**Heritage Lottery Fund – a short introduction**

The Heritage Lottery Fund is there to help fund projects that protect and promote the **heritage** of your church. It must be both. It’s not enough that you have a very old building that needs repairing. We must be looking to bring our history alive to a new audience. They won’t for example, fund repairs to your bells, simply because they and broken and don’t ring. They are also unlikely to fund a re-ordering project if your primary aim is to make worship more interesting and accessible.

Applying to the Heritage Lottery can feel overwhelming. There is a wealth of information and it feels like a lot to get to grips with. It’s true that it does take time, it is a commitment, and needs to be done properly, but when broken down into its components, it’s really not insurmountable and the reward can be great. Not just financially, but in the new approach you might take to acknowledge, recognise, present and promote the history of your church, which in turn attracts new people.

Our history is so important – and people can access it for free. You may have heard me say that I want to give the National Trust a run for their money. Applying to the Heritage Lottery Fund makes us aware of the areas we can improve on, to do just that.

One of the great things about Heritage Lottery is that they will help fund ongoing ‘heritage activities’ to keep your project alive after the building work is complete. You could apply for funding for third parties to run (for example) bell-ringing workshops, organ workshops (the explanation of how an organ works can fit into their STEM Science, Tech, Engineering, Maths aims), if you have church yard wildlife areas you could offer nature talks, or bat talks if you have bats in the belfry. It could be about drystone walling. There’s lots it could be. We would look to identify what works for you. They want you to provide it or enable it – they don’t want you to deliver it! Is that too good to be true?

They will also fund the training of people to become skilled in these areas. If the repair work is done by a company who are happy to have an apprentice for six months, HLF can fund that.

Together we can look to see how we might bring the history of your church to life – to build this into your appeal and create a legacy around heritage, which HLF will want to see if they are going to provide funding.

Personally, I think it’s great. It makes us think differently, and it opens our churches up to new audiences – which in turn gives us the opportunity to grow faith.

There is a lot of information on their website. We need to start with the outcomes they want. [**https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding**](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding)

1. **The outcomes that HLF want you to demonstrate**

There are **nine** outcomes. Of these, one is mandatory, and a further five are prioritised. You don’t have to meet them all, and it’s important you are focussed on the ones that have the best fit. <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes>

* 1. **The mandatory outcome:** *A wider range of people will be involved in heritage*

This is the one you must demonstrate. It is most likely that you might best meet the children and/or disability inclusion aspects. It must be something you can measure, but it’s important – and reassuring – to know that you aren’t expected to bring hundreds and thousands of people through the door. In fact, knowing that you are making a real difference to a smaller number of people is preferable. They want you to be realistic.

<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/wider-range-people-will-be-involved-heritage>

The people that you are thinking will benefit from your project, should be involved in the planning stage. We need to show that they have been consulted, that this is something they want, and that they are pleased to be part of. This can be in the form of interviews, or a survey. If you have connections with schools or scouting and guiding, this is a good time to involve them. We can be creative in the ways that we ask – it shouldn’t just be a survey monkey.

Also: look at this guide from Livewell to think more widely about what disability issues might encompass: <https://www.livability.org.uk/resources/for-your-community/more-than-welcome/>

* 1. **The other five prioritised outcomes:**
* [the funded organisation will be more resilient](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/funded-organisation-will-be-more-resilient)
* [people will have greater wellbeing](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/people-will-have-greater-wellbeing)
* [people will have developed skills](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/people-will-have-developed-skills)
* [the local area will be a better place to live, work or visit](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/local-area-will-be-better-place-live-work-or-visit)
* [the local economy will be boosted](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/local-economy-will-be-boosted)

We need to think about what these things mean, and how the project you are planning fits with the above objectives. Click on the links to find out more. You don’t need to demonstrate every outcome will be met, but what you might find is that your project fits more closely into a couple and hardly at all into others. Prioritise the ones you want to focus on.

* **Being resilient** typically means that once you are sorted, you will be self sustaining or better future proofed. You will be embedding activities into your every day thinking, that will help encourage new visitors, and raise more funds in the future. They want their funding to be the platform for growth, not so you can fix something and remain stagnant.
* **Greater wellbeing** in this context might be about community, about bringing people together, it might be music, or gardening, or being among nature. They want to see that your project has an impact on people’s happiness or sense of belonging. Since we want people to feel part of their church, this is a great one to aim for.
* **Developing skills.** I wonder if they would consider becoming successful fundraisers as ‘developing skills’? It certainly helps us become more resilient. I’m half joking. Broadly I think they are looking to provide everyday skills such as IT and online skills, public speaking, or learning about conservation, as part of the project management. But equally we might be giving a new generation a chance to learn old skills such as bell ringing lessons or organ playing. I mentioned before about apprenticeships with the contractor who delivers the work. HLF will fund this training, if you include the costs in your project.
  1. **The final three outcomes**
* [heritage will be in better condition](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/heritage-will-be-better-condition)
* [heritage will be identified and better explained](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/heritage-will-be-identified-and-better-explained)
* [people will have learnt about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/people-will-have-learned-about-heritage-leading-change-ideas-and-actions)

Click on these links to find out exactly what this might include – it is likely to be more than you imagine. For example, it might be about accessibility to archives, or virtual tours of the tower, better displays of the information, QR codes leading to new heritage information on your website. Most churches I visit have fairly high-brow and word heavy text based information books available. I love history and even I find them fairly hard going. This is a great chance to take this information and make it accessible to children. This is also a great level of reading for visitors and tourists who are looking for a lighter approach.