

Appendix 'B', Report on a meeting with NLHF

Cotswolds Conservation Board

02 08 2019

Report to the External Funding Working Group on a meeting the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).

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On the 31st July 2019 I met with Laurel Miller Engagement Manager. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the two recently submitted expressions of interest; "The Green Ribbon of the Evenlode Valley" and "Cotswold's Living Limestone" although the conversation ranged much further.

Their consultation identified; heritage at risk, natural heritage and community heritage as priorities. It is good to note that natural heritage was strongly supported as a priority by the players.

We are now within the new London and the south region. This has significantly affected the funding available. Available funds are distributed across the regions according to population. This had always disadvantaged the Southwest in comparison with the Southeast as the Southwest is comparatively high in heritage but sparsely populated. This led to increased competition within the Southwest whereas any bids passing the quality threshold within the Southeast would get funded. At least for the time being, now any bid passing the quality threshold across the whole new region will most likely be funded.

Better understanding the new schemes.

Heritage Grants £100,000 to £5 million

The Expression of Interest (EOI) stage is now competitive, not all EOIs will pass. Rejected EOIs cannot be resubmitted within 3 months. Decisions are taken at the officer level. If approved the applicant has 12 months to submit a development stage application. No extensions will be granted and if the deadline is missed the proposal is removed from their system. Similarly the development stage is strictly limited to 2 years and round two is now competitive. In practice, to date only bids with significant issues have not been approved.

The mandatory outcome "A wider range of people will be involved in heritage" is truly mandatory. Positive wording is not enough. Applicants are expected to have identified specific groups and how they will be engaged and they will be expected to have done this at the EOI stage.

Heritage Grants up to £100,000

This is a relatively quick process with decision making delegated to officers. All bids passing the quality threshold are currently getting funded. This level has no EOI stage but there is still a project enquiry form service. There is no requirement for match funding and activity only projects have been funded. This means that projects engaging target groups in heritage without the requirement to also save the heritage will be accepted at this level.

HLF; Why is the heritage at risk and why do you need to act now?

NLHF; what is the heritage, who do you want to engage and how?

Heritage Horizon Awards £5 million and over

This operates on a “call for projects” basis with the first deadline for EOIs being in October 2019. Ideas are being discussed across protected and other landscapes about collaboratively bidding to this scheme.

Laurel stated that she was not directly involved with this scheme but was able to provide some insight. This is their most competitive scheme and is intended for projects of regional or national importance that could not be funded through one of their other less competitive schemes.

Any collaborative bid would have to make the case that it could only take place at that scale and could not be delivered through a range of individual bids to their other schemes.

Feedback on our EOIs

Cotswold's Living Limestone

They felt that this project needed more development and in particular they could not clearly understand the need for the conservation work and its urgency. The main issue though was that they felt it was too expensive for the scale and character of activities described.

They would be interested in a phased approach starting with a smaller application tightly focussing on one priority aspect.

The Green Ribbon of the Evenlode Valley

This proposal was well received. They recognised it as a Landscape Partnerships type bid with a strong partnership and fit with their priorities. The EOI was not approved on first submission as they would like to see a tighter timeframe for the development stage submission and a clearer focus on the mandatory outcome.

Next Steps

They felt that knowing the scale of the Board they would have concerns over capacity if we pursued both project ideas, so we need to decide which one to continue progressing in the short term.

Both the Board's Executive Committee and NLHF have expressed a preference for the Evenlode proposal so I will continue to develop this. We should also consider a smaller project focussing on engaging an under represented audience in natural heritage for the under £100,000 fund.