# What we fund

Find out what heritage we support, and what you can spend the money on.

We fund a broad range of projects that connect people and communities to the UK's heritage.

## What is heritage?

We don’t define heritage. We ask you to tell us what you think is important and should be preserved.

From historic buildings, our industrial legacy and the natural environment, to collections, traditions, stories and more – **heritage can be anything from the past that you value and want to pass on to future generations.**

## Your heritage project could include:

- **Nature** – works to improve habitats or conserve species, as well as helping people to connect to nature in their daily lives.
- **Designed landscapes** – improving and conserving historic landscapes such as public parks, historic gardens and botanical gardens.
- **Large-scale rural projects** that help improve landscapes for people and nature by, for example, restoring habitats and celebrating the cultural traditions of the land.
- **Oral history recordings** of people’s stories, memories and songs, as a way of communicating and revealing the past.
- **Cultural traditions** exploring the history of different cultures through storytelling, or things that you do as part of your community. This could be anything from dance and theatre to food or clothing. It could also include the heritage of languages and dialects.
- **Commemorations and celebrations** – telling the stories and histories of people, communities, places or events related to specific times and dates.
- **Historic buildings, monuments and the historic environment** – from houses and mills to caves and gardens. Areas that are connected to history and heritage.
- **Community archaeology** involves the active participation of volunteers in archaeological activities, everything from investigating, photographing, surveying, excavation and finds processing. Sometimes it is called public archaeology.
- **Museums, libraries and archives** – making the collections that museums, libraries and archives hold more accessible through new displays, improving public buildings and galleries, or engaging people with interpreting new and existing collections.
- **Acquiring new objects** – help towards the cost of acquiring one-off objects or collections as part of a collections development policy.
- **Industrial, maritime and transport** – places and objects linked to our industrial, maritime and transport history.

## Projects we've funded



## Need inspiration?

Discover some of the projects we have funded already

Explore projects

## What you can spend the money on

The money you get for your project can be used for:

- **Activities:** to engage the wider community in your heritage. They might include guided heritage walks, sharing oral histories or workshops. Your activities should link to the heritage focus of your project and be tailored to the needs of the people you want to work with, including any reasonable adjustments that need to be made.
- **Repairs and conservation.**
- **Digital outputs**: this could be digital images, sound files or data, a website with heritage material, an app, or a film made using digital technology.
- **New staff posts:** include costs for staff who will be working on your project.
- **Paid training placements:** this could also include training for existing staff, to support the aims of the project.
- **Professional fees:** includes anyone related to your project in a professional capacity, from architects and heritage professionals to teaching staff.

## What you can’t spend the money on

- **Existing staff posts or organisational costs:** unless calculated through **full cost recovery** which means securing funding for all costs involved in running a project. So you can request funding for direct project costs and also for part of your organisation’s overheads.
- **Repairs to your own home.**
- **Legal and/or statutory responsibilities:** includes anything that would be paid for regardless, whether the project went ahead or not. For example, rent, utilities, building maintenance, unless you have a heritage

enterprise grant.

- **Promoting the causes or beliefs of political or faith organisations.**
- **Recoverable VAT.**
- **Costs for any activity that has taken place before a grant is awarded.**
- **Costs for installing artificial grass or plants.**

## Explore available funding

**Find the right funding programme for you**

## Do you require further help with your application?

We want to make sure our funding is open and accessible to all. We have set out a plan to meet people's access needs, from translation services to digital application support.

**Read more about the types of assistance we can provide**

# How to apply

This step-by-step guide outlines our National Lottery Heritage Grants application process, from understanding what we support to applying for and receiving a grant.

This guide **only applies to our National Lottery Heritage Grants programme.**

From time to time we distribute **other funding programmes**, including for governments across the UK. Refer to each programme's guidance page to discover who these are for, what their aims are and how to apply.

## 1. Understand what we fund

We fund projects of all sizes that care for the UK's heritage. Before you get started, find out more about what we fund.

## 2. Develop a project idea

Our National Lottery Heritage Grants programme offers funding at two levels:

- £10,000 to £250,000
- £250,000 to £10million

Carefully read the guidance page for each range to understand:

- what the programme offers
- who it is for
- the difference your project needs to make

Find out how to understand and explain your heritage to support your funding application. You can also see projects we've previously funded for inspiration.

Explore our position and advice on using artificial intelligence (AI) tools in your grant application.

**Watch our video that takes you through the process of applying for a £10,000–£250,000 grant**

## 3. Get feedback on your project idea

- **£10,000 to £250,000**: you can use our optional Project Enquiry to get feedback within 10 working days.
- **£250,000 to £10m**: you must submit an Expression of Interest before starting a full funding application. You should receive feedback within 20 working days.

## 4. Submit a funding application

Use our Get funding for a heritage project service when you are ready to submit your application. The service will guide you through the different steps.

### Applying for more than £250,000?

1. If you want to apply for more than £250,000, you must first submit an Expression of Interest.
2. If your Expression of Interest is successful, you will then submit a **development phase** application.
3. If your development phase application is successful, you will receive funding and have up to two years to develop a detailed project proposal for your **delivery phase** application.
4. When ready, you will then submit your **delivery phase** application.

### Our application deadlines

- **£10,000 to £250,000:** open all year round
- **£250,000 to £10m (both development and delivery phases):** quarterly application deadlines

## 5. Getting a decision on your application

- Once received, your application is checked to make sure your organisation is eligible and that all the required documentation has been attached.
- **£10,000 to £250,000**: After application checks are complete, you should receive a decision within eight weeks. Decisions are made at monthly local meetings.
- **£250,000 to £5m (both development and delivery phases)**: We will take up to 12 weeks to assess your application. It will then be presented at one of our quarterly committee meetings. You will receive a decision as soon as possible after a meeting.
- **Over £5m (both development and delivery phases)**: We will take up to 12 weeks to assess your application. It will then be presented at one of our quarterly committee meetings and then presented at one of our Board meetings. You will receive a decision as soon as possible after a Board meeting.

### If you are successful

You will use our Get funding for a heritage project service to receive and manage your grant. Find out more about what happens if you are awarded a grant:

- Receiving your grant: £10,000 to £250,000
- Receiving your grant: £250,000 to £10m

### If you are not successful

We will provide feedback on your application as soon as possible after the decision meeting. You may then choose to reapply with a revised application but you must first speak to us about this.

# Investment principles

02/10/2023

See all updates
Explore the difference we want our funding to make for heritage.

Our four investment principles will guide all our grant decision making under our new 10-year strategy, Heritage 2033.

You must take all four principles into account in your application. The strength of focus, and emphasis on each principle, is for you to decide and demonstrate.

Consider: How does your project reflect what we want to do for heritage? How will it help us achieve our ambitions for heritage?

## Saving heritage

**Conserving and valuing heritage, for now and the future.**

### What we mean

Our support will ensure heritage remains accessible, relevant, sustainable and valued.

### What we will do

**Heritage at risk**: We will commit funding to protect, conserve and revitalise heritage of all kinds that is in poor condition or at risk of loss, decline, damage, neglect or of being forgotten – ensuring it is valued and better understood.

**Invest in places**: Heritage has a unique role in bringing people together where they live, work and visit. We will increase people's connection with the heritage of their local places through targeted investment in our historic and natural environment.

**Revitalise and maintain**: We will invite proposals to work with us to develop the skills, capacity and innovation to sustain and manage heritage. We will identify opportunities for revitalising diverse types of heritage.

### What we want to achieve

**By 2033 we will have:**

- Improved the condition, viability and public understanding of thousands of heritage sites, collections, habitats, species and intangible cultural heritage.
- Measurably reduced the amount of heritage identified as ‘at risk’, whether through loss, facing extinction, assessed as being in poor or unfavourable condition or at risk of being forgotten.
- Delivered long-term projects to transform local areas, towns, cities and landscapes by taking a targeted approach to improving the condition of heritage and the pride people take in their local environment.
- Ensured that the digital heritage resources we support are open, accessible and discoverable by future generations.

# Protecting the environment

**Supporting nature recovery and environmental sustainability.**

## What we mean

We will support natural heritage and environmentally sustainable projects that help the UK meet its nature recovery targets and mitigate the impact of climate change on heritage.

## What we will do

**Landscape**: We will increase our support for strategic and landscape-scale projects – both rural and urban – that help habitats and species thrive, reducing and mitigating the impacts of climate change, while helping people connect to our unique natural heritage.

**Nature**: We will invest through partnerships to help halt and reverse the loss and decline of habitats and species.

**Environmental footprint**: We will support heritage projects that reduce adverse environmental impacts and help heritage to adapt to our changing climate. If projects involve construction, we will encourage restoration, conservation and reuse, rather than new build.

**Mitigation**: We will collaborate to bring natural, built and cultural heritage stakeholders together to identify and mitigate climate risks to heritage and involve people in bringing about positive behaviour change.

## What we want to achieve

**By 2033 we will have:**

- Put landscapes and habitats in both urban and rural places into recovery, so they support abundant natural heritage and healthy natural systems.
- Increased people’s understanding and connection with nature across towns, cities and the countryside.
- Reduced the negative environmental impact and carbon footprint of our funding portfolio.
- Improved the ability of natural and cultural heritage to plan for and adapt to a changing climate and helped projects take action for the environment.

# Inclusion, access and participation

**Supporting greater inclusion, diversity, access and participation in heritage.**

### What we mean

We will support organisations to ensure everyone has opportunities to learn, develop new skills and explore heritage, regardless of background or personal circumstances.

### What we will do

**Involve a more diverse range of people in heritage**, investing in volunteering, heritage careers, co-creating projects, leadership, governance and developing knowledge and skills.

**Enable organisations to remove barriers to access and participation**, particularly for people who are under-served by heritage.

**Support all communities to explore and share their heritage**, with a focus on making the stories of our four nations more inclusive of everyone's heritage.

**Accessible digital heritage resources**: Support greater use of digital technology to make heritage more accessible and enjoyable, and promote better access to heritage information, enabling projects to increase impact and reach.

### What we want to achieve

**By 2033 we will have:**

- Increased the diversity of heritage workforces, leadership and audiences.
- Addressed the barriers to access for people under-served by heritage, providing more equitable opportunities for active involvement and participation.
- Enriched people's lives through our investment, enabling everyone's heritage to be recognised.
- Supported people to creatively use digital technology in heritage to promote access and reach.

# Organisational sustainability

**Strengthening heritage to be adaptive and financially resilient, contributing to communities and economies.**

### What we mean

We will support organisations to develop the skills and capacity to ensure a sound long-term future and encourage new heritage investment that benefits communities and economies.

### What we will do

**Support financial sustainability**: We will continue to offer funding to build resilience, providing organisations with capacity and expertise to develop their long-term organisational and financial plans.

**Support heritage skills development**: We will collaborate with partners to identify opportunities to build capacity, skills and expertise in heritage, to contribute to thriving communities and economies.

**Provide flexible funding**: We will offer flexible financial support in the early planning stages of projects for preparatory analysis and activities. We will also make available follow-on funding for time-limited periods on completion of significant capital projects to help embed operational stability.

**New finance and investment**: We will champion the use of more diverse income sources such as green finance and commercial approaches and help build the capacity and skills needed to deliver this.

## What we want to achieve

**By 2033 we will have:**

- Supported organisations to increase their financial and organisational sustainability by developing their commercial and digital skills and strengthening governance and leadership.
- Supported the development of skills and capacity in the heritage sector.
- Used our flexible funding model to embed resilience in the projects we fund.



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

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

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

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

- Heritage Places: £200m to help 20 places across the UK thrive
- Landscape Connections: £150m for the UK's most treasured countryside
- Places of Worship: saving heritage in need and tackling sector challenges
- Nature Towns and Cities: new partnership and £15m of funding

## Heritage in need and other opportunities and emergencies

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

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

The first Heritage in need grant went to Archives Revealed, the long-running partnership between The National Archives, the Pilgrim Trust and the Wolfson Foundation. Our £5m investment is supporting the project to unlock and catalogue archival collections across the UK, making them more accessible to the public.

## Decision-making

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

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

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

## More to come

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

Sign up to our newsletter to get our latest news and announcements delivered direct to your inbox.

# Understanding your heritage

By exploring different aspects of your project's heritage, you will better understand its importance to place, people and communities, helping you to prepare your application for funding from us.

By fully understanding the heritage that your project is about you will be able to:

- know why people value your heritage so you can make sensitive and appropriate decisions about how to look after it in the future
- identify the potential for creative and sustainable solutions to improve the condition of the heritage
- better engage with your staff, volunteers and visitors
- uncover new information, insights or fresh perspectives of your heritage

## How best to understand your heritage

To understand your heritage, you could consider the following three questions.

### What is the heritage focus of your project?

Start by describing the heritage.

If your project is about intangible cultural heritage (such as memories or cultural and oral traditions) you should set out information about the subject and the time period it covers. Highlight if the heritage is at risk of being lost in some way. We have some information on intangible heritage that you may find useful.

If your project is about physical heritage (such as a building, ship, historic object or collection, or nature reserve), state factual information about it such as its size, when it dates from, the surviving features, its condition and why it is important to your local area.

### Why does the heritage matter?

Having established the facts you should now think about why your heritage is considered to be important or significant.

There are many reasons why people value heritage and want to conserve it or pass traditions onto future generations. Seek views from as wide a range of people as possible.

The following list of questions offer some ways to think about what makes your heritage special to people but it is not exhaustive:

- Why is the heritage important to history? Is it associated with important people or events?
- How does the heritage contribute to our understanding of the past? What does it tell us about people and society?
- What are the artistic or aesthetic qualities of the heritage?
- If it has a physical location, how does it contribute to or complement the wider environment? Is it a landmark?
- Is the heritage of technical importance – does it tell us about innovation? Is it the first of its type?

- Is the heritage of importance to science, for example for its wildlife, geology, biodiversity or ecology?
- Are the materials that it is made from important? Does it display a particular craft skill well?
- How does it compare with other heritage of its kind? Is it a rare or unique example or the best of its type?
- Has the heritage been featured in films, paintings or in literature?
- Is the heritage important for commemorative or spiritual reasons?
- If it is a tradition, custom, skill or knowledge, is it being practiced today? How has it been passed down through generations?
- Has the value of the heritage changed through time? Was it important for different reasons in the past?
- Does the heritage help create a sense of belonging, or perhaps instil a sense of pride in the area?

Sometimes heritage is registered, designated or protected in some way because it has particular significance and needs to be protected from harmful changes. Find out whether your heritage is recorded anywhere, for example it might be registered as a protected species, a listed building, a designated landscape or a UNESCO-recognised tradition.

Often the designation record will provide details about what experts believe to be important.

### Who does the heritage matter to?

It is good to gather comments and opinions on the value of the heritage from a range of sources. You might need to commission input from experts in the relevant field but you should also make sure you have talked to a representative sample of the people who interact with your heritage. They might also be able to write a letter of support when you come to apply, demonstrating to us there is real interest in your project.

These groups may include:

- the community who live or work nearby, if your heritage has a physical location
- any groups who take an interest in your heritage, such as friends groups or local interest groups
- people who use the heritage site/object now, or practice or perform it if it is a skill or tradition
- acknowledged experts in the relevant field
- statutory nature conservation organisations (SNCOs) and local authority conservation departments
- volunteers who help look after the heritage

Remember to also consider under-served groups who might not currently be interacting with your heritage, but could do in the future if any potential barriers are removed. See our guidance on running inclusive heritage projects.

Once you have identified who you will talk to, you can consider how you might go about doing this. The methods will depend on your project, who you want to talk to and the resources you have available, but they might include activities such as surveys, focus groups or engagement online or through social media.

## Sharing your understanding

Having gathered information about your heritage and why it is important, the next step is to record your findings so that you can share them with other people and use them to help with your application for funding.

We provide lots of good practice guidance to help develop your idea into a great heritage project.

There's bound to be something relevant to your organisation or project idea, with best practice advice in areas such as: evaluation, oral history, working with volunteers, digital, conservation planning and much more.

If you are planning on carrying out works to a church building, you may also need to prepare documents such as statements of significance and any repair needs. The Church of England has guidance on writing statements of significance and needs.

## Need inspiration?

Discover some of the projects we have funded already

Explore projects

# Using artificial intelligence in your funding application

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are being used more in our lives. Programmes like ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot and Claude are changing the way people work. We understand that organisations seeking funding may want to use these tools to help with their applications to us.

## Our position on AI

**You may use AI tools to help complete your Project Enquiry, Expression of Interest and application**. We will not reject an application just because AI was used.

We understand AI can support you to develop funding applications, especially if you don't have much experience bidding for grants or have access needs. Many organisations find that using AI helps them write applications faster and with less effort.

## Our recommendations for using AI

### Use AI with caution

AI can provide a useful starting point but won't be able tell the unique story of the heritage project you want us to fund and may include plans that are not practical or suited to your requirements. The proposals in your application inform our decision making and form part of your contract with us. Proposing activity you can't deliver could be a breach of your contract.

AI produced applications may also include incorrect information. It's your responsibility to ensure your application isn't misleading or inaccurate.

### Clearly tell us about the heritage you want us to support

AI tools often produce generic content or use buzzwords that don't capture why the heritage you want us to support is important to you and the people who may access it. Your application must tell us clearly:

- the heritage your project will focus on (see our what we fund guidance)
- why the heritage is important (see our understanding your heritage page)
- why your project matters by including any consultation feedback or research you've done to support your plans

### Be specific and provide the evidence we ask for in our application guidance

Applications that provide clear, detailed information make it easier for our assessors to understand your proposals. If you use an AI tool to write your application, check the final version clearly tells us **what** you want to do, **why**, **when**, **where** and **who** will be involved. You must also describe the difference our funding will make to the heritage and how your project takes our investment principles into account.

### Plan and cost your budget carefully

Your project budget is an important part of your application and our assessment process. We do not advise using AI to generate your budget, but if you do, check the final version carefully to make sure:

- it matches your project activities and supports your goals
- all the costs are eligible

## Risks when using AI

### Your data might not be private

AI tools, especially free ones, may store data you input. This could compromise confidentiality. Before you enter any data into AI tools, check your organisation's policies and relevant legislation such as UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in relation to personal data.

We advise against using any commercially sensitive or personal information in AI tools.

### AI has an environmental impact

AI tools use large amounts of energy and fresh water to power their data centres.  Estimates suggest that ChatGPT uses between 50 and 90 times more energy per query than a conventional online search.

Only use AI where it will clearly help you apply or significantly improve the quality of your application.

## Updates and acknowledgements

This statement explains our current approach to applicants using AI tools. We may update our position and will keep this page updated.

We'd like to acknowledge the National Lottery Community Fund's AI guidance for funding applications, which has informed the development of this policy.



Blyth Tall Ship has created inspiring volunteer opportunities in the north east. Photo: Colin McLean Photography.

Some of the best tips for planning and running your project often come from people who've been there and done it before.

We want to demystify the project application and delivery process and share experience across the heritage sector.

Our grantee Q&As bring together guidance and inspiration from successful heritage projects of all shapes and sizes.

Hear from project managers across the UK reflecting on the ups and downs, what they've learned and what they'd do differently next time.

Explore the Q&As below, or for more advice on how to navigate each stage of your project, explore our good practice guidance.

For bespoke support, get in touch with your local Heritage Fund team or complete a Project Enquiry.