HLF Chief Executive Ros Kerslake delivers first



Ros Kerslake speaking at the AIM Conference 2017

The role of museums in understanding our individual and collective identity has never been more important, HLF CEO Ros Kerslake told the AIM Conference today.

In her first major speech to the museums sector, Ros Kerslake said: “Museums have a key role to play in helping people understand identity. And at a time when that role has never been more critical, they need to continue to develop ways of operating in a sustainable fashion, as cultural businesses rather than cultural institutions.

“HLF can fund projects and can support resilience, but we can’t fill the gaps in public sector spending. We would like to work with museums on developing their strategic options. We supported the parks sector with our groundbreaking *Rethinking Parks* report, looking at alternative and emerging funding and sustainability models; we are now in discussions with Arts Council England and Nesta about a similar piece of work around *Rethinking Museums*.”

Museums as beneficaries

Museums are key beneficiaries of HLF’s open programmes, especially £100,000 plus Heritage Grants and the annual £5million plus Major Grants. Ros Kerslake told the conference that this is likely to still be the case.

Questions to consider

Ros Kerslake said that HLF will be working with the museums sector to consider a number of key questions, likely to include:

- Should HLF be capping major grants to ensure funding is spread across a greater number of beneficiaries?
- Should there be an expectation of higher levels of match funding?
- Is there a place for low-interest or interest-free loans?

[quote=Ros Kerslake, HLF Chief Executive]"Demand for our funding has never been higher."[/quote]

“Demand for our funding has never been higher. For this year’s 'Major Grants' Board meeting, we received grant requests totaling £224m for an available budget of £40m. This poses some challenging questions that we need to think about together.”

Cultural business mindset

HLF’s 'Resilient Heritage' funding was introduced in Summer 2016 to support heritage organisations in making the shift to being ‘cultural businesses’.

She continued: “One way of getting best value for National Lottery players is through ensuring that our funding has long-term traction, ensuring that heritage organisations are fit for purpose and financially robust.

"Research shows that our investment in capital schemes for refurbishment, new galleries and new visitor facilities has a direct impact on increased revenue, with 81% of museums surveyed reporting an improvement in their financial sustainability. This increase comes from a range of sources, including cafés or restaurants, retail, entrance fees, hiring out spaces and public programmes. I really would urge applicants to think about these opportunities when applying for funding.”

Future funding for museums

Ros Kerslake also indicated future thinking about funding new museums: “It’s a challenge for us, with increased demand, to strike a balance between funding new attractions and the existing heritage estate” she said.