



ENGLISH HERITAGE

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To Whom It May Concern:

Consultation on the Regional Growth Fund

English Heritage welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Local Spending Reports consultation, published March 2010. Our response to each of the questions posed is attached.

English Heritage's role

English Heritage is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, with our funding agreement signed by CLG and DEFRA. We work in partnership with central government departments, local authorities, voluntary bodies and the private sector to conserve and enhance the historic environment, broaden public access to our cultural heritage, and increase people's understanding and appreciation of the past.

We are the UK Government's statutory adviser and a statutory consultee on all aspects of the historic environment and its heritage assets. This includes archaeology on land and under water, historic buildings sites and areas, designated landscapes and the historic elements of the wider landscape. *Conservation Principles*¹ sets out the guidelines for engagement with the historic environment which have informed Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5).

Best wishes,

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¹ <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.9181>

Consultation on Regional Growth Fund
ENGLISH HERITAGE RESPONSE

Allocation on funding

Are there benefits to be had from allocating different elements of the fund in different ways?

We agree that there are benefits in ensuring there is flexibility in how the fund is allocated (see answers below). That flexibility should also encompass different scale of projects (something which is recognised in the criteria listed). There is a great deal to be gained from supporting (and funding) both small scale, locally driven projects, as well as the larger scale, big impact initiatives. It is important that the fund should not be broken up to such an extent that does not allow for larger scaled schemes. Naturally, such larger schemes should be expected to achieve multiple integrated outcomes (e.g. community involvement, jobs, economic regeneration, etc) and an example of such a project is included below (Hadrian's Wall Ltd). We feel that such cross regional projects should also be able to seek the fund's support and that it should be possible for Local Enterprise Partnerships to submit joint bids.

Type of activity

What type of activities, that promote the objectives outlined above, should the fund support and how should the fund be best designated to facilitate this?

We would urge that the fund remains flexible enough to ensure proposals that support long term, sustainable economic growth are recognised. In particular, projects that relate to improving the quality of life for communities. Examples of this type of work in action include:

Gloucester

- The South West Regional Development Agency funding of the Gloucester Heritage Urban Regeneration Company. This company has played a key role in regenerating areas of Gloucester by bringing key partners together – to bring about development that restores local heritage of international importance while introducing new community, educational and commercial facilities.
- One North East (the Regional Development Agency for the North East) was one of the founder members in establishing and funding Hadrian's Wall Heritage Ltd, a new type of development company set up to maximise the contribution Hadrian's Wall can make to the social, economy and environmental regeneration and well-being of local communities through sustainable tourism development and management of the World Heritage Site. Since its establishment it has been responsible for championing local produce; providing visitors to the North with one stop shop for information through their website; destination marketing; and individual projects such as 'Illuminating Hadrian's Wall' in which over 1,000 volunteers helped to light the 84 mile length of this World Heritage Site.
- The South East Economic Development Agency (SEEDA) was the main public sector funder of the Oxford Castle Heritage project. This was a mixed-use regeneration project involving a private developer, the council and local conservation groups which converted the site of Oxford's former prison into a hotel, museum, restaurants, accommodation and an education centre. It is a striking example of how preservation of the historic environment and new build can be successfully combined.

Benefits of such projects go beyond economic regeneration, they also engage and energise communities. They can then in turn act as a catalyst for further community led regeneration. Over the longer term, attractive, functioning places become attractive destinations for shoppers and tourists, helping to attract investment to local areas.

This potential was captured by the Prime Minister in his speech at the Serpentine Gallery on 12 August. He stated that the Regional Growth Fund will create 'an opportunity for the tourism sector to bid for support'. We support the view that tourism, and in particular heritage tourism, can play a key role in stimulating economies at the local level. A locally delivered fund, which can support local distinctiveness, can play a key role in supporting places to become popular destinations for both national and international tourists. We would emphasise the impact tourism can have on specific areas. In the North East for example, local economic impact studies suggest that there are over 6 million visitors to heritage attractions in the region, resulting in £180m of visitor spending which in turn supports an estimated 5,465 jobs.

Bid system

Do you think that these are the right criteria for assessing bids to the Regional Growth Fund?

To ensure that the Fund is well placed to support the improvement and development of places, as outlined above, we feel the current set of criteria needs to be amended. Ideally, proposals should seek to enhance the local environment (for the reasons outlined above). The historic environment is, a finite resource which if properly employed can make places better for those who live there and encourage others to visit them. It is our responsibility to ensure that its value is preserved for future generations. Economic growth should not put this resource at risk (which would put any future growth at risk). For example, we would support a presumption in favour of retaining and adapting existing buildings in order to reduce the carbon impacts of investment, and thereby achieve the objective of 'sustainable' economic growth. With that in mind, we would propose adding the following criteria:

- Demonstrate that they will have no adverse impacts on the local environment and, where appropriate, enhance that environment for those people who live and work there.

In addition, we support the need to ensure bids are fully integrated with local plans. We would urge that before any bid is successful, that any planning implications have, at least, been the subject of pre application discussions. This would reduce the risk of projects, supported by the fund, not receiving planning permission (which would result in wasted resources for all parties). It is important that the regeneration of an area, by whatever means, is co-ordinated to ensure that benefits are maximised and long lasting.

Bidding process

Do you think we should operate a two-stage bidding process?

No comment

Longer term potential

Should a Regional Growth Fund become a long-term means of funding activity that promotes growth?

Potentially yes, but we currently do not know enough about how the fund will work to provide a more definitive answer.

If you would like this document in a different format, please contact
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