (ToC).

As with other programmes, the AoF have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which impacted on both the delivery of planned project activity and the implementation of a new internal data management system by the Heritage Fund. Contextual considerations are made in trying to understand what has happened as a result of Covid-19, and to what extent unanticipated impacts can be identified and solutions incorporated into the ongoing delivery of the Strategic Funding Framework.

Programme Overview

Key objectives of the Strategic Funding Framework focus on overcoming perceived challenges around investing in heritage projects in particular deprivation contexts. The Strategic Funding Framework aims to generate investment in projects across 13 AoF. AoF are defined as areas which have received less than average levels of funding from the Heritage Fund, and that are located within the 25% most deprived wards in the UK. The 13 AoF are listed below and mapped in Figure 1.1:

- Brent (London & South);
- Corby (Midlands & East);
- Enfield (London & South);
- Inverclyde (Scotland);
- Knowsley (North);
- Luton (Midlands & East);
- Neath Port Talbot (Wales);
- Newham (London & South);
- North East Lincolnshire (North);
- North Lanarkshire (Scotland);
- Rhondda Cynon Taf (Wales);
- Tendring (Midlands & East); and
- Walsall (Midlands & East).

Note: Corby became part of a wider North Northants Local Authority in 2021.

Figure 1.1: Areas of Focus



The ToC (section 2) details short and medium-term outcomes that are hypothesised to lead to long-term impacts and the delivery of five higher level impacts, namely:

- increased inclusivity;
- increased investment in areas of focus;
- improved environment and heritage preserved;
- increased economic impact of heritage; and
- more vibrant places.

As part of its commitment to generating additional investment in the AoF, The Heritage Fund is committed to collaborating with key local partners. The aim is to develop and promote active participation of key organisations and / or communities in heritage activities. To do so, the Heritage Fund relies on Engagement Teams (ETs) whose roles are to:

- raise awareness of the Heritage Fund and the type of heritage projects it funds;
- support potential grant recipients to create heritage projects, including [solicited bids](#), eligible for funding;
- raise confidence and capability of eligible organisations to apply for funding; and
- explore new ways of raising awareness, understanding, promotion and participation in heritage initiatives.

The AoF activities also benefited from **strategic and tactical campaign activity** aligned to Strategic Framework key objectives. 2024 marks four years of the Digital Skills for Heritage initiative which helped organisations shift their heritage activities online during the Covid-19 lockdown, provides support and training for organisations, and supports organisations with low-confidence to improve their digital skills. It is noted as the economy and society continues to recover from the pandemic, the Heritage Fund have actively encouraged the return to face-to-face interaction with community organisations to enhance their level of collaboration and impact.

Evaluation Overview

Evaluation Aims

The evaluation has the following aims:

- understand the effectiveness of processes involved in delivering support to Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) and heritage organisations with respect to capacity building, networking, partnerships development and volunteers' recruitment;
- assess short and medium-term outcomes, capturing indications of impacts wherever possible; and

- establish 'what works'; enablers and barriers that affect impact and delivery.

Evaluation Approach

The evaluation approach is built around the ToC (section 2) which shows pathways through which the programme is expected to deliver activities and achieve its intended outcomes and impacts

Based on the timeline for outcomes, and stage of this study, the evaluation has so far focused on processes underpinning the delivery of the AoF activities, capturing indications of outputs and outcomes wherever possible. This report looks to build on the previous evidence of short-term and medium-term outcomes to begin to articulate the evidence of impacts for the programme.

Evidence in this report is derived and synthesised from multiple strands of evaluation activity, namely:

- desk-based review of key documents, policies, strategies and research papers;
- analysis of performance and investment data across five financial years (FY2018-19 to FY2023-24 up to 31st January 2024);
- case studies of 10 selected projects (as agreed with the Heritage Fund), across a sample of five AoF:
 - Newham;
 - North East Lincolnshire (NEL);
 - North Lanarkshire;
 - Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT); and
 - Walsall.
- consultation with the Heritage Fund's staff representatives, strategic stakeholders (x2) and project delivery partners (x10) to inform the development of the report (January – April 2024).

Report Structure

The structure and content of this report is outlined below:

- Chapter 2 provides the current iteration of the AoF ToC with its assumptions and risks;
- Chapter 3 updates the policy context, focussing on key changes since the Year 4 report;
- Chapter 4 provides an overview of AoF performance and investment trends to date;
- Chapter 5 focuses on findings from the project case studies in relation to programme impacts; and
- Chapter 6 concludes and identifies a set of lessons for programme development.

2. THEORY OF CHANGE

Introduction

This section presents a summary of the ToC developed in consultation with the Heritage Fund. The purpose of the ToC is to set out a clear understanding of AoF activities, outputs and outcomes over time. The ToC provides a basis and an analytical reference point for the evaluation, defining the outcomes that will need to be examined and highlighting key assumptions and risks that the data collection will aim to further understand.

The resulting ToC is presented in Table 2.1 with the section below describing the causal processes by which AoF programme is expected to deliver its intended results.

Summary of the Theory of Change

As described below, the AoF programme's ToC has six components, reflecting the stages needed to realise the programme key objectives.

Inputs, Activities, and Outputs

1. Inputs – this sets out the necessary means to implement the desired changes.
2. Activities – this sets out how the AoF programme will be implemented, with the Heritage Fund as a clear catalyst in capacity building work and support via the engagement leads.
3. Outputs – this shows the expected results from the inputs and activities. By Year 4 it is assumed that eligible applicants are aware of the Heritage Fund and are in touch with the engagement leads.

Outcomes and Impacts

The ToC (Table 2.1) details the expected outcomes and impacts in the chronological order that they would be expected to occur. The outcomes are represented at the Area of Focus programme level.

4. Short-term outcomes (0-3 years) – immediate outcomes related to capacity and capability work of VCSE organisations work with respect to heritage, greater awareness of the concept of heritage and cross sectoral work between public, voluntary and private partners.
5. Medium term outcomes (3-5 years) – outcomes expected to follow from the ongoing engagement work but also initiatives and confidence of Heritage and VCSE organisations to create heritage projects and apply for funding.
6. Impacts (5+ years) – this set out the impacts at the area level and include improved heritage preservation, positive economic and social effects as well recognition, in the form of investments, of the heritage agenda. Impacts fall outside the scope of the evaluation timeline, however, the evaluation is actively considering and capturing initial indications of impacts wherever possible.

Table 2.1: Theory of Change for Areas of Focus

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes 0-3 years	Medium-term Outcomes 3-5 years	Impacts +5 years
Appointment of local AoF engagement lead	Ongoing direct (one-to-one) support to build bid writing confidence	Increased number of events sharing knowledge about AoF agenda between VCSE, The Heritage Fund, local government	The Heritage Fund / ETs report increased capacity to engage VCSE	Increased confidence in applicants	Increased inclusivity
Creation of AoF network of delivery partners	Capacity building to VCSE sector including micro-organisations	Funding advice sessions raising awareness of funding opportunities	VCSE report increased capability to apply for funding	More applications	Increased investment in AoF
Grant funding disbursed to VCSE sector to contribute to the Heritage Fund's strategy	Schools provide a community hub	Increased number of volunteers and community groups supported	Greater visibility of the Heritage Fund on partnerships	Raised profile of AoF across other funders	Improved environment / heritage preserved
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3. POLICY CONTEXT

Introduction

This chapter provides an assessment of the UK heritage policy context, tracking key developments, outlining the Heritage Fund's objectives and tracking the influence of macroeconomic events such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, as well as identifying synergies with Strategic Funding Framework priorities and current local and national policy objectives.

Note: this section focusses on changes since the Year 4 report and does not reproduce previously reported analysis.


The National Lottery Heritage Fund 10-year Strategic Funding Framework (Heritage 2033)

The Heritage Fund's strategy is at a point of transition moving from [the 2019-2024 Strategic Funding Framework](#) towards the [Heritage 2033](#) strategy, coming into effect January 2024. The Heritage Fund's previous focus is outlined below:

- continuing to bring heritage into better condition;
- inspiring people to value heritage more;
- ensuring that heritage is inclusive (it is a required outcome for all projects to engage a wider range of people in heritage);
- supporting the organisations funded to be more robust, enterprising and forward looking;
- demonstrating how heritage helps people and places to thrive; and
- growing the contribution that heritage makes to the UK economy.

Heritage 2033 builds on this but focuses on four key principles that indicate what the Heritage Fund aim to achieve by 2033:

- **Saving heritage:** conserving and valuing heritage, for now and the future;
- **Protecting the environment:** supporting nature recovery and environmental sustainability;
- **Inclusion, access and participation:** supporting greater inclusion, diversity, access and participation in heritage; and
- **Organisational sustainability:** strengthening heritage to be adaptive and financially resilient, contributing to communities and economies.



The Heritage Fund will identify places with heritage needs, opportunities and potential by virtue of [identifying a total of 20 areas](#) to transform with the goal of boosting local economies and pride in place

These overarching goals of the strategy will be delivered by virtue of three year delivery plans with the [first delivery plan \(2023-2026\)](#) setting out a total spend of £345 million. Of this funding, £315 million will be spent as “open programme investment” for heritage projects that align with the four key principles, with the remaining **£30 million to be spent in areas requiring special care**.

4. PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Introduction

This section of the report analyses the Heritage Fund's investment within the 13 AoF, covering the period from Financial Year FY2018-19 (the baseline year) to FY2023-24 (up to 31st January 2024). It incorporates a review of the programme's funding activity (enquiries, applications, awards, and investments), in comparison with national level metrics, and the programme outputs (for which data is available).

Data Limitations

It is recognised that in some cases, accurate and comprehensive data collection has been a challenge for the Heritage Fund, due to resource and capacity issues, and the need to manually input data. As such, it should be noted that, whilst the following is reflective of the data available, there are a number of limitations including:

- not all engagement activities are fully captured by existing processes / data requirements;
- there is potential for human error in inputting responses;
- data recording approaches / processes vary across different AoFs, thereby making comparisons challenging; and
- varying time lags in AoF reporting means that not all data may be reflective of January 2024.

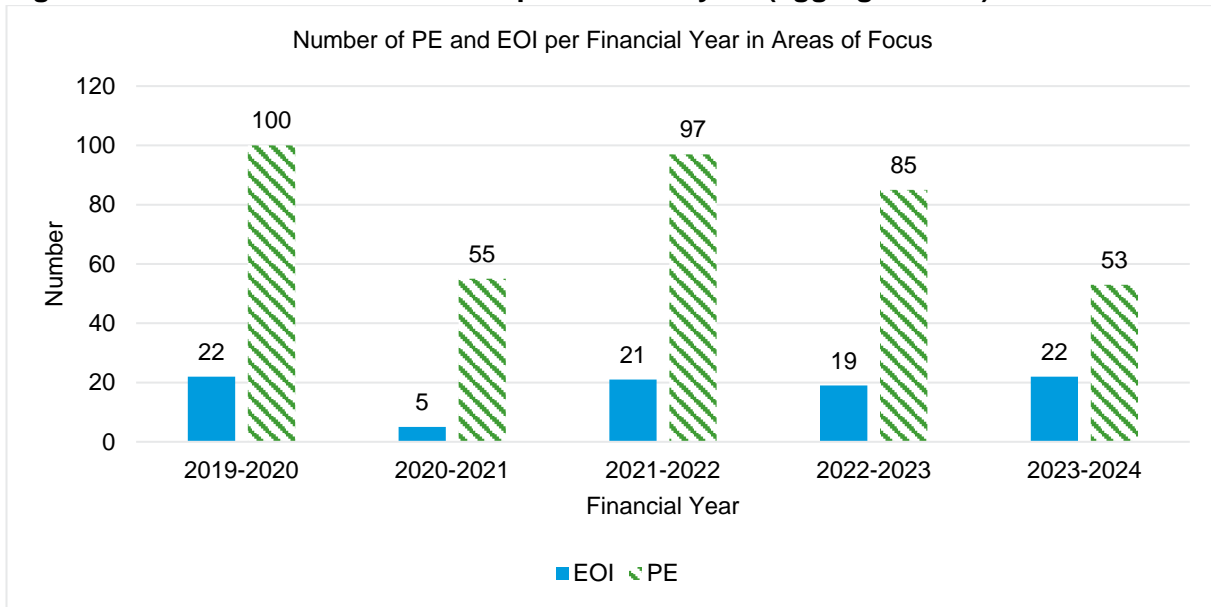
Funding Activity

Expressions of Interests and Project Enquiries

All organisations seeking project funding of greater than £10,000 are encouraged by the Heritage Fund to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) for projects over £250k or a Project Enquiry (PE) for projects under £250k prior to commencing work on an application, in order to gain feedback on their proposed project. Figure 4.1 provides a breakdown of EOIs and PEs submitted annually to the Heritage Fund from AoF since FY2019-20.

Figure 4.1 shows a falling trend in annual PEs received from the 13 AoF from FY2019-20 to FY2023-24 (up to January 2024), whilst EOIs remain relatively consistent across the time period noting a fall in FY2020-21. This is likely due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic whereby the Heritage Fund's calls for funding closed and there was a temporary shift in focus to delivering emergency Covid Recovery Funding and organisational priorities also shifted to specific pandemic related activities (e.g., delivering foodbanks).

Figure 4.1: Number of PEs and EOIs per financial year (aggregate AoF)*



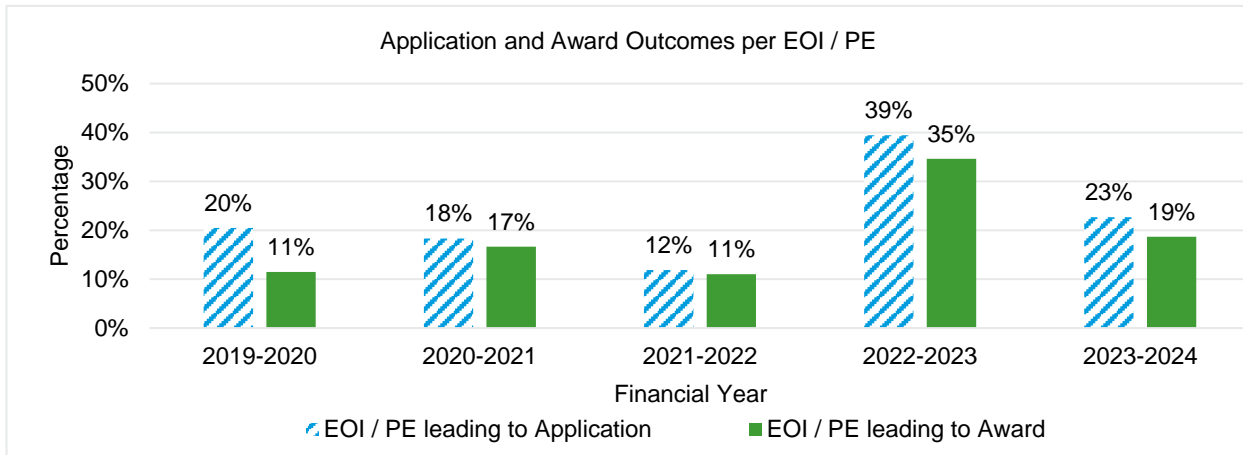
Source: The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Note: in November 2023, the Heritage Fund notified interested parties via online portal that they would not be responding to PEs linked to the Strategic Funding Framework 2019-2024 due to the transition to the Heritage 2033 strategy. EOIs were continued to be received.

Note: an EOI or Project Enquiry in one year can lead to an application the following year due to an array of reasons, such as capacity constraints, perceived barriers and anxiety to submit a robust application, and also the importance of conversations taking place which may engender applications in the future.

Figure 4.2 shows that, of the 478 PEs / EOIs submitted since April 2019, 22% have led to applications for funding (n=107), and 18% have led to funding awards (n=86). This peaked in FY2022-23, with a decline in FY2023-24, as of January 2024 (whilst remaining above baseline). This suggests that conversations at the initial stage have been more successful at targeting appropriate and investable projects and that applicants are improving their capability in relation to grant applications.

Figure 4.2: Application and award outcomes per EOI / PE

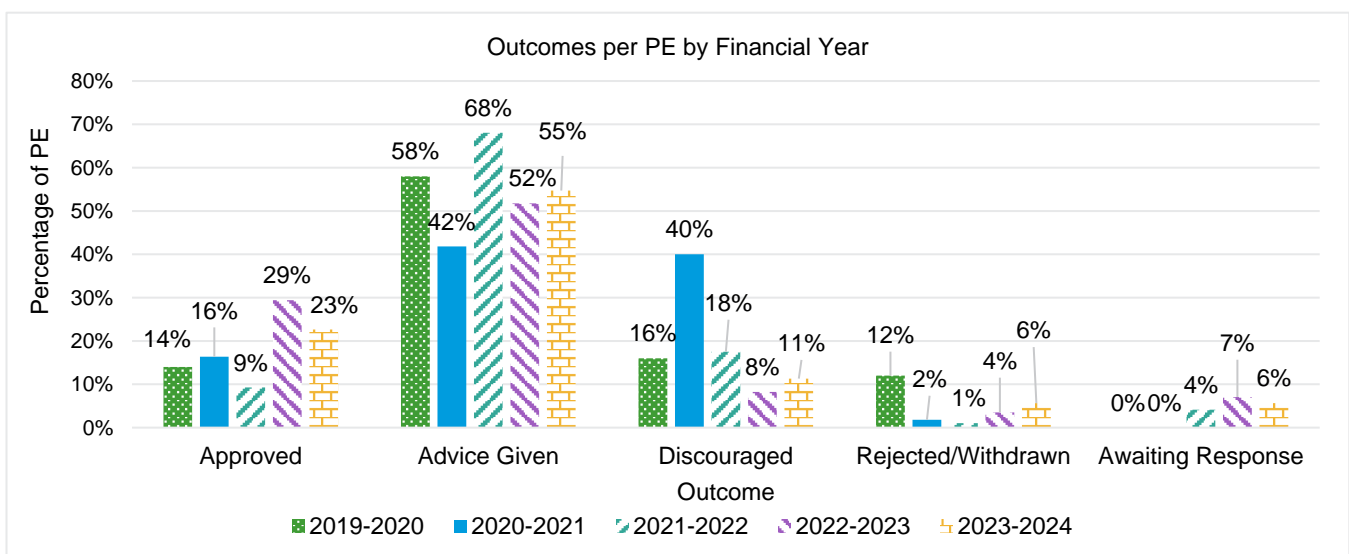


Source: The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Part of the enquiry process allows for engagement teams to discuss projects and give advice to potential applicants on how to best shape an application. Figures 4.3a and 4.3b show the resulting status of projects that submitted EOIs and PEs.

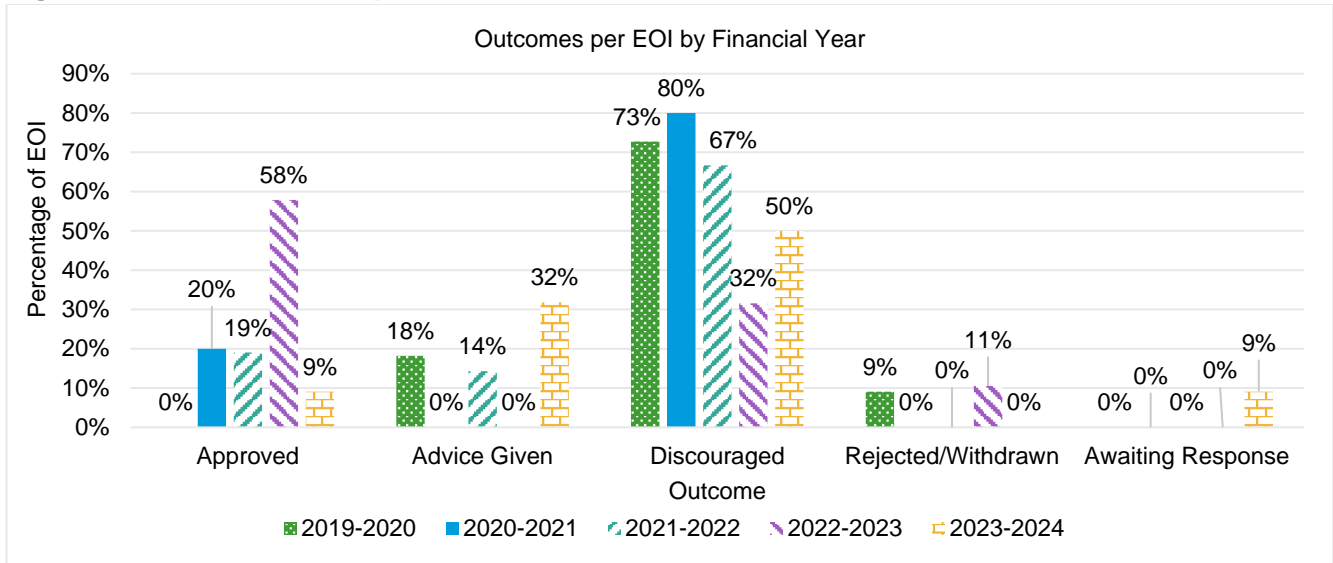
In FY2023-24, 23% of PEs were approved / complete; 55% were provided advice to help shape an application; and 11% of were discouraged from progressing. EOIs in FY2023-24 saw 9% leading to approval / completion, 32% given advice, and 50% discouraged from applying. This reflects the more complex nature of the projects and higher funding amounts.

Figure 4.3a: All outcomes per PE submitted



Source: RSM, based on data provided by The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Figure 4.3b: All outcomes per EOI submitted



Source: RSM, based on data provided by The National Lottery Heritage Fund

* Note: the “advice given” category reflects any enquiries that received a request for further information (project enquiry), are undertaking assessment / application checks or were provided advice or areas of improvement for the application.

Applications and Awards

A core outcome for the AoF programme is to see an increase in the number of applications received from the 13 AoF. Table 4.1 details the percentage change in applications per year, compared with the baseline year (FY2018-19). As shown, whilst there are some instances of a significant increase in the number of applications, the majority of areas show a more mixed picture in change from the baseline year, reflecting the challenge of the local context, as well the persistent impact of Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis. For a number of areas, this is also skewed by an abnormally strong baseline year (as noted by the Heritage Fund). **In total, across the 13 AoF, there was a 10% increase in applications in FY2023-24 from the baseline.** It should also be noted that other factors influence the number of applicants, such as organisations already delivering grant funded activity in areas of smaller heritage infrastructure, therefore not needing to submit another application.

Table 4.1: Trends in applications (% change from baseline year FY2018-19)

Applications	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Brent	-58%	-58%	8%	-33%	8%
Corby	250%	100%	0%	0%	100%
Enfield	20%	140%	-20%	60%	20%
Inverclyde	-30%	-40%	-50%	-100%	-50%
Knowsley	-29%	0%	-86%	-57%	14%
Luton	-60%	-7%	-40%	-80%	0%
Neath Port Talbot	-27%	64%	0%	-82%	9%
Newham	7%	29%	-36%	57%	43%
North East Lincolnshire	-27%	0%	-55%	-18%	-27%
North Lanarkshire	-79%	-64%	-50%	-79%	-43%
Rhondda Cynon Taf	-20%	150%	20%	20%	-30%
Tendring	100%	300%	-33%	-33%	67%
Walsall	600%	1000%	0%	600%	1400%
Change from baseline	-21%	+29%	-30%	-30%	+10%

Source: The National Lottery Heritage Fund

As a measure of the quality and alignment of the applications received, Figure 4.4 details the change in the proportion of applications received that have led to a fundable project (average of the five years since the AoF programme began), compared against the baseline year of FY2018-19. For the majority of AoF (n=8/13), there has been a positive change in application success, with an overall average increase from 57% successful applications in FY2018-19 to 65% over the course of the AoF programme to date. However, these figures only show applications made directly to the Heritage Fund and not the 141 Community Grant applications made locally as targeted interventions (refer to Table 4.3 for further information).

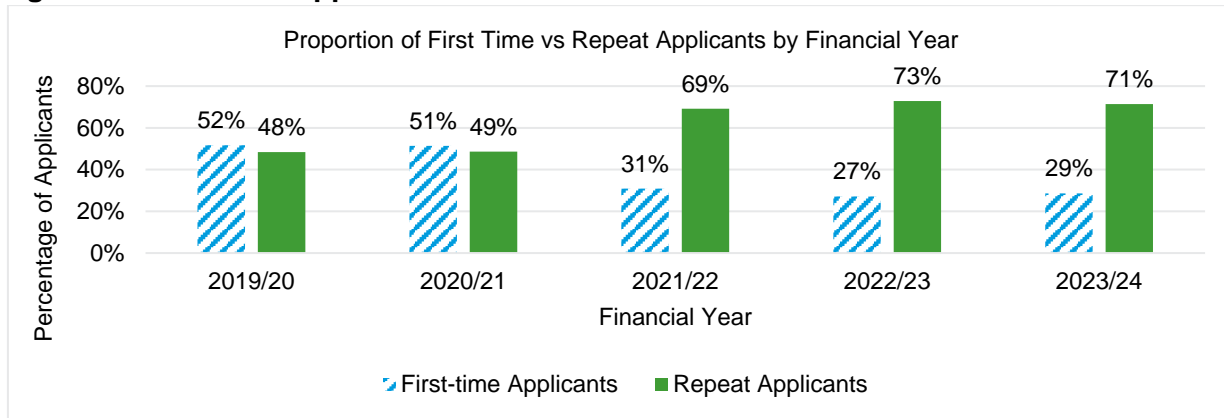
Figure 4.4: Proportion of applications leading to awards



Source: The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Figure 4.5 shows the proportion of applications that came from first-time and returning applicants. This was broadly evenly split in FY2019-20 and FY2020-21, with a spike in repeat applicants in FY2021-22 which has continued. The increase in the proportion of returning applicants since FY2021-22 could be indicative of relationship-building within AoFs, as engagement teams identify support organisations to develop ideas for fundable projects, as well as better ensuring that projects meet the Heritage Fund’s objectives. Initial applicants are often encouraged by engagement to tweak and develop their project, if in its current state it is not a fundable project.

Figure 4.5: First time applicants



Source: The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Table 4.2 presents a breakdown of the types of organisations applying to the Heritage Fund. As highlighted, registered charities have consistently recorded the highest proportion of applications, with 44% of applications since FY2019-20. Registered companies / Community Interest Companies (CICs) have increased in prominence over this time, from 15% in 2019-20 to 24% in 2023-24. Local authorities and community / voluntary groups were the next most common applicant types since 2019-20 (13%), however, where local authorities have been increasing in proportion (9% to 17%), community / voluntary groups have been decreasing (15% to 8%).

Table 4.2: Types of Organisations Applying

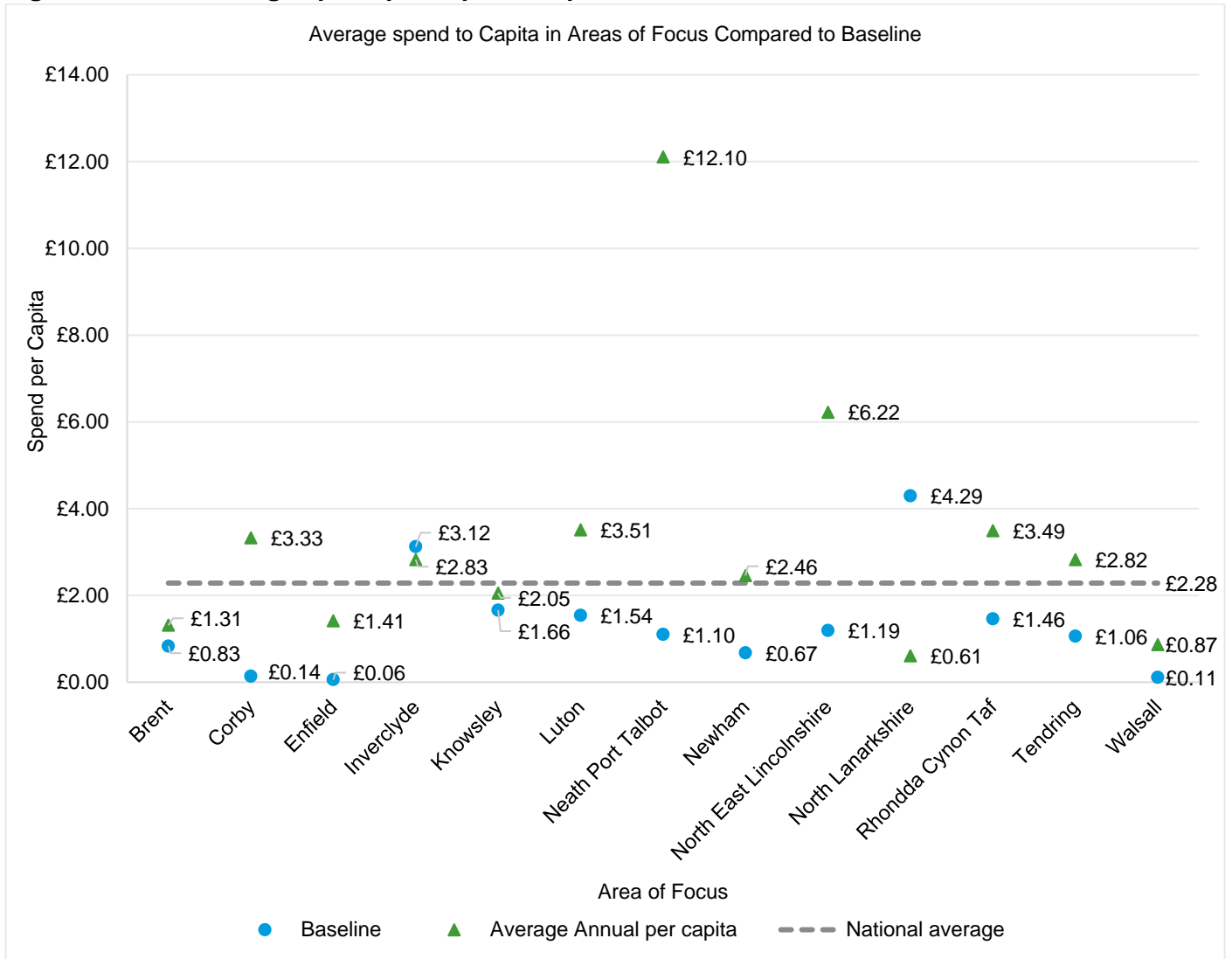
Organisation Type	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Total
Community / Voluntary Group	15%	7%	6%	12%	8%	13%
Faith based or church organisation	8%	3%	3%	1%	3%	4%
Local authority	9%	18%	9%	12%	17%	13%
Other	0%	1%	2%	1%	1%	3%
Other public sector organisation	1%	2%	4%	4%	5%	4%
Private owner of heritage	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Registered charity	50%	50%	49%	49%	42%	44%
Registered company / CIC	15%	19%	25%	21%	24%	18%

Source: The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Funding Awarded

In the selection of the thirteen AoF, one of the key criteria was low Heritage Fund spend per capita in previous years. As evidenced in Figure 4.6, with the exception of North Lanarkshire and Inverclyde, the baseline spend per capita in the 13 areas is below the national average, and an outcome of the programme is to increase spend per capita. Green markers in Figure 4.6 represent spend per capita in the given area, averaged over the five years of the AoF programme. In the majority of cases (n=11/13), there has been an increase compared to baseline values, and for eight AoF, spend per capita is exceeding the national average. Note: Neath Port Talbot's average spending has been skewed by significant funding allocated in 2023-24.

Figure 4.6: AoF average spend per capita compared to baseline



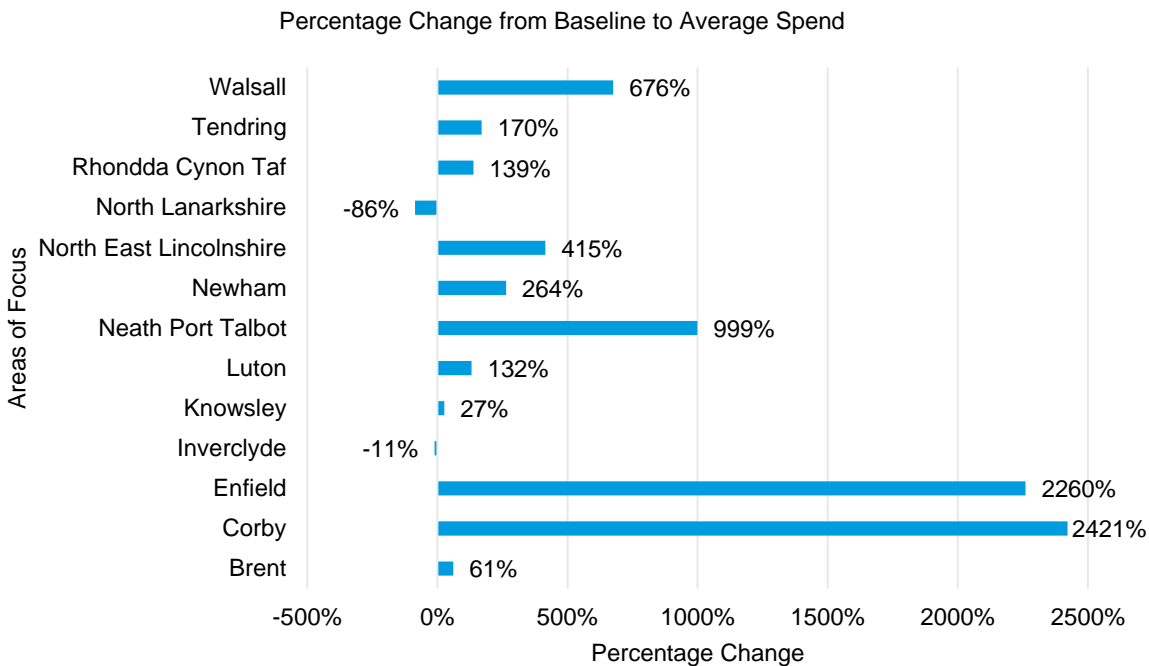
Source: The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Figure 4.6 offers an insight into the amount of capital spent per AoF, however, it does have the potential to skew conclusions on the performance of AoFs. For example, Neath Port Talbot is significantly higher than the national average in spend per capita, however, this is due to large investments as opposed to a breadth of investment. A caveat should be taken to acknowledge that Figure 4.6 does not holistically assess the performance and where the capital spend has been allocated in the AoFs.

To further understand the change in investment in heritage from the baseline, Figure 4.7 shows the percentage change in spend from FY2018-19. Across the majority of areas (n=11/13), investment in heritage projects has increased. The largest percentage changes are seen in Corby, Enfield and Neath Port Talbot. For two AoF (North Lanarkshire and Inverclyde), spend has decreased from the baseline, but this may be attributed to uncharacteristically strong baseline years.

Corby has seen the largest percentage increase (2,421%); however, Corby had a relatively low baseline spend (£9,800) and an average spend from FY2019-20 to FY2023-24 of £247,100; therefore, the percentage change is skewed by the low baseline. Conversely, North Lanarkshire recorded a decline in average spend compared to the baseline (-86%). This is due to a high level of baseline spend (£1,460,700) compared to an average spend from FY2019-20 to FY2023-24 of £207,036.

Figure 4.7: Percentage change from baseline spend to average spend (average across five financial years)



Source: The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Awards through the National Lottery Heritage Grants open programme is based on firm commitments, which for the two-stage 'large' grants will capture the development stage award ahead of a competitive process at the delivery (or second) stage. However, considerable work can be undertaken in the early stages of these large projects to enable them to be competitive, often by Engagement teams. In AoF, these large grants will have an immediate impact through the development phase, however, it should be recognised that the development grants may in the majority of projects go on to further millions of pounds invested in these areas in their delivery phase.

In the case of North Lanarkshire, we can see three large development grants committed over 2019 – 2024, totalling £400,800. However, there is the potential for the area to receive an additional £7,500,000 (estimated) of total funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund through three large projects.

Programme Outputs

As highlighted in the programme ToC, the following outputs have been identified for the AoF:

- number of events sharing knowledge about AoF agenda between VCSE, the Heritage Fund and local government;
- funding advice sessions raising awareness on funding opportunities;
- volunteers supported;
- new strategic partnerships; and
- increased number of quality and relevant heritage proposals.

The section below profiles the Heritage Fund's performance in relation to those outputs. However, data is currently limited to 12 AoFs in relation to the number of knowledge sharing events and funding advice sessions. Figures relating to the number of **volunteers supported** and **strategic partnerships** are not available and, therefore, quantitative analysis could not be undertaken for those outputs (however, a qualitative assessment of strategic partnerships has been undertaken).

Increased Quality and Relevance of Heritage Proposals

As highlighted in Figure 4.4, across the 13 AoF, eight have experienced an increase in application success, with the overall average increasing from 57% in FY2018-19 to 65% over the course of the programme to date. An increase in the proportion of applications that are successful suggests that both the quality and relevance of applications being received is improving. Furthermore, it is likely that this will increase further as FY2023-24 decisions are confirmed. Stakeholder consultation undertaken over the course of this longitudinal evaluation has identified that this output is aided by clearer prioritisation of AoF projects internally at the Heritage Fund, with growing internal openness to trust applications from AoFs that score medium, given the priority status of AoFs and the distance travelled from the baseline. Projects

that score “Medium” are viewed as being “fundable”, so the improvement and learning is in relation to internal prioritisation and advocacy for AoF projects.

New Strategic Partnerships

As the programme has been in operation for five years formal relationships with VCSE organisations have been formed across the AoF. Previous iterations of this longitudinal evaluation have identified, through consultation with AoF Engagement leads, anecdotal evidence of strategic partnerships, including:

- in Neath Port Talbot a project funded through a solicited application has won the Council an ‘Internal Pride’ award, beating over 100 other projects;
- the Heritage Fund, working with the University of Bedfordshire, set up the Heritage Enterprise Hub and Heritage Impact Accelerator which provides online and physical training sessions and events to help individuals who are interested in heritage signposting to projects they could support. These provide intensive support and training to build capacity and skills;
- in NI, there has been a strategic partnership formed between the Heritage Fund and the Rural Community Network, and through this collaboration additional work has been undertaken to deliver clinics and presentations to a range of rural groups across NI;
- the Heritage Fund meet with council-funded VCSE organisations / Locality Partnerships regularly and have built up strong relationships. Regular online funding surgeries are undertaken through these partnerships, and the Heritage Fund advertise regularly in Local VCSE organisation newsletters and present at events. There is a reciprocal relationship in terms of signposting between the Heritage Fund and these organisations, whereby the Heritage Fund signpost people for advice (e.g., for setting up a group or applying for funding) and the VCSE organisations / Locality Partnerships signpost to the Heritage Fund for funding; and
- through the solicited bid in Walsall Council, the Heritage Fund have a strong relationship with the Heritage Programme Officer. This includes meeting regularly to discuss both the bid and other work in Walsall, including the new heritage forum. The organisations signpost potential applicants to each other for support. The solicited bid has created a heritage strategy and a heritage forum and is building other relationships around heritage.

Events and Funding Sessions

Data in relation to the number of events undertaken and funding advice sessions is presented in Table 4.3. It should be noted that that the number of events and sessions in Table 4.3 refers to only events delivered through the Heritage Fund. There are a number of events that are run by AoF organisations who have received funding; however, data systems need to be implemented to capture this.

Table 4.3 sets out the available data, presenting total values from FY2019-20 to FY2023-24. In total, 382 events and advice sessions have been delivered across 12 AoF. The 'other' category reflects ad hoc meetings with strategic partners (e.g., local authority officials). It can be observed that advice surgeries have been the most prominent event (n=155, 41%) followed by networks and forums (n=119, 31%).

Capacity and resourcing challenges in Wales and Scotland teams have meant that support events are more challenging to deliver, and the need to manually record data poses a challenge to capacity-stretched teams. Capacity challenges have been documented through the series of evaluation reports, developed through consultations with the Heritage Fund programme staff and wider stakeholders. This has been a barrier facing several AoF throughout the framework, however, is not a reflection of the programme staff, rather the resource challenges they face.

Table 4.3: AoF events and funding sessions

AoF	Advice Surgery	Advisory Group	Funding Fair	Workshop / Training	Webinar	Network / Forum	Other	Total
Brent			3	4		10	5	22
Enfield			2			5	8	15
Newham			2	3		1	5	11
Knowsley	2				1	2	17	22
NEL	23	2	3	3		9	9	49
Corby	5					13		18
Luton	2				1	10	5	18
Tendring	28			3		8	8	47
Walsall	92			3		39	1	135
RCT			4			8	6	18
North Lanarkshire				3		12	1	16
Inverclyde	3				1	2	5	11
Total	155	2	14	19	3	119	70	382

Source: The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Community Grants

Community grants have been found by consultees to be a successful tool for engaging new grassroots organisations and upskilling both delivery partners and recipients. Local authorities are able to offer community and voluntary groups grants to support local heritage projects. Table 4.4 presents an overview of the total community grant funding and the number of projects funded through the scheme, as of December 2023.

Table 4.4: AoF Community Grants

AoF	Community Grant Amount funded	No. of Projects	Average grant per project
Enfield	£190,101	31	£6,132
Newham	£325,330	29	£11,218
Brent	£60,000	12	£5,000
NEL	£147,935	18	£8,219
Walsall	£10,027	7	£1,432
Knowsley	£72,768	25	£2,911
Luton	£32,666	8	£4,083
Neath Port Talbot	£41,666	11	£3,788
Total	£859,827	141	£6,098

Source: The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Table 4.4 shows that Newham distributed the most funding through the community grant scheme (£325,330) amongst 29 projects (the second highest number of projects) equating to an average of £11,218 per project. Table 4.4 illustrates that Newham recorded the highest average funding per project (£11,218) and Walsall recorded the lowest average (£1,432).

Programme Delivery

Stakeholder consultation has identified the following salient points in relation to the Heritage Fund's delivery of the programme:

- project delivery leads (n=3) stated that there is effective, flexible and responsive communication from Fund staff;
- project deliver leads (n=3) highlighted the value of support provided by Fund staff during the application process, including: idea generation and recommendations; showcasing of successful projects; and leveraging contacts to establish application partnerships. One project lead stated that a highlight was being able to attend an in-person session providing advice on submitting applications:

“I haven't seen another fund do that. This type of open communication event is so helpful” **[Project delivery lead]**

- project delivery leads (n=2) reported that further collaboration with other funders in the sector and awareness raising of funding opportunities would be beneficial;
- project delivery leads (n=2) stated that further dissemination activity and showcasing of projects would be helpful;
- one project delivery lead highlighted the complex ecosystem of stakeholders in the heritage sector, including at a local level, and reported it can be difficult to understand where each stakeholder fits within that ecosystem;
- one project delivery lead reported that there is significant demand for heritage projects and a lack of suitable funding opportunities, resulting in projects seeking alternative funding opportunities that aren't heritage-focussed;
- one stakeholder identified the potential for resourcing constraints, particularly in relation to senior engagement managers. It was highlighted that “overlapping responsibilities” between country engagement teams and AoF can result in constrained resources for non-AoF activity; and
- one stakeholder noted that differences in the structural set up of various Fund teams across the UK was reported to be prohibiting for collaboration, strategic discussion and sharing of learning.

Key Findings

The following key points have emerged:

- there has been a steady decline in the number of enquiries per financial year. As of January 2024, annual enquiries have decreased by 39% since FY2019-20;
- in relation to applications, across the 13 AoF, there was a 10% increase in applications in FY2023-24 from the baseline, however, the majority of AoFs show a mixed picture in change from the baseline year, reflecting the challenge of the local context, as well the persistent impact of Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis. Nevertheless, there is also evidence to suggest that the quality and relevance of applications is improving, reflected by an increase in the proportion of successful applications (increasing from 57% successful applications in FY2018-19 to 65% over the course of the AoF programme to date);
- a review of spend per capita shows that, in the majority of cases (n=11/13), there has been an increase compared to baseline values, and for eight AoF, spend per capita is exceeding the national average; and
- qualitative feedback provided on programme delivery was positive, indicating that support activity provided by the Heritage Fund is effective.

5. IMPACTS

Introduction

This chapter identifies the emerging findings against the impacts identified in the programme's ToC. The evidence provided below is based on the data provided by the AoF, wider secondary data sources and qualitatively explores impacts achieved by a sample of projects from each of the five AoF case studies, specifically:

- the London Borough (LB) of Newham;
- North East Lincolnshire (NEL);
- North Lanarkshire;
- Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT); and
- Walsall.

Increased Inclusivity

Walsall

Increased inclusivity was a core facet of the **Walsall Women's Wellbeing Project**. A series of events took place with a focus on the general and financial wellbeing of women, focussing on a range of inclusivity topics such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, racial diversity, and socioeconomic status. Stakeholder consultation the following observations in relation to increased inclusivity:

- 75% of the attendees of the events delivered by the project were from ethnically diverse communities, including African, Caribbean, Polish, and Asian ethnicities'
- the events brought together people from varying age ranges and created an opportunity for discussions between waged and non-waged people; and
- in one particular event, 28 of the 32 attendees were from ethnically diverse communities. Attendees at the event expressed their desire to be part of the heritage and highlighted the lack of diversity associated with heritage.

The **Walsall Solicited Bid project** delivered a heritage strategy for Walsall local authority. A key strand of this strategy going forward is having a "Diverse community". Stakeholder consultation revealed that the diversification of their communities from the 20th century industry and migration period is an integral part of the area's heritage identity. The strategy has resulted in the creation of a Heritage Forum which plays a key role in ensuring engagement from across the community, bringing together charities, social enterprises, and community groups alongside public and private sector organisations.

North Lanarkshire

Through a range of events, teaching classes and exhibitions over a period of eight months, the **Nigerian Food Festival** project activity demonstrates strong evidence of increasing inclusivity in North Lanarkshire. This includes:

- information and storytelling sessions such as black history day to improve awareness of history, culture and heritage. Diverse and “larger than expected” attendances were reported at the various events;
- cooking classes used as a way to promote social inclusion, learning and friendship; and
- assistance was provided through sign-posting women to organisations that can alleviate distress, provide learning, support and information. The empowerment of women is a priority of the project, and it was reported that the project’s classes had supported women with emotional trauma, depression and isolation.

Although the **Airdrie Town Centre Project** is still in development, it has commissioned a charity that has been interacting with various marginalised groups and is likely to contribute to increased inclusivity in the area.

North East Lincolnshire

The **Linkage Weelsby Hall** project offers care provision for students with disabilities and has demonstrated a strong impact of reverse inclusion (i.e., reverse inclusion aims to have non-disabled individuals included in the experiences of those with disabilities). Community events and afternoon tea sessions were carried out in the premises, with the focus being on the students, giving them opportunities for leadership and responsibility. Consultation findings also evidenced community cohesion through members of the community recreationally visiting the Weelsby Hall and estate.

Rhondda Cynon Taf

The **Altered Images Project** is aimed at connecting communities through a shared interest for heritage and local history. Stakeholder consultation revealed that a particular success of the project has been public engagement, achieved through targeted activity which promotes inclusion. Some key examples include:

- creative art and film-based projects targeted at schoolchildren and young people addressing issues such as learning disabilities;
- engagement with the Nigerian community in the area, which included oral history training and video interviews to be used in a film production showcasing Nigerian dance and culture, which will be disseminated within the community and with schoolchildren; and
- development of a resource for teachers in the area which focuses on the local heritage and history and places an emphasis on diversity and inclusion given the area’s high levels of immigration in the past.

Similarly, storytelling workshops are a key element of the **Rhondda Radio project**, whereby participants come together to think and speak about history and other heritage related topics. The recorded stories are then broadcasted on Radio Rhondda and made available afterwards on an on-demand service. Attendees of the workshops come from a diverse range of backgrounds and therefore raise awareness of and foster inclusivity. The broad spectrum of reported participants includes secondary school children aged 10 and 11, refugees new to the community, and people with neurodiverse and mental health issues. It was added that participants integrated and socialised at the local rugby club for six consecutive weeks.

Newham

During a stakeholder event in Newham, participants were asked what makes them most proud about heritage in the area. 48% of responses made reference to increased inclusivity. Key anecdotal evidence from this event regarding pride of heritage in the area includes:

- celebration of diversity and cherishing of history in the area. An example was provided of an individual playing a significant role in capturing the history of the introduction of the art form called “Bharatanatyam” in Newham;
- witnessing young people participate in the New Curators project, a collaboration between UCL Special Collections and Newham Heritage Month that sought to contribute towards making routes into the cultural heritage sector more transparent and accessible to non-graduates in East London. The project created and supported a cohort of 10 young cultural heritage practitioners in 2021; and
- one participant talked about how, through a previous heritage project, they developed a relationship with one of first female lawyers in a social law firm as well as one of the first female police officers to rise a senior rank whilst being a single parent.

Forrest Lane Park

Although still in development, co-design and co-production is at the forefront of **The Forrest Lane Park** project. This includes working with local residents, community stakeholder groups, intergenerationally through schools and older people, and those with additional needs, to gather insights on how a more accessible park and environment can be created. This includes physical inclusivity, and it was highlighted that a statue of the figure head of the Caribbean Elderly Association will be erected in the park as a way to create links and connections in the community.

Increased Investment AoF

Qualitative evidence in relation to increased investment is limited, however, through stakeholder consultation with project leads, it was identified that:

- interaction with the Heritage Fund has been effective in raising the profile of AoF across other funders and raising awareness and interest in projects. This was reported to have led

to further funding opportunities and engagement with influential funders such as the Arts Council, UK Shared Prosperity Fund, The Architectural Heritage Fund, Historic England, Cultural Development Fund and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI); and

- the importance of long-term funding commitments was highlighted in order to derive impact and being important for shaping the more recent Heritage Places initiative.

A review of secondary data sources has identified indirect evidence of increased investment in AoF during the programme period. This review is based on wider external data recorded by DCMS (source: [National Lottery Grant Database](#)). The data identifies a modest but noticeable upward trend in the amount of grant funding distributed to the AoFs over the last six years, but displays a decrease in number of grants awarded from 2019/2020 onwards. This indicates that the trend for grant spending across the AoF by external funders has moved towards a model of awarding a smaller number of higher value grants, as opposed to a larger number of smaller number grants. Salient points to note include:

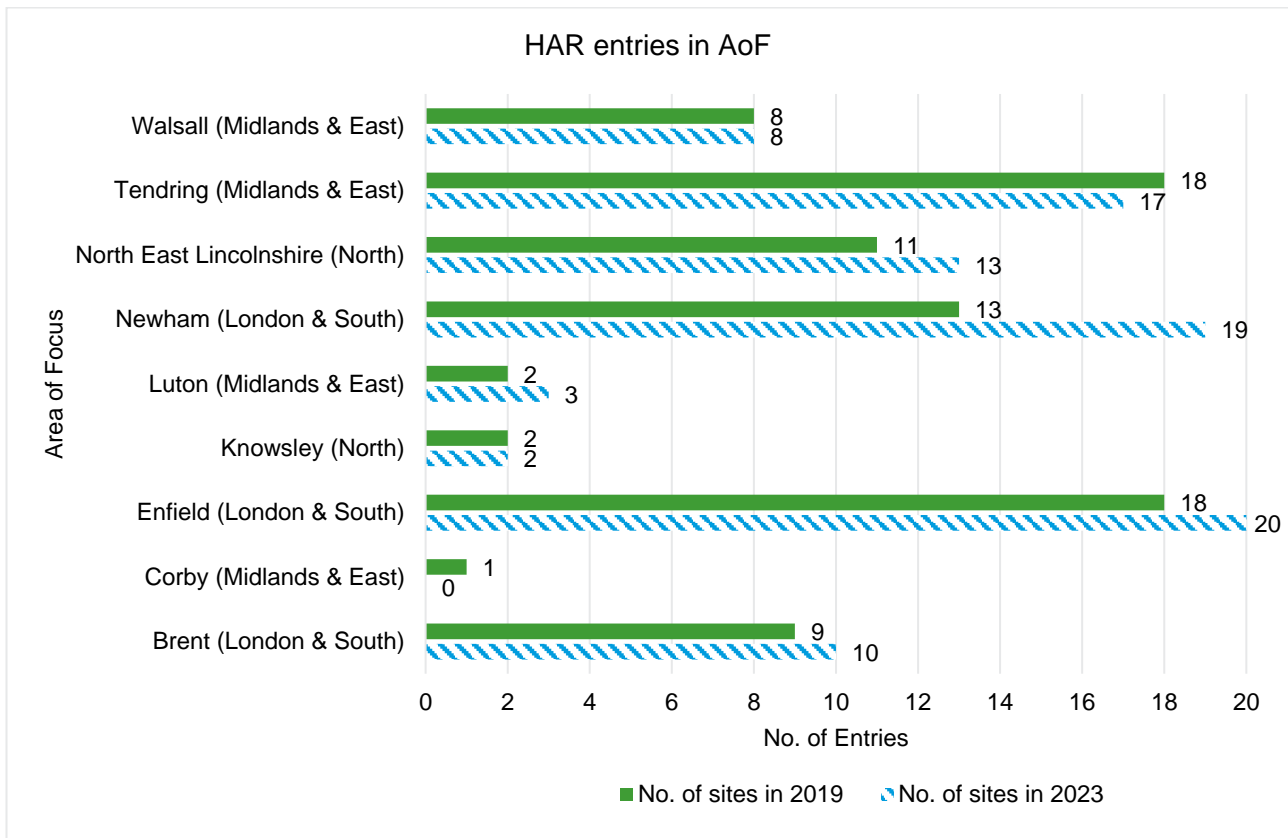
- Neath Port Talbot and Tendring saw the largest increases in total grant funding spend from 2018 – 2023;
- Inverclyde, Knowsley and North Lanarkshire experienced a decrease in the amount of grant spending; and
- Whilst the number of grants awarded across all AoF declined from 2019/2020 onwards, Luton, Neath Port Talbot and Rhondda Cynon Taf saw an increase in the number of grants awarded in 2023, breaking this pattern.

Improved Environment / Heritage Preserved

The level of evidence available on the extent to which the programme has supported the preservation of heritage sites across the AoF is limited as robust data is only available for the English AoF through the Heritage at Risk (HAR) registry. Note: equivalent data for Wales and Scotland was reviewed but discounted as, in Wales, the data was not collected / collated in a way as to facilitate secondary analysis and, in Scotland, the data is limited to buildings which are currently “at risk” and does provide historic data.

Figure 5.1 summarises the change in the number of entries on the HAR register between 2019 and 2023. This highlights that the majority of regions (n=5) have experienced an increase in the number of heritages sites at risk, with two AoF experiencing a decrease and two AoF remaining static.

Figure 5.1: No. of entries to HAR register by AoF



Source: [Heritage at Risk 2023 Registers | Historic England](#)

North East Lincolnshire

Through the restoration of the historically important Grade II listed Weelsby Hall and estate near Grimsby, the **Weelsby Hall project** contributes to the Improved Environment / Heritage preserved impact. The Victorian Hall has significant historical significance in the area, and through its refurbishment, its heritage will be preserved. The project has also employed architects and specialist sustainability consultants to design a sustainability strategy for the site. It was reported that unsustainable heating sources have been ruled out and solar panels were being strongly considered.

Similarly, construction is underway for the **Horizon Youth Project** in the renovation of the Grade II Listed West Haven Maltings buildings along the River Freshney. This will be converted into a state-of-the-art youth centre to provide young people with opportunities to engage in activities and access support from youth workers. The new Youth Zone will include an indoor climbing wall, a four-court sports hall, training kitchen, music room with a recording studio, fully equipped gym, dance and drama studio, 3G pitch, and an arts and crafts room. Careful reconstruction planning was reported to have been carried out with the environmental agency,

archaeological architects, consultants, and Historic England due to the historical significance of the building and the ecological importance of the river that runs through the surrounding area.

North Lanarkshire

It was noted during consultation with project leads that heritage has traditionally not been a priority for North Lanarkshire and, therefore, it has been a challenge to derive heritage-based impacts. One interviewee noted that, as a result of the Heritage Fund's activity in the area:

“whilst there isn't a strong infrastructure to work within, the Council is now more aware of the impact and culture of heritage. The Council being more positive is a great success.”

This attitudinal change was reported to be illustrated through the Council's support for a funding application for a large multi-million-pound project to refurbish the museum, focusing on mining heritage in the area.

Although the project is at an early stage, the **Airdrie Town Centre project** will implement an active travel strategy with plans to widen pavements and further encourage walking and cycling as forms of transport. Preservation of heritage is a core element of the project's implementation plan, whereby 12 young people will be selected to work with Strathclyde University on an oral history project. This includes aspects such as Scots language and poetry and will give participants an opportunity to connect with and capture the thoughts of the general public with regard to heritage in the area.

Walsall

The delivery of a Heritage Strategy through the **Walsall Solicited Bid Project** on behalf of the Council was noted as a breakthrough moment for heritage in the area. Heritage has gained a more prominent role in Walsall because of AoF funding. The Heritage Strategy developed and its subsequent Action Plan link to Walsall Council's Corporate Plan and the Walsall Proud Programme (WPP), with wider strategies now incorporating the cultural sector, including Walsall 2040 and the Walsall Economic Strategy.

Newham

A significant proportion (22%) of comments made during a stakeholder event in Newham referenced improved environment / heritage preserved when asked what makes them most proud. Relevant anecdotal evidence from this event includes:

- admiration for the regeneration work and accessibility efforts in the Royal Docks area;
- the opening of the Getty archive to more public access, allowing for residents to gain an enhanced sense of their heritage and conserve 19th century photographs; and
- pride of Newham's green heritage. Allotments projects in the area (funded through AoF) and learning about the history of growing food for local people were reported to be fulfilling experiences.

Similarly, it was reported during consultation that the conservation of the space used for the **Forest Lane Park** project will be centred on nature recovery and increased biodiversity.

Rhondda Cynon Taf

Stakeholder consultation revealed that the **Rhondda Radio project** will implement a physical heritage trail in summer 2024 which will be an opportunity to showcase the areas impressive topography and key heritage sites. A station and information board will be available at 12 iconic sites, displaying relevant historical and heritage information. Furthermore, stakeholder consultation identified that one of the information boards, 'Welcome to our woods', will explore the area's green future and promote environmental sustainability and use of resources.

Increased Economic Impact of Heritage

North East Lincolnshire

Although the restoration of the Grade II listed building in Grimsby is still underway, the **Horizon Youth Zone** project activity and workshops are ongoing to develop skills of the young people and foster employment opportunities. The project lead reported during consultation that:

"I took four of our project members to London where they pitched to a funder and secured £400K for revenue costs for when the youth zone opens, using skills they gained through workshops funded by NHLF"

It was added that following this success, and through the support of the Heritage Fund, the project opened lines of communication to other funders which resulted in further leveraged funding for the project from funders such as Historic England and the DCMS Youth Investment Fund. Further salient points from the consultation regarding contributions to economic impact include:

- an enterprise and employability suite will also be developed in the zone which will serve as attractive space for employer engagement; and
- the Youth Zone will lead to increased footfall in the area and, therefore, may have a positive economic impact for Grimsby.

Similarly, key information reported from the **Weelsby Hall** project regarding increased economic impact in the area includes:

- creation of jobs in the care sector for local people;
- generating income streams for the charity and enhancing its financial stability; and
- training and improving local skills. It was added that the project will continue to employ an apprentice on the scheme, demonstrating the project's social value.

North Lanarkshire

The **Airdrie Town Centre** project will repurpose an old Assembly Mill building into a creative sector hub. Although plans are still in development, stakeholder consultation explored the possibility of art students taking up the space. A separate development through the project is the creation of a women's business centre space, which was stated to be likely to have a knock-on effect for other local businesses in the area. It was added that these developments are likely to increase footfall, change traditional perceptions of the area and have a positive economic impact.

The **Nigerian Food Festival** proved popular and garnered many visitors from outside of North Lanarkshire throughout the project period. Project activities and sessions aimed to empower women towards financial independence and economic development through skills and confidence building. One aspect of this was the provision of cooking and volunteering opportunities to 20 local people. Stakeholder consultation reported that a previously homeless person was given an opportunity to participate on the course, successfully developed skills, and is now working for the project's lead organisation.

Walsall

The inclusion of heritage in the of Economic Strategy and Action Plan of Walsall Council is significant in terms of economic impact. It was reported during consultation that the Heritage Strategy has resulted in a more joined up approach between local groups, funders and the Council. A significant development from this was the Council securing £3.7 million of funding from DCMS, delivered by Arts Council England, as well as further funding from other sources such as the Government's Towns Fund. This funding will enable Walsall's currently vacant Grade II listed Guildhall building to be transformed into a vibrant Creative Industries Enterprise Centre that will be completed by 2026 and have a positive economic impact in the area.

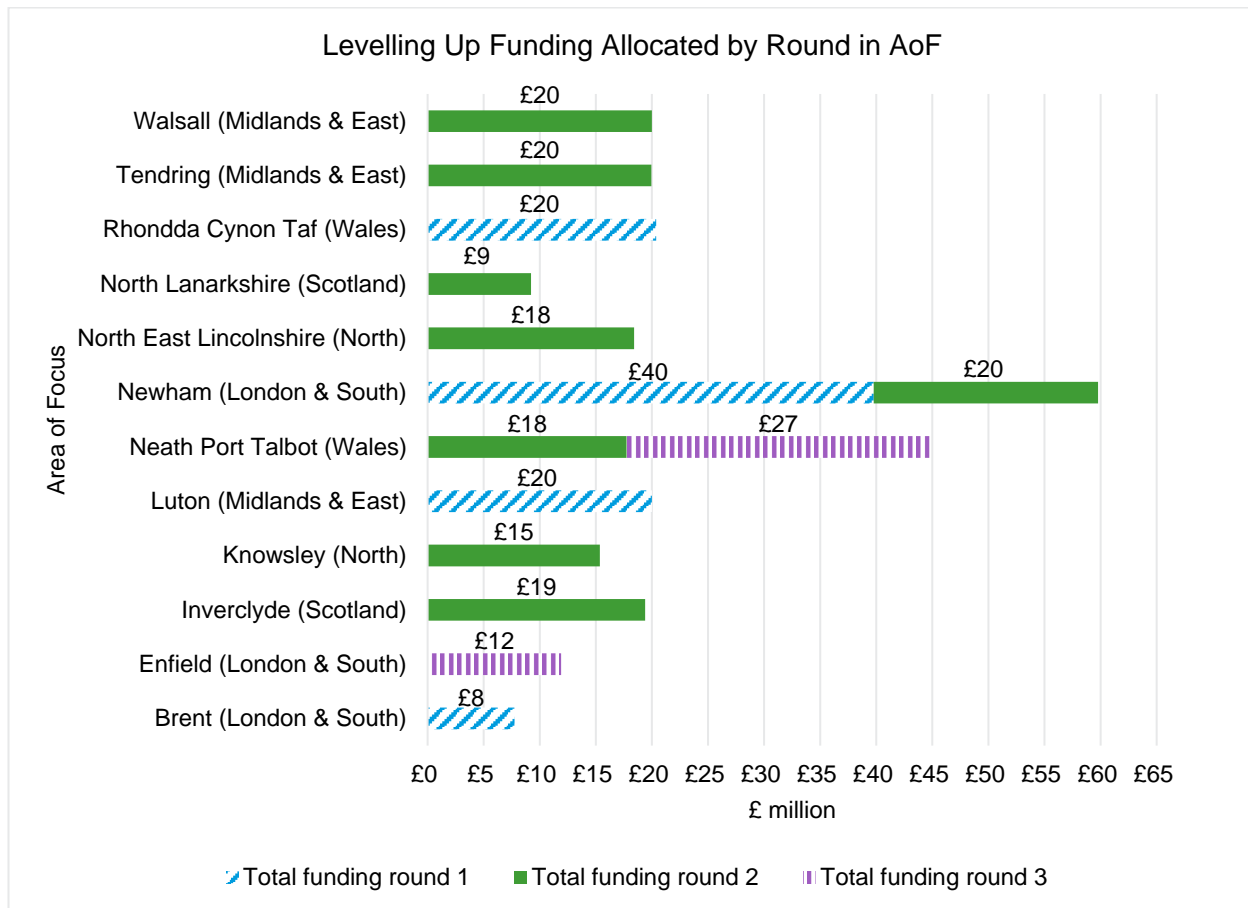
The project's funded posts (Heritage Programme Officer and Conservation Officer) are continuing, with responsibility for financially supporting these transferred in February 2024 to the Council's portfolio. This will allow for the Council's Heritage Strategy to continue to be implemented moving forward and play a role increasing economic impact of heritage in the Walsall.

Although at a smaller scale, interview findings from the **Walsall Women's Wellbeing Project** report increased financial awareness and independence from attending the project. This includes anecdotal evidence of one participant starting her own business, whilst others reported increased confidence allowing them to seek pay rises, promotions and career changes.

More Vibrant Places

Figure 5.2 explores the allocation of Levelling Up funding in AoF (note: Corby is not detailed due to identification issues within the dataset). As highlighted in Figure 5.4, Newham and Neath Port Talbot have secured two rounds of funding. The remaining AoF received comparable amounts of funding with the exception of North Lanarkshire and Brent, both of which received under £10 million.

Figure 5.2: Levelling Up funding allocated by round (£ million)



(Source: [Levelling Up Fund Round 3: explanatory and methodology note on the decision-making process - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91222/levelling-up-fund-round-3-explanatory-and-methodology-note-on-the-decision-making-process.pdf); [Levelling Up Fund Round 2: successful bidders - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91222/levelling-up-fund-round-2-successful-bidders.pdf); [Levelling Up Fund: first round successful bidders - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91222/levelling-up-fund-first-round-successful-bidders.pdf))

Newham

Analysis from Newham’s stakeholder event revealed that when asked ‘what makes you most proud about heritage in the area?’, 23% of all responses related to more vibrant places. Key anecdotal evidence from this event regarding more vibrant places includes:

- heritage activities in Newham have led to the creation of exciting plans by the borough for Canning Town Old Library. This includes making available the library’s archives and collections for public access;
- appreciation of the multi-cultural awareness of borough, through its strongly multiracial characteristics and as many as 104 languages being spoken; and

- the Theatre Royal Stratford East has contributed to the increase in vibrancy of Newham for 140 years and brought people together. It was perceived as a diverse, civic hub with an open-door policy, creating an environment that people feel welcome and therefore increases the vibrancy of Newham.

The **Alice Billings House** project has resulted in the restoration of Grade 2 listed building built in c.1905 and has been vacant for over 10 years. Stakeholder consultation revealed that the surrounding area of the building was a hotspot for anti-social behaviour, and that cost savings have occurred from previously having to introduce security measures in the area.

The newly restored historic building is now home to creative workspaces and studios for artists. Interviewee data revealed that an increased community feel has occurred as a result of the generation, leading to higher footfall and visitors, as well as a catalyst for other previous under-utilised assets in the area. Similar plans have now been made to revitalise the Old Court House building and the Old Town Hall in the area.

Similarly, stakeholder consultation revealed that plans are in place to enhance the visibility of **Forest Lane Park** and raise its profile and awareness to encourage visitors. This will include rearranging entrance points for ease of access to increase the vibrancy of the surrounding area.

North East Lincolnshire

Stakeholder consultation highlighted that the current perception of the historic building that is being restored for the **Horizon Youth Project** is an “empty, burnt-out building”. The redevelopment will result in an increase in visual attractiveness of the area, and the Youth Zone itself is expected to have 5,000 members. This will increase footfall, along with the building being situated on the town’s river should add to the attractiveness of the area and encourage further visitors.

North Lanarkshire

Stakeholder consultation reported that the **Airdrie Town Centre** project plans to create a more vibrant place through the modification and enhancement of view-points for the public observatory located near the town’s library, street astronomy activities as opportunities for targeted public engagement, and the commissioning of artists and hosting of a subsequent art exhibition as a further public engagement tool. This activity should allow for the deprived area of Airdrie to become more vibrant.

Rhondda Cynon Taf

The project delivery lead identified that the **Rhondda Radio project** has led to a more vibrant place. They further added that it is important for people to have a sense of their community and their community’s heritage and have witnessed the rise in people’s sense of knowledge and belonging through their programmes. The project delivery lead reinforced the significance of heritage buildings and assets in the area and encouraged the authorities to continue to enhance their relevance.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter draws together the research findings from this evaluation report, distilling key messages, emerging impacts and identifying learning in terms of what works and what requires improvement. The chapter will conclude identifying implications for the Heritage Fund and the delivery of the AoF programme.

Impacts

It is evident from consultations conducted with project representatives from the five sample AOF's, analysis of wider secondary data, and NHLF programme data that the anticipated year 5+ impacts identified in the programmes ToC are beginning to emerge.

Increased inclusivity was found to be one of the strongest areas of emerging impact. Qualitative findings demonstrate evidence of increased inclusivity as a direct result of funded activity in all five sample areas. Analysis of programme data from a stakeholder event in Newham reiterates this, whereby data gathered on resident's views on heritage in the area related to increased inclusivity more than any other impact.

Although most projects in the sample areas are still ongoing or in development, the potential for increased economic impact through AoF funded projects is strong, most notably in North East Lincolnshire and Walsall. Grimsby's Horizon Youth Zone Project and Walsall's Heritage Strategy have been pivotal in leveraging further funding into the areas for the development of the new Youth Zone and Creative Industries Enterprise Centre respectively. As well as the provision of education, training and employment opportunities, both developments will have significant positive knock-on-effects for businesses in the local area.

Increased Investment across the AoF is apparent through the analysis of wider secondary data which saw an upwards trend in the amount of grant funding distributed to the AoF over the last six years. Rhondda Cynon Taf and Newham saw the largest increase in investment from 2020-23, whilst North Lanarkshire lags comparatively.

Levelling Up funding awarded across the AoF equated to £267 million across the three rounds, with each AoF receiving an average of £22 million in funding. This increased funding is likely to have contributed to and will continue to contribute to more vibrancy in these areas through the regeneration of town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets. This aligns with qualitative findings which indicate that interviewees observed increased vibrancy in their areas and that funded projects are resulting in more vibrant places. This is most prevalent in Newham, which received the largest total of Levelling Up funding. The restoration of the Grade 2 listed Alice Billings House building into a creative sector hub for artists represents a significant transformation from a previously derelict asset associated with anti-social behaviour and has acted as a catalyst for further change in the area.

Whilst evidence toward Improved environment / heritage preserved was less robust across the projects sampled, the delivery of a Heritage Strategy on behalf of the Walsall local authority is a significant breakthrough for Heritage in the area. The creation of a Heritage Forum, dedicated Heritage staff, and incorporation into the Walsall 2040 and Walsall Economic Strategy's is likely to provide a long-term boost for Heritage in the area.

What Works?

Findings from this evaluation report suggest that across the majority of the anticipated impacts, the Heritage Fund has positively contributed, although the extent to which varies across specific areas. Key enablers in meeting these objectives and crucial in further achieving impacts are listed below:

- **Strong working relationships:** qualitative findings from this evaluation and previous iterations of the annual reports suggest particularly strong lines of communication between Fund staff and beneficiaries. This primarily relates to being approachable, flexible, easily contactable, and prompt with responses;
- **Application process support:** Fund support was found to be particularly useful in providing advice and guidance to applications. A hands-on approach was reported to be useful in bringing together different partners for applications, as well as idea generation and recommendations for application submissions.
- **Collaboration with other funders:** Fund activity has been effective in raising awareness and interest in projects across other funders and therefore increased the Heritage Fund's influence over the role that heritage has and has seeped into other national funders objectives. The deployment of Heritage Spark Grants in Walsall through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is an example of this. Other key organisations that the Heritage Fund have collaborated with and leveraged further funding into AoF include: DCMS, the Arts Council, UK Shared Prosperity Fund, The Architectural Heritage fund, Historic England, Cultural Development Fund and UKRI.

What needs Improvement?

Areas of improvement have been highlighted through the evaluation. These are summarised below:

- **Lack of data in relation to some outputs** – data is currently limited to nine AoFs in relation to the number of knowledge sharing events and funding advice sessions. Figures relating to the number of volunteers supported and strategic partnerships is not available and, therefore, quantitative analysis could not be undertaken for those outputs.
- **Budget and capacity constraints:** the rationale for budget and staffing allocations for nation and area teams based on GDP per capita was reported to not be nuanced enough to account for the practicalities of meaningful engagement work. Evidence was provided of the capacity of engagement teams being strained and experiencing difficulties in having to

prioritise between AOF programme priorities and wider NHLF strategic framework priorities and priority audiences.

- **Staffing Structure:** hierarchy gaps between more junior and senior staff were reported between areas and nations. A reported lack of senior engagement managers in some areas has had a negative impact on both local delivery and the ability to work in cross-partnership with other engagement teams.

Recommendations to Inform Future Learning / Development

The AoF programme is beginning to show emerging evidence of achieving the impacts expected at this stage of the programme, whilst identifying a number of areas for improvement. These findings validate the current iteration of the ToC; however, this will be reviewed in the final annual report (2025).

Key considerations from this report are profiled below:

- in relation to data, it is recommended that the Heritage Fund continue to review and update data recording processes, automating where possible and aiming to align processes across all regions to allow for comparisons;
- further collaboration with other funders such as Historic England, Historic Environment Scotland, and Cadw (Welsh Government's historic environment service) could lead to increased support, awareness raising, signposting and advice for eligible funding applications and may help lead to reductions in HAR sites;
- local teams could lead to increased support, awareness raising, signposting and advice for eligible funding applications and may help lead to reductions in HAR sites;
- given that **improved environment** and **heritage preserved** are identified as separate principles in the Heritage 2033 strategy, consideration should be given to whether the ToC should be updated to separate these impacts;
- further dissemination activity and showcasing of projects in the AoF could lead to raised awareness and idea generation for potential project applicants, leading to increased numbers of applications and higher quality projects;
- it was reported that various stakeholders are promoting heritage in the AoF which can lead to a complicated funding landscape. The Heritage Fund might consider taking on a coordinating role to simplify the landscape for future beneficiaries. A central website or depository with information and promotional activity might help to address this;
- more consistent staffing structures and delivery approaches across the Heritage Fund's nation and regions teams may result in increased sharing of resources and may help to reduce staff pressure. A more collaborative approach and knowledge sharing and learning could lead to efficiencies; and
- the Heritage Fund should continue to monitor and update their funding eligibility criteria to ensure that funding reaches the projects that are focussed on heritage.

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