Are endowments the future for UK heritage?

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A new report has revealed that a National Lottery-backed pilot kick-started US-style endowment giving

At 2pm each day, visitors to The Bowes Museum gather in the main picture gallery to see the centrepiece of its eclectic collection come to life. The anticipation builds as they wait patiently for the life-sized 18th century automaton known as The Silver Swan, to play its 30-second tune as it gracefully fishes in a river of silver gilt.

In spite of its challenging rural location in County Durham, the museum attracts over 100,000 visitors each year. They come to view the collection's two Canalettos, its prison scene by Francisco José de Goya and El Greco by Domenikos Theotokopoulos. So it's surprising to learn the museum was struggling to remain financially sustainable.

"We rely on paying visitors to the museum and we rely on income through the café and the shop," explains the Museum's director of 18 years, Adrian Jenkins. "Because of the cuts in funding, even though our visitor numbers have increased and even though our funding from visitors has increased it wasn't in line with the cuts."

But there's good news.

Today, The Bowes Museum is more financially resilient than it was six years ago. It is one of 30 heritage organisations who have successfully built an endowment through the match-funded Catalyst Endowment programme.

Building resilience

Launched in 2011 with first awards in 2012, Catalyst Endowments was a joint venture between HLF, Arts Council England and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Broadcaster and former politician Michael Portillo headed up the panel that provided initial assessment and recommendation for grant awards.

The fund's primary aim was to bring new money into the cultural sector by offering match-funding to help arts and heritage organisations become more sustainable and resilient by building a new endowment fund or developing an existing one, to increase annual income.

Grants between £500,000 and £5million were awarded with varying match-funding ratios.

In the end, Catalyst Endowments: Heritage attracted £53.3m of private investment into the heritage sector. When combined with HLF's matched funding of £29.8m, the total investment in UK heritage was £83.1m.

Harnessing the power of match-funding

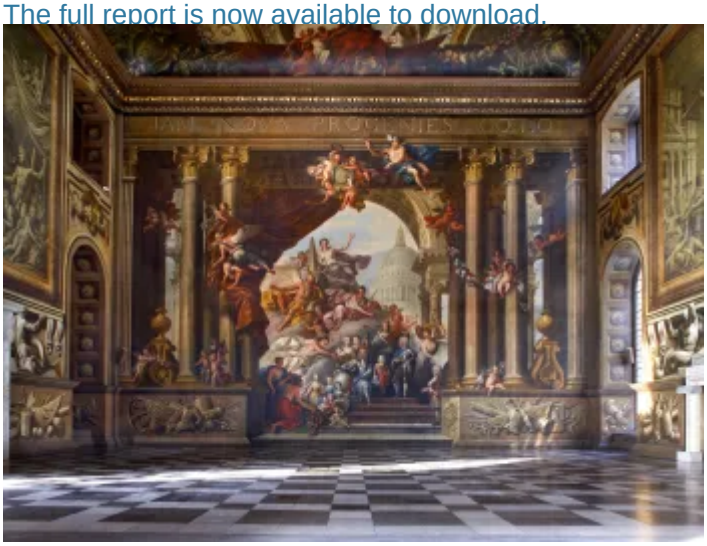
The Bowes Museum found that donors were drawn into the matching concept and also gave to the fund along similar lines. It secured a triple match-funding offer. So, for every £10 with Gift Aid the Museum raised, one of the Museum's long-standing donors doubled it to £25, The Friends of The Bowes Museum doubled that to £50, and HLF doubled it in the Endowment. In effect every £10 raised with Gift Aid, became £100 in the Endowment.

“We had a really compelling marketing campaign, because we were able to say if you give us a pound it will become £10 immediately. And that was very very attractive,” added Jenkins.

Catalyst now brings the in an annual income of £70,000, so although there’s still work to do, the future is now brighter for The Bowes Museum.

Read the report

The full report is now available to download.



The Painted Hall at Old Royal Naval College Greenwich Foundation



e donations to UK heritage

Catalyst Endowments evaluation