Heritage 2033 delivery plan: 2026–2029

Our plan for 2026–2029

Our insight, evidence and your feedback have confirmed that we're on the right track to achieve the ambitious goals of Heritage 2033. We remain committed to the four priorities that will help us continue to deliver this across 2026–2029:

- **Grant funding**: strengthening resilience and relevance through investment.
- **Strategic initiatives**: driving large-scale impact through targeted interventions.
- **Collaboration, partnerships and engagement**: amplifying impact through working with others.
- **Impact and improvement**: delivering with insight and innovation.

What we'll invest

Total National Lottery investment across the three years of this delivery plan is projected to be £1.46billion*. We'll also distribute non-Lottery funding, including from UK governments, to support and strengthen heritage across all four nations.

How we plan to invest that money over the next three years is set out below. Budgets are indicative for years two and three, based on National Lottery income forecasts provided by the National Lottery operator, Allwyn. Forecasts are subject to change and plans are reviewed annually throughout the three years and updated as necessary to meet strategic priorities.

Total projected National Lottery investment

Our investments	Year 1 2026–2027	Year 2 2027–2028	Year 3 2028–2029	Total 2026–2029
National Lottery Heritage Grants	£385.5m	£358.9m	£359.2m	£1.1bn
Strategic initiatives	£45m	£45m	£41.9m	£131.9m
Flexible budget*	-	-	-	£233m
Total National Lottery budget	£430.5m	£403.9m	£401.1m	£1.46bn

*This flexible budget allows us to respond to emerging needs and priorities across the three years.

Grant funding – strengthening resilience and relevance through investment

We'll support heritage to be more resilient and relevant to communities across the UK by continuing to invest in projects that deliver all four of our investment principles and the ambitions set out in Heritage 2033.

Headlines from the first three years include:

- awarded £885m to 1,750 projects
- supported 4,125 grant applications through the transition to deliver National Lottery Heritage Grants under the four Heritage 2033 investment principles and new grant thresholds
- streamlined our application, assessment and post-award processes

In the next three years we will:

- attract a strong pipeline of projects of all sizes between £10,000 and £10m through our marketing and engagement work, monitoring success rates and providing equitable access to funding across the UK
- use our grant funding to complement DCMS priorities and funded initiatives for heritage such as Places of Worship Revival Fund and Heritage Revival Fund, supporting strategic investment in places, assets and communities
- support cross-cutting, strategic projects with potential to be transformational for the sector, as well as projects rooted in particular places or types of heritage
- continuously improve our application, assessment and post-award processes

In 2026–2029 we will

Contribute to an inclusive national story

Years 1–3:

- Work with the National Lottery family to share stories of the people and places across the UK that have benefitted from our funding.
- Celebrate how the money raised for good causes by National Lottery players helps safeguard heritage, strengthen communities and power creativity across the UK.
- Take an active role in UK?wide moments of celebration and gratitude, such as National Lottery Open Week, Heritage Treasures Day and Crossed Finger Selfie Day.

Improve the grant experience

Year 1:

- Deliver an end?to?end grants process that is simple and streamlined.
- Launch refreshed applicant guidance which fully reflects the investment principles and the grant journey.
- Publish new good practice guidance about digital and working with children and young people.
- Develop our approach for strategic applications which address investment principles beyond single geographies, organisations or heritage assets.

Years 2 and 3:

- Continuously improve and embed the grant experience through testing with applicants and learning from best practice.
- Refresh and keep applicant guidance up to date through regular review and learning.

Drive long-term organisational resilience

Year 1:

- Conduct research on the impact of our capital funding over past 5–20 years and how it’s strengthened heritage organisations’ sustainability.
- Explore the potential for an online tool to help organisations understand their resilience.

Years 2 and 3:

- Apply learning from our capital funding research.
- Potentially pilot an online tool and, subject to positive outcomes, roll it out to all applicants and grantees.

Manage our investment portfolio risk

Year 1:

- Gather data about the drivers of financial and delivery risk in our investment portfolio to manage it effectively.

Years 2 and 3:

- Gather data about the drivers of financial and delivery risk in our investment portfolio to manage it effectively.

Strategic initiatives – driving large-scale impact through targeted interventions

We'll tackle long-standing heritage issues at scale, support cross-territory approaches and accelerate new ideas and innovation. We'll engage with partners and communities to identify emerging opportunities and challenges and ensure our budget planning is flexible enough to respond.

Headlines from the first three years include:

- committed investment of over £380m across the 10 years of the strategy, with £134m already committed to 89 projects
- launched five strategic initiatives to support thriving places, urban nature recovery, to connect landscapes and address challenges faced by places of worship and archives

In the next three years we will:

- invest at least a further £130m in strategic initiatives
- identify and target support at heritage in need, including places of worship, historic ships and museum collections
- work with DCMS and other National Lottery funders to support the UK's next city and town of culture
- embed learning from our investment in urban green spaces and large-scale landscapes and invest in further support for these types of projects
- deepen investment in the places that need it most

In 2026–2029 we will

Place

Our place-based approach across our investment portfolio has a focus on areas with both heritage opportunity and demonstrable socio?economic need among local communities. We will track and report on our investment in areas of double disadvantage with high deprivation and lack of social infrastructure.

Heritage Places

Longer-term place-based investment targeting areas, towns and cities with heritage need, opportunity and potential.

Year 1:

- Work with the existing 15 Heritage Places to increase the capacity of local heritage to contribute to their place, people's connection with their heritage and ensure effective delivery of locally developed projects.
- Strengthen the relationships between Heritage Places, including at least one in-person peer network meeting, so they can share insight and build collective expertise.
- Publish the second stage of independent evaluation of Heritage Places.

Years 2 and 3:

- Deepen and sustain the impact for the 15 Heritage Places through continued engagement, supporting long-term investment and building local capacity.
- Strengthen connections between Heritage Places through supporting their peer network and shared evaluation.
- Publish evaluation and research that strengthens wider understanding of effective place-based heritage investment.

Nature Towns and Cities

A partnership providing support and funding to improve the quality of, and access to, urban green spaces.

Year 1:

- Continue work with the 19 towns and cities awarded funding to build local capacity to put nature at the heart of their thinking for the future and to allow everyone to access nature close to home.
- Work with partners including the National Trust, Natural England and sister nation-based nature agencies to scale the initiative and create a learning network that connects and influences across the UK.

Years 2 and 3:

- Track delivery in the 19 funded towns and cities and monitor impact.
- Share learning across the cohort of projects, using emerging insights to strengthen delivery and inform other similar strategic system-change investments.
- Work with national partners to grow and shape the ongoing direction of Nature Towns and Cities.

Landscape Connections

Helping world-class landscapes across the UK become better for nature and people.

Year 1:

- Build on the existing investment in 13 designated protected landscapes.
- Target engagement with partners in landscapes with fewer resources but greatest need, to ensure funding is accessible to all.
- Support peer learning across projects and encourage collaborative approaches.
- Establish an evaluation framework, data collection and methodology for monitoring landscape change.

Years 2 and 3:

- Grow and strengthen our investment in protected landscapes, increasing the number of projects and ensuring reach across the UK.
- Support the cohort of landscape projects, enabling knowledge transfer from the most established projects to those with greatest need.
- Support data collection for monitoring and evaluation, applying early learning to refine the long?term approach.

Heritage in Need

Saving heritage in need and tackling sector challenges, informed by evidence from partners and communities.

Places of Worship

Investment in projects that have a strategic impact at a regional or national level for places of worship.

Year 1:

- Continue to support more places of worship through National Lottery Heritage Grants.
- Evaluate existing strategic projects to understand their impact.
- Share learnings and identify any gaps in provision emerging from our evaluation.

Years 2 and 3:

- Work with sector partners to identify additional opportunities for strategic investment in places of worship.
- Continue to support more successful applications for places of worship through National Lottery Heritage Grants.

Historic Ships

Strengthening resilience across the historic vessels sector.

Year 1:

- Support National Historic Ships UK to establish a clear national framework for prioritising risk and significance across the historic ships sector.

Years 2 and 3:

- Invest in projects which deliver coordinated UK-wide support by improving access to expertise and skills and target funding to reduce risk and strengthen resilience in the historic vessels sector.

Museum Collections and Resilience

A new area of focus for Heritage in Need, recognising the particular pressures on UK museums and their collections.

Year 1:

- Publish research into museum collections and resilience.
- Develop a targeted intervention, to be delivered in collaboration with sector support organisations, that reflects the planned new Museums Strategy in England, alongside sector priorities in the devolved nations.

Years 2 and 3:

- Work with sector partners across the UK to introduce interventions to support long-term collection management and resilience.
- Embed learning to support long-term sector resilience.

Acquisitions, opportunities and emergencies

We will consider how to support the UK's archives sector, building on the learning from Archives Revealed, our current project with The National Archives, The Pilgrim Trust and the Wolfson Foundation.

We will remain open to respond to emerging needs or opportunities.

UK Town of Culture (2028) and UK City of Culture (2029)

Years 1–3:

- Support successful UK Town of Culture and City of Culture with heritage grant applications, project development and delivery.

Partnership, collaboration and engagement – amplifying impact through working with others

We will work through partnerships and wider networks to benefit heritage, providing greater value for people, communities and places by understanding and responding to local needs and priorities.

Headlines of the first three years include:

- distributed over £63m of government funding in partnership with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), DCMS and the Welsh Government, including:
    - creating and restoring wildlife-rich habitats in England (Species Survival Fund, Defra)
    - strengthening the resilience of protected land and marine sites in Wales (Nature Networks Fund, Welsh Government)
- supported innovative partnership approaches including £31m committed to Heritage Enterprise projects, giving new life to neglected historic sites
- invested in over 90 projects with community grants, allowing targeted support for smaller, grassroots organisations at a local level
- launched the final phase of our Heritage Innovation Fund, awarding £2.9m to 13 organisations to develop innovative solutions to workforce issues

In the next three years we will:

- prioritise interventions with partners to invest in heritage projects that support opportunities for children and young people, develop heritage skills, improve financial sustainability and deepen expertise and understanding of climate risk for heritage
- support and encourage the co-design of heritage projects which meet local and community needs
- develop new strategic partnerships to deliver investment models such as co-created funding opportunities and delegated grants
- strengthen collaboration with the devolved governments, local authorities and, in England, mayoral strategic authorities, as well as other Lottery distributors

In 2026–2029 we will

Support for children and young people

Invest at least £20m in projects targeted at young people, recognising their vital role in shaping and sustaining the future of heritage.

Year 1:

- Develop our approach for investment in heritage for young people, focused on maximising opportunity and impact.
- Explore partnerships between heritage organisations and at least one organisation specialising in reaching young people in each of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Identify ways to build more opportunities for young people into National Lottery Heritage Grants projects.

Years 2 and 3:

- Support partnerships to make successful applications, resulting in at least one large youth-focused project in development or delivery in each of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Track the number of National Lottery Heritage Grants-funded projects which engage young people.
- Establish cohorts to create high-quality opportunities at scale for children and young people, prioritising those least likely to engage.

Develop sector skills

Collaborate with others to meet sector skills needs.

Year 1:

- Following a review of the UK skills landscape, we'll identify actions to address ongoing challenges, assess where we are not receiving applications and better understand the opportunities to partner on strategic interventions.

Years 2 and 3:

- Work with partners to develop and launch pilot interventions that test ways of addressing gaps and growing skills across the heritage sector.

Drive heritage-led regeneration

Unlock the potential of heritage assets to drive economic, social and cultural renewal.

Year 1:

- Refresh and re-launch our Heritage Enterprise grants, working with entrepreneurial heritage organisations and commercial partners to bring heritage assets back into use.

Years 2 and 3:

- Promote, monitor and improve the use of Heritage Enterprise alongside other forms of support, such as social investment.

Strengthen the tools of social investment

Explore opportunities for further social investment partnerships which benefit heritage.

Year 1:

- Continue to partner in social investment funds, including the Arts and Culture Investment Fund and Heritage Impact Fund.
- Explore opportunities for further alternative finance partnerships which benefit heritage.

Years 2 and 3:

- Maintain, increase and develop new social investment and alternative finance opportunities.

Non-Lottery funded partnership programmes:

Source of funding	Funding programmes	Activity in 2026–2029:
Programmes delivered in partnership with **Defra**	Species Survival Fund*	Projects in delivery and monitoring. Programme closes in 2026–2027.
Programmes delivered in partnership with **Welsh Government**	Nature Networks Fund Local Places for Nature*^ The Woodlands Investment Grant*^??	£10m funding available for 2026–2027. Programme closes in 2026–2027. In monitoring.
Programmes delivered in partnership with **DCMS**	?War memorials funding ?	£2m funding available. Details to be announced in 2026–2027.

More opportunities to work in partnership with governments to help deliver the ambitions of our strategy may arise in time. All new funding programmes are subject to business case agreement by our Executive team.

*Programmes have awarded available grants and projects are being delivered.

^Programmes part-funded by National Lottery.

Impact and improvement – delivering with insight and innovation

We'll strengthen operational delivery, ensuring efficient and effective systems and improving the measurement of the impact of Heritage 2033.

Headlines of the first three years include:

- improved our internal and external systems, including our grant application system, to help applicants navigate a clearer, simpler process
- introduced a new framework to evaluate and assess the impact of Heritage 2033 over its 10 years
- scoped innovative ways of supporting applicants, the sector and organisational capacity through investment in AI and upskilling our workforce

In the next three years we will:

- build deeper insight into what drives long?term impact from National Lottery investment through smarter, proportionate data collection and project evaluation
- invest in digital and AI tools and training to improve our customer experience and support the sector
- aim to reduce the environmental impact of our investment in heritage
- provide training and employment opportunities which develop a diverse heritage sector, through programmes including Future Heritage Leaders, Windsor Fellowship and Change100

In 2026–2029 we will

Measure our impact

Develop the evidence base for our impact framework.

Year 1:

- Introduce new data collection points into the grant journey.
- Review and adopt approaches to measuring economic impact, aligning with DCMS's Culture and Heritage Capital programme.
- Carry out in?depth reviews of selected larger capital projects from across the UK to understand their challenges, achievements and long?term impact.

- Introduce a new approach to project evaluation.

Years 2 and 3:

- Ensure data collection is fully embedded in the grant process so we capture the right insights at every stage.
- Implement a new approach to project evaluation for grantees, with long-term follow-up on key projects to track impact over time.
- Publish a full impact report in year three.

Transform our services and infrastructure

Invest in digital transformation to improve the customer experience.

Year 1:

- Develop an internal Technology Programme Board to oversee our digital and AI roadmap.
- Approve a three-year action plan for AI piloting and adoption including identifying where AI can improve the experience for applicants and grantees.
- Commission external AI expertise to support us and strengthen capability across the heritage sector.

Years 2 and 3:

- Deliver technology upgrades that support Heritage 2033 and streamline our operational and funding processes.
- Pilot AI-powered tools to enhance productivity and improve the grant process, sharing insights and learnings with the heritage and wider grant-making sector.

Environmental impact

Reduce the negative environmental impact and carbon footprint of our investment in heritage and support the heritage sector to adapt to climate change.

Year 1:

- Improve the quality of data used to estimate the carbon footprint of our investments to inform the next steps in improving and evolving the approach to measuring our funding portfolio.
- Pilot methods to improve environmental data collection at the end of projects.
- Champion and promote the support for climate adaptation available through National Lottery Heritage Grants.

Years 2 and 3:

- Implement a roadmap to improve and update the accuracy of our carbon footprint measurement approach. Identify insights and gaps.
- Measure progress towards collecting structured environmental data on our funding activity and outputs.
- Use lessons learned to inform project engagement and development to actively reduce negative environmental impact.
- Work with partners to share best practice and support heritage organisations better plan for and adapt to the changing climate.

Income and costs

We award 20% of the National Lottery's good causes income and set our investment budgets annually based on the amount raised by National Lottery players across the UK. At any time, we are monitoring in excess of 2,000 live projects, which is set out in the cash reserves and liabilities in our financial accounts.

In addition, we receive annual UK government income for the National Heritage Memorial Fund of £5.3m (£5.2m for grants and £0.1m for administration costs). We may also receive income from governments and other bodies, such as DCMS, Defra, the Northern Ireland Executive and Welsh Government, to distribute grants.

Across 2026–2029, we aim to invest over £1.46bn through a portfolio of National Lottery Heritage Grants, strategic initiatives and partnerships.

Projected investment for 2026–2029	2026–2027	2027–2028	2028–2029	Total
National Lottery income	£379m	£498.2m	£546m	£1.42bn
Operating costs	£29.4m	£38.6m	£42.3m	£110.3m
Investment ratio balancing*	£155.1m	Nil	Nil	£155.1m
Total available for National Lottery investment	£504.7m	£459.6m	£503.7m	£1.46bn

Our total National Lottery operating costs are set by DCMS and should not exceed 7.75% of annual National Lottery income over a three-year rolling period. We consistently operate within this threshold.

*A change in the total investment to the National Lottery Distribution Fund balance ratio, agreed by our Board in December 2023, has allowed for additional commitments over this planning period.

Back to top

Previous Setting the context

Next Governance