

Email (probably a standard email) sent to CofE diocese 4 April 2017

As you may be aware, HLF has been supporting the DCMS working group assisting Bernard Taylor's English Churches and Cathedrals Sustainability Review over the last few months. This has provided a timely opportunity to look again at the challenges faced by the hundreds of volunteers who care for historic places of worship across the United Kingdom. It seems that there is broad agreement across the country that the issue of long-term sustainability urgently needs to be addressed. Whilst the ongoing need to tackle straightforward fabric repairs is recognised, supporting congregations to build capacity and helping them reach out and engage with more people in their community is also a key priority. HLF has been considering how best to adapt its grant programmes to support this need.

Four years ago HLF made changes to its funding for places of worship (introducing Grants for Places of Worship – GPOW) as an early response to this issue, supporting the introduction of new facilities designed to encourage more people into these buildings and activities to engage them in their heritage alongside fabric repairs. More recently we have noted that the simple single-stage process for accessing the Government's Listed Places of Worship Roof Repair Fund, which we administered, was very well received. We therefore now believe it is time to give congregations even greater flexibility to develop projects that address their specific needs to deliver a truly sustainable future.

As a result we plan to invite congregations to apply for funding through our existing [Our Heritage](#) (up to £100k, single-stage process) and [Heritage Grants](#) (over £100k, two-stage process) programmes in the future. By offering funding through these programmes rather than GPOW, we hope to make it much simpler and quicker for less well-resourced groups to apply for funding for modest schemes of repair at Our Heritage level, while providing more flexible access to funding at a larger scale too. The change also reflects HLF's strategic approach, which seeks positive and lasting benefits for heritage, people and communities, and we envisage that a wider range and number of places of worship will be encouraged to access HLF funding. Importantly, this greater flexibility will also enable a wider range of supporting elements within projects, with a focus on sustainability – including the repair of the building fabric, the addition of new facilities and the delivery of activities that will encourage greater community use and revenue generation schemes as well as building additional volunteer capacity. Removing the existing restrictions on the scope of eligible fabric repair will also allow applicants to apply for whatever they feel that they most need to help to make their building fit for the future.

Delivering our support in this new way also gives congregations the potential to benefit from greater levels of funding than they do at present. And we know that they are already using and enjoying considerable success through our existing open programmes. In the three years from 2013, grants totalling £149m across all HLF programmes have been allocated to places of worship (excluding cathedrals), of which only £83.6m was delivered through the GPOW programme.

We expect the final GPOW submission deadlines for England will be 14 August 2017, as per the [deadlines on the website](#), with the last decisions made in December and all applications coming in under Our Heritage and Heritage Grants thereafter. In order to support this change we are also putting together a package of measures to help applicants during the transition period and beyond (see attached briefing) and would welcome your views on these.

Further information is being released over the next few days, please do contact our Office if you have any initial questions.