

DCMS CONSULTATION ON THE ENGLISH HERITAGE NEW MODEL: RESPONSE FROM THE ENGLISH HERITAGE COMMISSION

The Charity

1. The consultation outlines the benefits of the new model for the National Heritage Collection.

English Heritage strongly agrees with the proposed benefits.

2. If you either strongly or somewhat disagree with the proposed benefits why is this?

Not applicable

3. Are there any further benefits that could be delivered by this model?

English Heritage Commissioners are delighted that the Government has endorsed the new model proposal we put to them. This will achieve greater financial resilience for the National Heritage Collection by dealing with the backlog of serious conservation issues at the sites in the Collection and enabling English Heritage to raise more funds through philanthropy and commercial opportunities. Freedom from government accounting will enable us to use those funds more effectively and plan for the long term.

Without the additional £80m which government is providing to invest in the National Heritage Collection, the backlog of conservation defects would increase. As there is little prospect of sustained increases in government spending over the medium term, this investment, together with the proposed new governance arrangements offers the best prospect to secure the funds needed to conserve and develop the National Heritage Collection for present and future generations to enjoy.

Without the new model, the needs of the National Heritage Collection would inevitably take an increasing share of English Heritage's total grant in aid, reducing the resources available for our work to protect and champion England's wider heritage.

Under the new model it will be possible to maintain the level of services provided by Historic England, improve the condition of the National Heritage Collection and, over time, reduce the total grant in aid required for English Heritage and Historic England.

Following approval of the final business case by Treasury we hope to be able to publish further details of our financial projections and assumptions to show that these aims are possible and realistic. In the meantime, we are publishing alongside this consultation response further details of our Asset Management Plan which details how our estimate of the value of the conservation defects in the National Heritage Collection was calculated and shows that £52m will deal with the highest priority conservation defects.

4. Are there other key opportunities for the charity to increase earned income in addition to those outlined in the consultation?

Yes

5. If yes what are they?

It is inevitable that over time new opportunities will arise to increase earned income which will then be reinvested into conserving the sites in the National Heritage Collection and improving the experience for visitors. Any new opportunities must be consistent with the values of authenticity, quality and responsibility which guide our management of the National Heritage Collection. These will be reinforced by the standards set out in the Property Licence which will protect against inappropriate developments.

6. What aspects of the current service provided to the public by English Heritage in relation to the National Heritage Collection is it important that the charity maintains?

A vital part of the new model proposal is that there are no changes to the ownership of the sites in the National Heritage Collection. This preserves the public interest in the Collection. It is Commission's role to protect the public interest and we will do that through the Property Licence which will ensure that the sites remain open to the public, that their condition improves as a result of the additional investment and that the charity continues to provide education services (including free education visits) and maintains the highest standards of presentation and customer service.

Historic England will continue to protect heritage at risk through raising awareness, advice and grants. In exceptional cases, where there is no other option, it will take sites into ownership and undertake any necessary works to remove risk for potential future owners. In some cases sites may be passed to the charity to become part of the National Heritage Collection where this is appropriate and there are no other suitable owners. The Property Licence will cover the circumstances in which this would happen.

Part of the Commission's role in protecting the public interest will be to monitor the performance of the charity and in due course to review the licence and its renewal. Given English Heritage's track record in managing the National Heritage Collection and our impressive growth in income over the past ten years we have no reason to think that the charity will not be successful. If the charity appears to be failing because of external factors, the charity will be given every reasonable opportunity to turn it around. If it appears to be failing because of poor management, Commission can exercise its influence through the charity trustees. Ultimately, if the failings are beyond repair, then Commission can take the operation back to maintain the properties and public access.

7. What are the opportunities to further enhance the services that will be offered by the charity?

The additional investment made available by the Government will improve the condition of the sites in the National Heritage Collection and enable the charity to improve visitor facilities and interpretation.

The charity will also be more attractive to volunteers than a government body so we expect to be able to increase opportunities for volunteers to be more involved in the National Heritage Collection. This will provide rewarding experiences for volunteers and also enable us to extend the services for visitors.

8. Do you agree that the suggested charitable objectives are broadly the right ones?
Yes

9. If no, what changes to them do you think should be made?

Not applicable

10. Are the proposed success criteria to measure the performance of the charity and to ensure that the benefits are realised the right ones?

Yes

11. If not what else should be included in the success criteria?

Not applicable

Historic England

12. We are interested in the views of respondents to the proposed future opportunities and priorities for Historic England. Are these the right priorities and opportunities? Is there anything missing?

The Commission welcomes the Government's commitment to a broad vision for Historic England and its recognition of the need for Historic England to be a strong and independent champion of the role of England's heritage in sustainable growth. We want to help everyone appreciate and care for England's heritage. We will improve our services for owners and developers and we look to work with others to use our resources to increase public knowledge, awareness and capacity.

In addition to the new opportunities highlighted in the consultation document, the Commission will ensure that Historic England continues to provide its core services including grants, evidence gathering and research, designation, constructive engagement with the planning process, advice to central government, saving heritage at risk and the provision of data and archive material for everyone involved in understanding and managing England's heritage.

We anticipate that the National Heritage Protection Plan, and especially the Historic England Action Plan will be the foundation of Historic England's corporate plan, guiding both what we do and how we work in partnership with others. However we recognise that the National Heritage Protection Plan needs to change and in particular needs to be more accessible to continue to develop a culture of greater openness about our expertise and transparency of decision-making. We will engage with and listen to the rest of the heritage sector over the coming months as we develop the National Heritage Protection Plan, the Historic England Action Plan and the Historic England Corporate Plan.

We recognise the challenges, not least the continuing pressure on local authority resources, but also the opportunities including the commitment of owners, the knowledge and expertise which exists across the heritage sector and the public's enthusiasm for heritage. We are looking forward to working with the heritage sector and other organisations to review how we can work together more effectively.

13. Are the proposed success criteria to measure the performance of Historic England the right ones?

Yes

14. If not, what else should be included in the success criteria?

Not applicable

15. Should the National Heritage Protection Plan form the basis of the business plan for Historic England?

Yes

16. If no – why not?

Not applicable

17. Are there any further points you would like to add in relation to the consultation?

The success of the New Model is critically dependent upon Historic England and the charity having financial certainty. The charity needs to be able to plan long term in order to realise the benefits of the new model. The charity will require a particular level of support from GIA to deliver the business plan necessary to achieve financial self-sufficiency within 8 years. Commission, however, cannot commit to a particular level of support for the charity over this period without knowing how much financial resource it has overall. Mitigation of this unacceptable financial risk is essential to enable the Commission to endorse the New Model. We want to work with government over the coming months to find a solution to this issue.

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