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Our Ref:  
REDACTED

Dear REDACTED,

Thank you for your correspondence of 7 April to the Minister for Sport, Tourism and Heritage, Tracey Crouch, concerning the closure of the Heritage Lottery Fund's Grant for Places of Worship (GPOW) programme. As I am sure you will appreciate, the Minister is unable to respond to all the letters she receives. I am replying as a member of the Ministerial Support Team at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

HLF is proposing that from September 2017 funding for repairs to places of worship will be made available through its Our Heritage and Heritage Grants programmes, rather than through GPOW. HLF believe that the merging of GPOW with its existing programmes will meet the needs of applicants who are seeking a more flexible and lighter-touch way in accessing much-needed funding.

Whilst there will no longer be a separate funding pot as such for places of worship, the proposed merging of GPOW with HLF's two other grant programmes is intended to make applications for funding significantly less onerous, especially for grants up to £100,000. These changes will also offer places of worship more flexibility and scope in terms of what they can apply for. Larger grants will still be available to individual places of worship where more significant schemes of repair are needed.

Officials in DCMS are in contact with HLF regarding its planned changes and have received assurances that HLF remains fully committed to supporting the heritage of places of worship. Since 1984, HLF has invested over £850m in places of worship projects which has helped to ensure that the building fabric of these historic churches is in better condition, allowing people to have greater access to and involvement with these historic buildings.

I fully appreciate your concerns on the lack of consultation with stakeholders. In response, HLF has committed to a full discussion regarding the implementation of their plans with stakeholders going forward and in the longer term will consult on further possible changes that will benefit churches and others, such as increasing the thresholds for Our Heritage grants to levels significantly higher than the current £100,000. HLF will also be providing support and guidance to congregations as they adapt to this new approach.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Pointon  
**Ministerial Support Team**

