Heritage 2033 delivery plan: 2026–2029

Our vision for heritage

Introduction

In 2023 we set out our 10-year strategy, Heritage 2033, to invest £3.6billion raised for good causes by National Lottery players to make a decisive difference for people, places and communities. Our long-term approach was designed to allow us to respond to a changing world and support communities across the UK to connect with their heritage. We committed to publishing three-year delivery plans to outline how we'd do this. This is our second delivery plan, guiding our work from 2026 to 2029.

Heritage 2033 – the first three years

In the first three years of Heritage 2033 we:

- rolled out streamlined National Lottery Heritage Grants, supporting a wide range of heritage projects which reflect our four investment principles
- introduced a higher grant threshold of £10million, allowing larger-scale investment in transformational heritage projects
- supported 1,750 projects with £885m of investment
- launched five new strategic initiatives aimed at tackling long-term heritage challenges at scale, including:
    - Heritage Places: investing at least £200m over 10 years to boost pride in place and connection to heritage
    - Landscape Connections: investing at least £150m over 10 years for the UK's most treasured landscapes
    - Nature Towns and Cities: a new partnership and at least £15m of funding to improve urban green spaces
    - Places of Worship: investing at least £15m in strategic projects to save heritage in need for communities across the UK
- celebrated the 30th birthday of the National Lottery and its extraordinary impact on life and heritage across the UK

We've already made significant progress towards delivering the ambitions of our four investment principles: saving heritage; protecting the environment; inclusion, access and participation; and organisational sustainability.

In the first delivery period (2023–2026) of our strategy, we launched a new, streamlined National Lottery Heritage Grants process, supporting 4,125 grant applications from every corner of the UK. We've committed £885m of National Lottery funding to 1,750 projects to support the places, collections, cultures and memories from the past that people value and want to pass on to future generations.

We also launched five strategic initiatives and have already committed over £134m to 89 grants supporting long-term heritage challenges. This strategic investment is helping embed heritage in the plans of towns, cities and areas across the UK; improving access to, and the quality of, our natural heritage; supporting outstanding heritage such as places of worship; and addressing common, sector-wide challenges.

We've invested in programmes that allow people to preserve and enjoy the heritage that matters to them, including working with the Architectural Heritage Fund to support 19 Heritage Development Trusts which empower communities, charities and heritage groups to reimagine and repurpose their heritage buildings. We've supported organisations including museums and volunteer-led nature groups to work in new and sustainable ways, both through National Lottery Heritage Grants and our dedicated Heritage Innovation Fund. And we've worked with local communities and businesses to give new life to much-loved heritage landmarks through our Heritage Enterprise programme.

Heritage 2033 – the next three years

Over the next three years we will:

- invest a total of around **£1.46bn** in heritage
- invest **over £130m** in strategic initiatives
- invest **at least £20m** in projects aimed at engaging young people in heritage
- deepen investment in the **places that need it most**
- make approximately **95%** of grant decisions in the area or nation where the applicant is based
- continue to make funding for heritage available in every local authority in the UK

As the largest funder for the UK's heritage, operating across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, we're uniquely placed to continue to help people access heritage and tell their stories. Over the next three years, around 95% of our grant decisions will continue to be made locally, by staff and committees based in our three English areas and across the three devolved nations. We'll also continue to invest in strategic initiatives that support heritage at scale, from landscape recovery to youth engagement and skills development, for now and the future.

Applicants, grant recipients and partners have told us they value the flexibility and simplicity of Heritage 2033. And the publication of our first impact report demonstrates that the projects we've funded to date are strongly supporting our investment principles. We know that meaningful heritage impact requires long-term commitment, but already at this early stage, our stakeholder feedback and impact data is giving us confidence that we're on the right track, and we remain committed to four delivery priorities: grant funding; strategic initiatives; collaboration and partnerships; and impact and improvement.

As we build on the progress we've made since 2023, we'll remain agile, responding rapidly to changing external circumstances and meeting the emerging needs of communities. In this delivery plan you'll see evidence of both continuity and adaptation, including:

- plans for further investment in the places that are most in need of support to develop their heritage, including but not confined to our existing 15 Heritage Places
- additional support aimed at young people to help them engage with heritage and build long-term skills which support heritage in the future
- investment in access and growth by supporting innovative projects which create volunteering, employment and training opportunities, and which reuse historic buildings
- help for organisations to adapt to the challenges of global instability so they are resilient enough to protect and make accessible our outstanding heritage for the long term

We look forward to working with you to deliver this next phase of Heritage 2033.

– The National Lottery Heritage Fund Board of Trustees

How we work

Our vision

Our vision is for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future.

To achieve this, our strategy is supported by three-year delivery plans. This approach allows us to be flexible, adapt to heritage sector needs and respond to external events and opportunities over the 10 years of Heritage 2033.

This delivery plan sets out our key milestones and how we will invest National Lottery money across 2026–2029. It's updated annually as part of our business planning process.

Our investment principles

Our four investment principles are at the heart of our ambitions for heritage and are the foundation of all our grant decisions:

- **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.
- **Organisational sustainability**: strengthening heritage to be adaptive and financially resilient, contributing to communities and economies.

We ask projects we fund to take all four investment principles into account in their applications.

Our approach

Most of our Heritage 2033 funding is delivered through National Lottery Heritage Grants. They're designed to be broad and inclusive and can support a wide range of heritage projects that reflect local needs and aspirations. We aim to continuously improve our customer application and grant delivery process through regular user research and other feedback.

To ensure we're fulfilling our vision to invest for the future as well as the present, and across places as well as individual projects, we also invest in:

- **strategic initiatives** that address large-scale or cross-territory challenges, with a focus on place, landscape and nature, heritage in need and responding to opportunities and emergencies
- **partnerships** that bring together expertise and resources, creating more powerful and lasting impact

Our values

Our values and behaviours are fundamental to the way we work. They are embedded across our strategic and business planning, our leadership and management:????

- **Inclusive** of all aspects of heritage, people and communities.
- **Ambitious** for our people, communities and heritage.
- **Collaborative** by working and learning together.
- **Trusted** for our integrity, expertise and judgement.

The role of The National Lottery Heritage Fund

As the largest funder for the UK's heritage, we have the privilege of investing money raised by National Lottery players to support projects across the UK that connect people and communities to their heritage. We award 20% of the good causes income raised by National Lottery players. We also distribute heritage funding that aligns with our vision and investment principles on behalf of the UK and devolved governments.

We are a non-departmental public body accountable to Parliament via the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). This department sets our Policy directions for the UK and for England, and we also have Policy directions from the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Policy directions are waiting ministerial approval).

Our decisions about individual applications and policies are entirely independent of the government.

We have teams and committees working across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and 95% of our grant decisions are made locally, by people who live and work in the communities we fund.

The Board of Trustees of the National Heritage Memorial Fund is our legal body for the administration and supervision of all funds vested in us. It was set up by the National Heritage Act 1980 to administer the National Heritage Memorial Fund.

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