



HLF Major Grants – The first 100

June 2015

Introduction

A golden age for heritage: Major Grants from 1994 to 2014

Over its lifetime HLF has made grant awards for as little as £3,000, and as much as £30million. Funding of all sizes has been important in achieving the breadth of benefits that this investment has enabled – for heritage and for people.

Recent research we have undertaken has looked at the way the public now views the last two decades of Lottery funding for heritage, with the results featured in the '20 years in 12 places' report that we published in March 2015.

In this new report, we are summarising the findings from research that looked at the transformation that has been secured through the biggest of our grants – the 'Major Grants', each of £5million or more. One hundred and seventy-three of these grants have now been made, and the first 100 of them are complete. Many have been finished for a decade or longer, giving us a picture of the long-term, sustained benefits that have been achieved.

"HLF Major Grants have contributed to the complete and fundamental change to arts organisations in the UK. The era of HLF grants more generally has helped make Britain the world leader in cultural regeneration. This marks a complete change from the years preceding the HLF, such as the 1980s when it was clear that the UK required huge investment but nothing was being done."

Charles Saumarez Smith, Chief Executive Royal Academy & former Director, National Gallery (2002-07) and National Portrait Gallery (1994-2002)

Many of these long-completed projects stem from HLF's early years, when the pattern of funding was much more towards the large-scale. In its first three years, HLF funded five projects with grants of more than £20million: the Kennet & Avon Canal, National Museums Liverpool, the Gilbert Collection, the Wellcome Wing at the Science Museum and the Royal Albert Hall.

Another 14 awards were for over £10million: grants for the Tate Gallery, National Maritime Museum Falmouth, the Great Court at the British Museum, Manchester Art Gallery, the British Galleries at the V&A, the Museum of Docklands, Churchill Archive, Imperial War Museum, the Neptune Hall at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, the National Portrait Gallery, Manchester Museum, the Lowry Centre in Salford, Somerset House and Mar Lodge Estate.

A further 30 grants of more than £5million from this period included awards to the British Film Institute, the Wallace Collection and the first acquisitions of paintings through HLF – a Stubbs and a Seurat, both by the National Gallery. But there were also awards to the Football Museum and to museums in Swindon and Brighton. Historic buildings awarded Major Grants included Stoneleigh Abbey, Norwich Castle, the Adams Building in Nottingham, Cardiff Castle, Christ Church Spitalfields and Stanley Mills in Perth. New museums, IWM Duxford and the National Media Museum in Bradford, were supported, as was the Segedenum Museum at Hadrian's Wall.

All this before the end of 1999.

These early Major Grants were, first and foremost, about repair – in some cases rescue would not be an inappropriate word. But ultimately this was only the beginning of what the investment through Major Grants achieved. The complexity and requirements involved in Major Grants have increased. Where once that capital work was enough, in later years – post 2002 – conservation work had to be accompanied by more attention to people. Participation, involvement, learning became the watchwords.

The aggregate impact of all this funding has been extensive. Places that were once run-down are now presented with confidence. They are well looked-after, on the tourist map, and speak to a broader public. They reach bigger, more varied audiences. Heritage stories are being told in exciting new ways. Great cultural treasures have been acquired for the nation. There is a wider concept of what constitutes heritage, with previously overlooked places and subjects now part of the picture. These are national assets now in the stewardship of organisations that can look to the future from a far stronger base.

These successes of Major Grants cannot be attributed to Lottery funding alone, of course. Free entry to national museums and galleries, other funding schemes, the adoption of more business-like approaches within the sector, and the appointment of a wave of talented directors and leaders have all played a part. Many local authorities have shown imagination and commitment in their support of heritage. HLF is never the sole funder of a Major Grant: public authorities, private philanthropists, trusts and foundations are all to be applauded for their contributions.

And it would be wrong, of course, to suggest that HLF emerged fully formed in 1994: we have been learning alongside the sector. Yet we believe HLF can claim a good share of the credit for the rejuvenation of heritage in the UK.

There are new challenges ahead. The tougher public spending climate, the rising costs of maintaining heritage, ensuring heritage reflects Britain's increasingly diverse population, and incorporating new ways of consuming and experiencing heritage – through technology and digital media – are all challenges the sector still has to successfully address.

But HLF's 21st birthday year is a good point at which to look back and reflect on what our biggest investments have achieved. The research findings in the report have been collated from work we commissioned BOP Consulting to undertake across 2013 and 2014. This research incorporated: interviews with the directors and chief executives of all the Major Grant recipient organisations – plus, where it was relevant, the former leaders who were incumbent at the time of the Major Grant; a survey through which we collected some standard key data about all projects; and the assembly of any existing evaluation material about the project produced by the grantees themselves.

Major Grants, Major Change

The recipients of Major Grants have varied greatly in terms of geography and type of heritage, and their individual stories – full of fascinating detail – are explored in more depth in the case studies that sit alongside this report. However a number of threads are woven through all these stories, and together they reveal the wider picture of what Major Grants have achieved. This section, written jointly by HLF and BOP Consulting, discusses six of these, and presents some lessons for the future that emerged from interviews.

1: Repair and renewal

Towards the end of the 20th century, the UK's heritage assets were in a parlous state. Many of the great Victorian museums and galleries had failed to keep up with both an evolving society and significant maintenance challenges. Revolutions in industry, and the economic fortunes of people and places, had left valuable architectural heritage empty and decaying. Mines, mills and canals had been left to rot. Important collections – of trains, ships, planes, papers – had expanded beyond their storage capacity, or been poorly looked after for lack of funds.

“Weston Park Museum [in Sheffield] was in a terrible state. Every time it rained we had to put 40 to 50 buckets out to catch the rain; in a storm we could end up with two inches of water in the exhibition gallery.”

Nick Dodd, Chief Executive, Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust, 2002-2012

“Without HLF, Kelvingrove [in Glasgow] would have closed within two years. The electrics would have failed the insurance tests – the museum had last been rewired in 1898 – and the heating had failed the previous winter.”

Mark O'Neill, Head of Arts & Museums Glasgow City Council 2005-2009

“The Beaneys was a late Victorian building in a serious state of disrepair. Its 1930s extension was no longer fit for purpose... there was no lift. There were no public toilets in the building, no café, no proper shop, no proper art handling store, and no sophisticated climate controls ... It also lacked an education or learning space.”

Janice McGuinness, Head of Culture and Enterprise, Canterbury City Council

“The canals were previously barely operable – not dredged, gates not working etc. So the first restoration in the 1980s was better than nothing. But it was done really without any money. The resources weren't there to do it for the long term.”

Robin Evans, Chief Executive British Waterways (now the Canal and River Trust) 2002-2013

“We had actually managed to build one hangar, but had been unable to raise the money to heat it or install air conditioning. Even so, much of the aircraft and vehicle collection was still based outdoors, where it was constantly deteriorating.”

Sir Robert Crawford, Director Imperial War Museum 1995-2008

In the case of museums and galleries, there was a familiar litany of problems beyond basic maintenance: collections were displayed in dark and gloomy galleries, or were hidden away in storage rooms, education facilities were inadequate; and access for disabled people was limited, if not impossible. Many places had minimal café or retail space, restricting the revenue-generating capacity of their organisations.

It was this backlog of under-investment that HLF began to tackle in 1994: repairing what was at risk, expanding space to meet demand, bringing facilities up to date.

In total HLF has awarded £1.63billion in Major Grants of more than £5million. Of this, just over one billion - £1.05billion – was for projects that have now completed. And of this amount, over £850million has been spent on conservation work involving historic buildings – many of which were also the home of museum, gallery or archive collections.

But simply repairing the existing wasn't always enough. Projects also involved some – occasionally dramatic – reconfiguring of spaces and the construction of new, modern additions. Striking examples here are IWM Duxford, the Darwin Centre at the Natural History Museum, Pallant House Gallery in Chichester and The Lowry in Salford. Heritage organisations turned to some of Britain's most influential and exciting modern architects, who – as well as finding good solutions to challenging briefs – brought publicity for the project and increased the confidence of other investors. From Rick Mather's work at the Dulwich Picture Gallery and the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, to Zaha Hadid's spectacular Riverside Museum in Glasgow, these schemes are architectural attractions in their own right – an example of funding ostensibly for the past actually creating new cultural landmarks.

Two consequential benefits of all this capital work are worth highlighting. This kind of architectural conservation work is highly specialist. Major Grants have involved a huge investment in the UK's stock of heritage skills, with potential benefits in a global market where heritage conservation is taken increasingly seriously. And, over the years, individual institutions, and the sector as a whole, have developed far greater expertise in the management of major capital projects. Projects have had their challenges, and lessons have been learnt.

2. Opening up

The transformation of physical space has enabled a second transformation, in visitor experience. And in some cases, buildings, collections and archives have been made available to the public for the very first time.

“We worked with external experts to find ways of engaging the public with the collections. It was about weaving them all together to tell the story. One of the aims of the galleries was to manage the objects whilst simultaneously taking them out of their cases. We wanted the objects to feel more immediate; the public prefer the tapestries, for instance, to not be behind glass.”

Martin Roth, Director, Victoria & Albert Museum

“The overarching change throughout the museum was the way in which it engages with people as a research institution... But we had to communicate to the permanently employed scientists that the NHM expected them to be more public facing. It was a something of a management challenge explaining why they had to change the way they work.”

Sir Michael Dixon, Director, Natural History Museum

“The range of visitors is broader now, and the museum encourages comment and interaction. People come expecting to learn about working class history, but the collections are designed to explore stories about people, all people. Visitor responses now seem deeper, people are more moved, the stories are personal and visitors relate to them on that level.”

Katy Archer, Director, Peoples' History Museum

“The Rylands remains a research library and research institute but it has a public face and is a visitor attraction. It's open seven days a week, and it's a key visitor attraction in Manchester... The research function of the Library continues, and remains a priority, but it is now much more than a library – it's at the heart of the community.”

Jan Wilkinson, Director, John Rylands Library

“The education department was particularly inspired by the major acquisitions – they saw it as a test of how to use them in the most innovative way. This has been transformative, especially the ‘Take One Picture’ (which used Madonna of the Pink). The painting was a test for the educational team, and they have since designed a ‘Take One Picture’ programme, which empowers primary school teachers to focus on one painting and encourage children to look at it from different perspectives. These efforts would not have happened without HLF. So, the excitement of the major acquisitions has driven forward the educational programme.”

Nicholas Penny, Director, National Gallery

In large part stemming from its National Lottery remit, and the desire that funding should reach people in all walks of life, HLF has required heritage organisations to think deeply about the way they present heritage to the public. A familiar refrain that we have found throughout the case studies has been the reorientation of institutions from being specialist, scholarly, inaccessible places, to ones where communicating with the public has become a primary goal. So there has been an increasing focus on understanding what the public wants from a collection, and how objects can be used most effectively to engage people.

For example in Manchester Museum, local residents were formally consulted on the design and contents of galleries; at the National Gallery of Scotland, conservation work – previously done behind closed doors – became a central part of public engagement. At the London Transport Museum, the Major Grant provided the opportunity to tell more stories about the links between people, transport and change in a city.

More dramatically, heritage has been made accessible that was previously closed. As a result of Major Grants, a number of archives are now accessible that were either completely unavailable or had limited access: the John Murray Archive, the Churchill papers; and the archives held by the Royal Geographical Society, the Shetland Museum and the Hull History Centre.

“The grant opened the collection up to everyone. The research usage is mainly graduate level and above, but anyone can look. And in addition to being truly open to the public, intellectual access to the archive has been very significantly enhanced through the cataloguing process.”

Allen Packwood, Director Churchill Archive

A handful of particularly successful projects have seen incredible changes in visitor numbers. M Shed, formerly the People’s Museum of Bristol, went from 150,000 visitors a year in the years before its Major Grant; to 750,000. Hull’s historic archives were accessed by just 6,000 people each year before the creation of the Hull History centre – now it’s 30,000 a year. Aggregating across all these 100 major grants, visitor numbers have gone from 41 million a year before the HLF projects took place to 94 million a year, post-Major Grant – a rise of 130%.

“The National Portrait Gallery was quite dark and very constrained before the Ondaatje Wing. There were worries about the site to such an extent that serious consideration was given to moving to a completely new site... The physical change was really important. But it was much more than that... [the] social transformation of the gallery stemming from the [Major Grant] has been as important as the physical one.”

Sandy Nairne, Director, National Portrait Gallery 2002-2015

3: Recognising our varied heritage

Major Grants have created opportunities to conserve and celebrate forms of heritage outside the traditional.

“Collecting contemporary objects might not be thought of as ‘heritage’, but HLF understood that the act of collecting such objects and putting them on display makes them ‘heritage’, and is an appropriate activity for a museum of science and technology. It was an absolute breath of fresh air that the HLF understood the role of the Science Museum in collecting.”

Ian Blatchford, Chief Executive, Science Museum

“Visitors now bring in objects and the permanent exhibition on coal mining is supplemented by temporary galleries, which also draw on the archives. We also have significant online access and provide interactive experiences. Visitors to the archive have doubled and deposits trebled. People understand the significance of the archive for the first time.”

Keith Merrin, Chief Executive, Woodhorn Trust

“There is more information given to visitors, better information panels, more explanation. Now half of visitors see vehicles moving as part of their visit versus a third before the grant. We do around half a dozen talks or events a day now – very few before. The Major Grant was all about improving the visitor experience – making the stuff more accessible, explaining it better, seeing it in action”.

Richard Smith, Director, The Tank Museum

There are fashions and trends in heritage. At different times, some things, or periods, are simply valued more than others. Academic research, changing tastes and new discoveries all contribute to the ebb and flow of perceptions about heritage. However, over recent years we have seen a move to a much more inclusive approach to heritage: a broadening out of the subjects, social histories, periods, buildings and artefacts that are seen to constitute our collective heritage. Major Grants have played a part in this movement.

There is increasing recognition, for instance, of the importance of science and technology in the UK’s story, given Britain’s place as the origin of the Industrial Revolution. Major Grants have helped create or upgrade museums dedicated to transport (in London and Glasgow), science (in London and Manchester), the tank (in Dorset), military aircraft (in Cambridgeshire), railways (in Co. Durham) ships (in Bristol and London), and mines (South Wales). They have conserved great ships from British history (ss Great Britain in Bristol and the Cutty Sark in Greenwich). And one of the great painters of industrial Britain, LS Lowry, has been celebrated with a gallery The Lowry Centre in Salford that shows the full range of his work, in the city where he worked.

Social and cultural history has grown in significance too, driven by an interest in everyday experience, and the particularities of places and communities. The People’s History Museum in Manchester celebrates the traditions and culture of British working life. The National Football Museum is the first major museum dedicated to the sport. Projects at Stanley Mills

in Perthshire and Milestones Museum in Hampshire have all helped people explore social and cultural histories in more depth than before. Woodhorn Museum in Northumberland was one of several projects commemorating the history of coal mining communities, through an imaginative project that conserved 19th Century colliery buildings and mining plant, and also provided a new home for county archives spanning 800 years of Northumbrian history.

Major Grants have also enabled institutions to address topics that were previously ignored or hidden. Britain's role in the slave trade is examined in the Museum of Docklands, and the Holocaust in galleries at the Imperial War Museum in London. Bletchley Park had been hidden for a different reason: the code-breaking that took place here, first during the Second World War and subsequently through the Cold War, was kept a secret on grounds of national security. Only once that intelligence gathering ended, at Bletchley, did the importance of its heritage emerge.

4: Acquiring heritage for the nation

HLF Major Grants are not always capital projects: one important function has been supporting the acquisition of heritage objects, both to strengthen the collections of existing institutions and, in exceptional circumstances, to establish new ones.

“Major acquisitions help to keep the gallery alive as a major institution in the public's eye.”

Nicholas Penny, Director, National Gallery

“Without HLF the John Murray archive would have been broken up. The previous owners could have sold off pieces of the archive (for example 60% of all known Byron letters in the world) and achieved significantly larger purchase prices and been less likely to encounter export licence problems. They probably could have made about twice what they received from NLS. But there wasn't another buyer who would keep it intact.”

Martyn Wade, Chief Executive, National Library of Scotland

“Without HLF we would not have been able to take Newhailes on, and the substantial legacy offered alongside ownership would not have been realised.”

Kate Mavor, Chief Executive, National Trust Scotland 2009-15

The most high-profile acquisitions have been paintings, such as George Stubbs' 'Whistlejacket', now one of the most popular painting in the National Gallery¹ in London. Other major works by Raphael, Dürer, Seurat, Botticelli and Titian have also been secured for public collections. Two of the Titians, 'Diana and Callisto' and 'Diana and Actaeon', now on show in London and Edinburgh, were described by the artist Lucian Freud as 'simply the most beautiful pictures in the world'.

¹ As measured by postcard sales in the National Gallery shop

But HLF's support for acquisitions extends well beyond paintings. The National Football Museum began with the purchase of a collection of 4,000 football-related objects and memorabilia. Such acquisitions often prompt other donors to give or lend work, and the Football Museum has subsequently been given or lent 10 other major collections, and now has 40,000 objects in its care, including the original FA Cup.

In a similar vein, the securing of the Churchill archive for Churchill College in Cambridge has led to the archives of Margaret Thatcher, John Major and Gordon Brown being pledged to the same place, creating Britain's leading archive of modern political history. Other notable purchases include the archive of the publishing firm John Murray, which is now part of the National Library of Scotland. The Archive tells the story of the publisher's 200-year history, and includes correspondence and papers from Lord Byron, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and David Livingstone. Without support from HLF this unique collection would almost certainly have been dispersed.

HLF has also helped purchase buildings and entire landscapes. Important houses and estates that have been saved thanks to HLF support include Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire, Newhailes in Musselburgh, and Mar Lodge in Aberdeenshire. These are now far more publicly accessible than they were previously.

5: Bringing pride and economic value

An important trend in recent years has been the growing recognition that heritage has a big role to play in 'place-shaping' – contributing to the distinctive identity and character of a town or city – which can be an important 'pull factor' for incoming businesses and people.

"The HLF grant said to Buxton – this is important, this matters. It boosted the town's morale – it brought vibrancy and pride to the middle of town."

Professor John Coyne, Vice-Chancellor, University of Derby

"It is now more than a museum – it's a community centre, education hub, meeting place, venue for talks and seminars, has one of the best restaurants on island and is as important to locals as to visitors. Now there's a cultural quarter in Lerwick with the major new arts centre, Mareel, joining recently. It's a real regeneration project."

James Moncrieff, General Manager, Shetland Museum and Archives

“The key point is the power of the large grants. They allow you to advocate for arts/culture/heritage at a city-wide level. Their grand scale lets cultural professionals sit at the big table: it’s real currency for the profession.”

“Initially the idea of turning a working coal mine into a museum went down like a lead balloon. However we proved ourselves, and people started to take pride in the site as a local icon. Following the Major Grant work that has only increased, especially now that we’ve won a number of awards.”

Simon Green, Director, Cultural Services, Hull City Council

HLF-funded schemes have helped raise the profile of culture and heritage in many places, giving heritage organisations a bigger role in regeneration, and greater political clout. Increasingly, British cities market themselves to visitors and residents alike as lively, culturally rich places. London, Bristol, Liverpool, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Manchester have all received more than one Major Grant, helping to strengthen their appeal. Heritage attractions have become anchors of local tourism economies in a wider set of urban and rural places – from Falmouth (The National Maritime Museum) to the Scottish islands (Shetlands Museum), taking in Exeter (Royal Albert Memorial Museum), Reading (Museum of Rural Life), Cardiff (Cardiff Castle), Blaenavon (Big Pit), Nottingham (the Adams Building), Bradford (National Media Museum), and Newcastle (Great North Museum).

Those projects with the biggest local impact are often located in smaller towns and cities, where their relative importance is greater. In Brighton, political commitment to culture 20 years ago, and a Major Grant for Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, has been rewarded with a rise in tourist numbers. Canterbury has identified culture and heritage as crucial factors in the future of the city itself and the wider east Kent region. A Major Grant for its Beaney House of Art & Knowledge plays a part in that revival.

The National Railway Museum in Shildon has given a focus, and brought tourism, to an economically deprived area of the country that once took great pride in its industrial identity, whilst in Buxton, HLF helped the University of Derby buy the Royal Devonshire Hospital after the NHS moved out. The restoration of the building, with its celebrated Dome, has created a centrepiece for the university. But it has also been embraced by the wider town since the Dome is open to, and used by, the general public, as well as by students. More than 2,000 students are now based in the centre of Buxton, their presence helping to bring a different daytime feel to the town centre and contributing to its economy.

6: Supporting organisational change

In the best cases we found symmetry between the determination of HLF to see public benefit from its funding, and the ambitions of heritage leaders to use a Major Grant as a way of bringing about wider change within the organisations they lead.

“It gave us a boost in confidence; enabling a great institution to think big again. After the Earth Galleries, the natural history museum knew it could tackle a big project – and did.”

Sir Neil Chalmers, Director, Natural History Museum 1998-2011

“Although learning had been part of the mix for the previous museum, the Major Grant helped give a strong focus to learning, and on children and families. We wanted WPM to become ‘a learning institution’ and through it Museums Sheffield to become ‘a learning organisation’”.

Nick Dodd, Chief Executive, Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust, 2002-2012

“We’ve been on a journey from freight... to paying lip service to leisure, to now, where we’re a big heritage manager, a big manager of habitats – this has become what we are all about and what people give us money for... The HLF grant was huge in this journey – it gave us expertise, prestige, exposure.”

Robin Evans, Chief Executive, British Waterways (now the Canal and River Trust) 2002-2013

“The volunteer programme is bigger and broader. The capital project made us rethink how to use volunteers and they mix entry level/apprentices with older volunteers in different roles whereas before most were in customer service. A staff member is volunteer coordinator, encouraging use of the breadth of experience available, giving volunteer workforce projects alongside staff. We have lots of early retirees, some younger and many students.”

Katy Archer, Director, Peoples’ History Museum

“The HLF grant enabled fundamental change, not just to the bricks and mortar but to the whole culture of the museum.”

Tristram Besterman, Director, Manchester Museums 1994-2004

In these cases, heritage organisations have become more outward-facing, more innovative, more business-like, and nimbler – maximising opportunities as they arise. For the staff of such organisations, this was often a challenge. Some had been recruited for their curatorial skills, or subject knowledge. Though professionals working in public engagement were far from unknown in the sector before the mid-1990s, many more have joined it since. Experience in large-scale capital project management was in very short supply, given the lack of investment over the previous decades, and had to be gained rapidly.

Approaches have varied greatly from institution to institution. Some have relied on internal staff. Some have chosen to rely on external consultants. But either way, they have emerged the other side of the Major Grant with, in some cases, an entirely new strategy (for example the V&A's Future Plan) or, at least, a broader mix of skills among staff, in fields including fundraising, education, and visitor experience.

Learning has often been shared within and between organisations. The Big Pit National Coal Museum is now regularly asked to provide advice to other institutions undertaking capital projects. The experience gained by the Kelvingrove Art Gallery team in Glasgow helped shape the hugely successful development of the city's Riverside Museum, whilst the Museum of London built on its experience with its Galleries of Modern London to establish an entirely new museum in the heart of Docklands. The progress across the sector in learning a wider set of skills over the last 20 years has meant that a relatively recent Major Grant like the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester has been able to manage its extension and redevelopment relying almost entirely on the existing team.

Culture change has also been achieved through alterations to organisational governance: by becoming more independent, creating a broader-based board of trustees or hiring a new type of director. Richard Smith of the Tank Museum, the first non-soldier to run his museum, had a background in shipping in Hong Kong and was recruited for his business expertise. Other Major Grants projects were led by insiders determined to shake things up: Rita Gardner, Director of the Royal Geographic Society (RGS) for example, looks back on the major grant as the catalyst for a reshaping of the RGS, which has made it much more innovative and outward-looking, and more accepting of change as a natural process. According to Gardner, The Major Grant "enabled the RGS to demonstrate what it can do."

The experience of going through the Major Grants process has forced many organisations to think much more carefully about the way they approach issues such as fundraising. Some have started Friends schemes; others have found it is more cost-effective to nurture a handful of large-scale donors rather than chasing after a large number of small-scale ones. Some have tried to build up endowments, to give themselves a degree of financial stability. Nearly all report that Major Grants have boosted the self-confidence of their institution, encouraging it to think more strategically.

7: Lessons learnt

HLF now stands in a unique position. With 20 years of experience, we have acquired knowledge in assessing and investing in large scale heritage projects. We are aware this gives us a great deal of leverage – both within the sector, at a strategic level and also with other funders. We look to use our research for the development of our own work, and this review has yielded some important insights.

"HLF was clear that Bristol museums needed to change. They issued a challenge (to us). We in turn made it clear to staff that M Shed was not a project being done to the service, it was the future of the service".

Julie Finch, Director, Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives

“Dynamism. Aside from the physical transformation of the building and the conservation works, (the Major Grant) created a more dynamic workforce and team. There is now more drive to change the space more frequently and to demonstrate change within the building as it progresses... It fanned the existing flames of engagement existing in the organisation – the grant acted as a catalyst and forced us to think creatively.”

Dame Helen Ghosh, Director, National Trust

“It’s now a totally different organisation. As well as the physical transformation it now has a totally different focus and organisational culture – outward looking – a whole new set of skills and capabilities and radically different revenue model. The conservation department is still the biggest department. But there are new skills and capabilities that have been brought in with the creation of new departments: exhibition design, press and PR and development. All of these are focused on outward facing activities.”

Christopher Brown, Director, Ashmolean Museum

“We had a long-term plan in place from 1998 onwards of which the major grant is one significant part. It aimed to break the ‘death spiral’ affecting the museum... The grant has been transformational. We have gone from being a 1970s museum run by soldiers to a 21st century museum. The extra visitors mean we generate more cash, which means we can invest more, which improves the visitor experience further – it’s a virtuous circle. One board member described extra visitors as the ‘means and ends of what we do.’”

Richard Smith, Director, The Tank Museum

First, for maximum public value to be achieved from Major Grants, it is abundantly clear to us that any physical transformation must be accompanied by innovations within organisations: rethinking the nature and quality of the visitor experience, and widening access. Delivering a different offer means organisations themselves need to change – culturally, structurally, or philosophically. However we have found it is this kind of change that organisations can sometimes be less enthusiastic about, and it is also harder to affect. Strong leadership within organisations receiving Major Grants has been an essential element of the most successful projects.

Political support (especially for local authority supported organisations) was widely cited as important in many successful projects, as was a common factor that emerged about the importance of governance oversight and project management.

Beyond these common factors, we have been able to identify others that are characteristic of the most successful Major Grants – those that have wrought the greatest transformation for heritage, people and organisations.

Firstly, the scale of ambition to use the Major Grant project for a much bigger process of organisational change was a feature of the most successful. This was strongly emphasised in the interviews by several leaders. Allied to it, in several cases the Major Grant was described as fitting within a clearly developed and articulated forward strategy for the

organisation, which had been developed before the HLF application was submitted. These strategies incorporated a vision of where the organisation aimed to be, and this was shared widely with all staff.

We also found a correlation between the success of a Major Grant and the extent to which an organisation appears to be committed to a culture of evaluation, learning and change.– indicated by the quality and content of the data each organisation was able to provide, the evaluation material it supplied and the comments about organisational learning made by the chief executives and directors.

It was also striking how the most successful projects spoke about their relationship with HLF, and the importance they attached specifically to an HLF Major Grant in enabling them to push through change. Nearly all of the organisation leaders said the Major Grant had been “essential”, frequently as a way of generating interest and belief in the project for other funders. However, beyond this, the leaders of the most successful projects were most likely to speak of HLF as either mutually supportive of their internal strategic vision. These changes encouraged them to go further in their ambitions or – in a couple of cases – required they undertake activities, especially around education, that would otherwise not have been built into projects.

A final lesson from the research is that many recipients felt they would have benefited from more peer-to-peer learning: around the dos and don'ts of capital projects (how to select contractors, how to apportion funds to do snagging after 12 months, etc), and other elements of projects, such as practical ideas for fundraising. Some projects did manage to speak to and learn from others, but this could happen much more widely.

8: Questions for the future

Part of the purpose of reviewing the last 20 years, and the lessons that have been learnt, is to help inform what HLF should do in the future. Are such big sums of investment still necessary? And what does the change in the wider operating context mean for Major Grants?

Taking the last question first, it is clear that we are in a time of change. For the first 16 years of its life, HLF was working in a ‘pro cyclical’ way: our investments complemented investment of other kinds – central and local government culture budgets, public and privately funded regeneration and property development. But clearly this is no longer the case.

We are aware that the 2008 financial crisis had less of an effect on HLF, as a funder, than it did for many organisations that we support and work with: spending levels on National Lottery tickets were maintained during the recession. Since the financial crisis, we have seen the economy recover but the public investment landscape, in local authorities and all other major funding streams, is likely to be severely constrained for some time yet. We know that many organisations are facing difficulties in obtaining match-funding for projects. What should HLF do to respond? Grantees also raised questions about the role of National Lottery funding for heritage, at a time when sources of revenue funding are being squeezed.

From the grantees' perspective, unsurprisingly, everyone we interviewed for this research said that Major Grants continue to be a very necessary part of the funding landscape: such sizeable amounts of money, which allow organisations to attempt really radical change, are rarely – if ever – available from other sources. But in terms of how Major Grants are allocated, opinion was divided. At a very basic level, some felt that Major Grants should now focus on consolidating and making sustainable those projects that have already demonstrated their viability. Others felt there was still a need for Major Grants to restore and create new heritage sites and attractions, and that this function was more important than ever given the pressure on local authority funding.

Rather than seeing it as a binary choice, our sense – at this moment – is that Major Grants should remain part of our funding portfolio and that we should continue to fund new large-scale projects. In our most recent batch, announced in May 2015, we were able to support another nine projects with collective funding of £98million.

But we also need to continue to monitor and learn what does, and does not, tend to be most successful, at this scale, in the long term. Some interviewees cautioned against HLF becoming too risk averse and only funding 'safe' projects where there is an established market and a long-term commitment from other funding partners. In the current financial climate we are conscious that HLF funding may be the only way less obvious projects can come into being.

Above all, we are determined that the great renewal in heritage that Lottery funding has enabled should continue – in a way that opens up heritage, and the benefits of heritage, to the very widest range of people that, together, we can achieve.

“Major Grants are needed. They have transformed the public’s view of museums and completely rehabilitated the museum sector. Flagship projects are important to this.”

Alec Coles, Director, Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums 2002-2010

Heritage Lottery Fund / BOP Consulting

June 2015

Appendix – Major Grants – the first 100 completes

Applicant	Project title	Grant awarded	Year of grant award
Ancoats Buildings Preservation Trust	Murrays' Mills, Ancoats, Manchester	£7,164,000	2003
Birmingham City Council	Birmingham Town Hall	£13,500,000	2000
	The Restoration of Bletchley Park	£5,099,500	2009
Brighton & Hove Council	Brighton Museum & Art Gallery	£7,562,000	1997
Bristol City Council	Creating the Museum of Bristol: The People's Story (now M Shed)	£12,521,400	2004
British Film Institute	British Film Institute - Twenty First Century Film And TV Archive	£9,149,560	1999
British Museum	British Museum - Education & Information Centre	£15,198,860	1997
British Waterways Board	Kennet and Avon Canal	£25,000,000	1996
Canterbury City Council	The Canterbury Beaney (now the Beaney House of Art and Knowledge)	£7,015,000	2007
Cardiff County Council	Cardiff Castle	£6,702,500	2000
Christ Church, Spitalfields	Christ Church, Spitalfields, restoration	£5,984,500	1996
Clarendon College Nottingham	Adams Building	£7,750,000	1996
Corporation of the Hall of Arts & Sciences	Royal Albert Hall Development	£20,180,000	1996
Council of the Museum of the Port of London & Docklands	Museum of London Docklands	£14,246,000	1997
Cutty Sark Trust	Cutty Sark Conservation	£25,001,000	2005
Derbyshire College Estates Limited	Devonshire Royal Hospital	£6,110,500	2003
Dulwich Picture Gallery	Dulwich Picture Gallery - Refurbishment	£5,000,000	1998

Applicant	Project title	Grant awarded	Year of grant award
English Heritage	Stonehenge Environmental Improvements	£10,000,000	2009
English National Opera	Restoration of the London Coliseum	£10,980,000	2000
Exeter City Council	Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery	£10,190,000	2005
Gilbert Collection Trust	Gilbert Collection	£30,750,000	1996
Glasgow City Council	Kelvingrove New Century Project	£13,171,500	2001
Glasgow City Council	Riverside Museum and Glasgow Museums Resource Centre	£21,640,000	2005
Hampshire County Council	Hampshire Museum of Transport and Technology, Basingstoke (now Milestones Museum)	£6,083,750	1996
Harrogate Borough Council	Restoration of the Royal Hall, Harrogate	£6,580,500	2002
Historic Scotland	Stanley Mills	£5,110,000	1998
Horniman Public Museum & Public Park Trust	Horniman 2001	£9,902,000	1998
Hotties Science and Arts Centre	World of Glass	£8,385,000	1996
Imperial War Museum	Imperial War Museum London	£12,624,000	1996
Imperial War Museum	American Air Museum, Duxford	£6,500,000	1995
Imperial War Museum	Air Space, Duxford	£10,500,000	2001
John Rylands University Library	John Rylands Library restoration	£8,426,800	2001
Kingston Upon Hull City Council	Hull History Centre	£7,697,000	2006
Leeds City Council	Leeds City Museum and Resource Centre	£19,479,000	2004

Applicant	Project title	Grant awarded	Year of grant award
Liverpool City Council/St Georges Charitable Trust	St George's Hall, Liverpool	£14,598,000	2005
London's Transport Museum	Covent Garden Project	£9,470,000	2004
Lowry Centre Trust Company	Lowry Centre, Salford	£10,875,000	1996
Manchester City Council	Manchester City Art Gallery	£15,000,000	1997
Mary Rose Trust	Mary Rose Hull Conservation	£6,066,000	2009
Museum of London	The Galleries of Modern London and Learning Centre	£11,565,500	2005
Museum of Science and Industry, Manchester	Museum of Science and Industry, Manchester	£8,800,000	1997
National Football Museum	Football Museum Development	£9,384,000	2003
National Gallery	Acquisition of George Stubbs's 'Whistlejacket'	£8,268,750	1997
National Gallery	Acquisition of Durer's 'StJerome'	£5,018,000	1996
National Gallery	Acquisition of Seurat's 'The Channel of Gravelines'	£8,000,000	1995
National Gallery	Acquisition of Raphael 'Madonna of the Pinks'	£11,500,000	2003
National Gallery of Scotland	Acquisition of Titian's 'Venus Rising from the Sea'	£7,600,000	2003
National Gallery of Scotland	Acquisition of Botticelli's 'Virgin adoring the Sleeping Christ Child'	£7,687,000	1999
National Gallery of Scotland	Playfair Project	£7,390,000	2000
National Library of Scotland	Acquisition, interpretation and display of the John Murray Archive	£17,700,000	2005
National Maritime Museum	Neptune Hall	£12,050,000	1996
National Maritime Museum	Time and Space - Developing the Royal Observatory	£7,151,400	2004

Applicant	Project title	Grant awarded	Year of grant award
National Maritime Museum Cornwall	Falmouth Maritime Initiative	£18,431,638	2005
National Media Museum	National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, Bradford	£6,081,000	1995
National Museum of Science & Industry	Wellcome Wing	£23,000,000	1996
National Museum of Science & Industry	NRM at Shildon	£5,047,000	2000
National Museums & Galleries of Wales	National Waterfront Museum Swansea	£11,124,500	2002
National Museums & Galleries of Wales/Big Pit (Blaenafon) Trust	Big Pit: National Mining Museum of Wales	£5,278,000	2000
National Museums Liverpool	NML Into the Future	£30,939,800	2002
National Museums Liverpool	Museum of Liverpool	£11,400,000	2006
National Museums of Scotland	Museum of Scotland	£6,750,000	1995
National Museums of Scotland	The Royal Museum Project	£17,762,000	2005
National Portrait Gallery	NPG Centenary Development	£11,900,000	1997
National Trust	Tyntesfield	£20,000,000	2005
National Trust for Scotland	Burns Birthplace: An International Museum	£5,827,000	2007
National Trust for Scotland	Mar Lodge, Braemar	£10,276,993	1995
National Trust for Scotland	Newhailes - Acquisition and Restoration	£8,000,000	1996
Natural History Museum	Darwin Centre	£20,500,000	2001
Natural History Museum	Earth Galleries redevelopment	£6,058,000	1995
Norfolk County Council/Norwich City Council	Norwich Castle Museum	£8,000,000	1998

Applicant	Project title	Grant awarded	Year of grant award
North Tyneside Council	Segedunum Museum and Archaeological Park, Wallsend	£5,633,000	1996
Northumberland County Council	Experience Northumberland at Woodhorn	£10,258,750	2002
Pallant House Gallery	Pallant House Gallery New Wing	£5,179,000	2000
People's History Museum	People's History Museum One Site Project	£7,376,500	2006
Royal Artillery Museums	Royal Artillery Museum Development	£5,000,005	1997
Royal Geographical Society	Unlocking the Archives	£5,154,000	2000
Royal Gunpowder Mills Charitable Trust	Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills	£6,500,000	1996
Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust	City Museum and Mappin Art Gallery (now Weston Park Museum)	£14,153,500	2001
Shetland Amenity Trust	Shetland Museum & Archives	£5,115,000	2006
Somerset House Ltd	Somerset House Restoration	£10,278,750	1997
South Bank Centre	Royal Festival Hall: Restoration and Renovation (Auditorium)	£22,176,000	2003
ss Great Britain	Securing the Heritage Core	£9,205,000	2000
St Martin-in-the-Fields	St Martin-in-the-Fields Re-development	£15,365,000	2003
Stoneleigh Abbey Preservation Trust	Stoneleigh Abbey Preservation	£8,226,000	1996
Stowe House Preservation Trust	Stowe House Preservation Plan	£5,528,000	2002
Tate Gallery	Centenary Development	£18,447,102	1997
Thamesdown Borough Council	Swindon...This is Swindon (now STEAM)	£8,460,000	1997
Tank Museum	At Close Quarters	£10,044,500	2006

Applicant	Project title	Grant awarded	Year of grant award
University of Cambridge	Churchill Archive, Cambridge	£13,253,929	1995
University of Cambridge	Fitzwilliam Museum Courtyard Development	£5,928,000	2001
University of Manchester	Manchester Museum	£11,650,000	1997
University of Manchester	Whitworth Gallery	£8,652,000	2009
University of Newcastle upon Tyne	Great North Museum	£9,246,000	2006
University of Oxford	Ashmolean Plan	£15,907,500	2004
University of Reading	Rural History Centre, Reading (now Museum of English Rural Life)	£5,170,000	2001
Victoria & Albert Museum	Medieval and Renaissance Galleries	£9,750,000	2006
Victoria & Albert Museum	British Galleries	£15,000,000	1998
Wallace Collection	Wallace Collection Centenary Project	£7,743,000	1997
Wedgwood Museum	The Wedgwood Museum	£6,090,680	2005
York Gate Music Trust (Royal Academy of Music)	York Gate Project	£7,635,000	1997