

Karen Brookfield
Collections Development Initiative
The Heritage Lottery Fund
7 Holbein Place
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31st January 2007

Dear Karen Brookfield

Museums and Galleries Collections Development Initiative Consultation

The National Council on Archives (NCA) welcomes this opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Heritage Lottery Fund's Museums and Galleries Collections Development Initiative. The NCA highlighted collections development as a priority area for funding in the 2005 publication *Giving Value: Funding priorities for UK Archives 2005-2010* (Recommendation 2.3.7). Our views on the proposed scheme are outlined below.

1) Do you agree with the proposed scope of the initiative?

The NCA recognises the pressures on the museum sector to develop strategic purchasing in the light of restricted acquisitions budgets. This is a situation that is replicated across the museums, libraries and archives sector. As a recent survey by The National Archives revealed, out of a sample of 230 record repositories, only 58 had a purchase budget, and of these only 18 had a budget exceeding £5,000. The recent conference 'Manuscripts Matter' at the British Library, highlighted the issues of acquisitions in one particular collecting area, that of contemporary literary archives, but this is certainly not the only area where additional funding for supporting collections' development is essential.

The Heritage Lottery Fund's support for archive acquisitions in the past has been vital, and we welcome recent HLF grants for projects involving acquisitions, most notably to The British Library for the Raffles Family Collection, to Northamptonshire County Council for The Cartwright Archive, Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archives for The Sutherland Collection, and the £17.7 million grant to the National Library of Scotland for the John Murray Archive.

We understand that HLF has made a strategic decision, following strong lobbying by the National Museums Directors Conference, The Arts Fund and others, to introduce a single round of funding in 2007 to benefit specifically museums and galleries. We would strongly support HLF in using the evaluation and monitoring of this initiative to consider its potential roll out in the future; either as a more general collections' development programme or to provide archives and libraries with a similar targeted funding round. We would welcome any

opportunities for the archive sector to learn from this targeted scheme. We would therefore hope that HLF will maintain a dialogue with the NCA, The National Archives, MLA and other key archive stakeholders, on how to support future collections development.

With regards to the scope of the scheme as outlined in the consultation document:

- We support the proposal for the initiative supporting a broad geographical distribution of projects, as this is very much in line with our own remit to represent the views of the UK's archive sector,
- We would strongly endorse the intention to use the scheme to support 'all types of collections'. There are currently over 500 museums and galleries in the UK listed as holding archives on the ARCHON directory (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/>). We would hope that these museums and galleries will take the opportunity of this scheme to enhance their archive collecting programmes where appropriate.

2) Do you agree with this definition of eligible applicants?

The proposed eligibility of consortia bids is an interesting development. We would hope that, if applications from museums and galleries focus on archival materials, HLF would ensure that the applicant has consulted other archive-holding organisations with a shared subject interest, prior to application.

3) If not, who else be open to?

NCA would welcome the opportunity for archives to become involved in consortia led by museums or galleries. As the introduction of Designation for archive collections is fairly recent (and only covers England), and Accreditation does not cover archives; if such partnerships are proposed we would hope that HLF will consider eligibility for archives on the basis of the HLF guidance note 'Archives, people and communities'.

4) Should higher priority be given to some types of museum or collection over others?

Why?

We would consider that archives are a priority area for collections development.

Archives are important for cultural, informational, aesthetic, and legislative reasons, amongst others. In the context of museums and galleries, archival collecting can also assist in the documentation and interpretation of past and future acquisitions of artefacts or art works. An awareness of the value of archives in supporting and developing museum collections and education programmes, and the need to share archival skills with the museum professionals, has been demonstrated by the proposal to develop a specialist subject network for Archives in Museums, and in recent articles in both *Museums Journal* (Jan 2007) and *Archives, Records Management & Conservation* (Jan 2007).

5) Do you agree with the proposed criteria for the initiative?

Although the consultation document outlines specific requirements for the initiative, in practice these appear to have little variance from the planning work required for a successful application to the 'Heritage Grants' scheme. We would hope that, in the context of any potential archival collecting, the requirements to include 'a plan and budget for research into the collection' would enable organisations to budget for cataloguing of materials to international standards.

6) Are there other criteria that should be added?

In normal instances the HLF would insist on applicants submitting an independent valuation, and would commission an additional valuation for any application involving purchases. Our understanding of the consultation document is that if successful, the applicant will not need to 'identify individual items that they wish to purchase and will not need to seek HLF approval for individual purchases during the project'. We would strongly advise that if applicants are considering purchase of archival material as part of a successful project, they contact The National Archives' National Advisory Services. Their advice, based on their ongoing advisory work to the sector, supplemented by their sales monitoring work, would be invaluable to any such applicants and indeed we feel that this should be included as a requirement in the criteria for the scheme.

7) Do you agree with the proposed outcomes for the initiative?

We would agree with the proposed outcomes.

8) Are there other outcomes that should be added?

We hope that as an outcome of the initiative, the Heritage Lottery Fund itself will produce or commission evaluation of the scheme to inform possible programmes under in its Strategic Plan 3.

9) Should some outcomes have higher priority than others?

In the light of the fact that HLF is envisaging only circa 25 awards, and the suggestion to direct at least 50% of the grant towards purchases, we would consider that in this particular scheme the following outcomes should have a higher priority:

- An enhanced – and appropriately documented and interpreted – understanding of the collection's significance and, where relevant, its relationship to other collections of the same kind.
- Collaboration with other relevant organisations and networks enabling the project to make a contribution beyond the applicant museum or gallery.

10) Do you agree with the proposal that at least 50% of HLF's grant should be devoted to purchases?

As the initiative has been designed to meet concerns around collections development, the proposal to ensure at least 50% of the grant is devoted to purchases seems logical. In light of this substantial commitment to funding purchases within any given project, HLF will need to be realistic about, and give appropriate guidance, on the level of public involvement, audience development and learning activities they will expect to see delivered in a

project. This will be a particular concern amongst the projects that are proposed within the £50,000 to £100,000 award category.

11) What kinds of advice and support would you like to see offered:

a) before application; and b) during the life of the initiative.

- a) Prior to application it is essential for HLF to promote the scheme widely, to brief key stakeholders on the aims, criteria and outcomes and to provide accurate and clear information on the HLF website and in hard copy format. Pre-application seminars would certainly be beneficial and it is vital to ensure all HLF staff are fully briefed on the scheme so that advice is uniform across the regions/home countries. We would strongly recommend HLF working with the MLA partnership in England, CyMAL in Wales and the Scottish Museums Council in order to target and deliver appropriate pre-application support.
- b) During the initiative, opportunities for successful applicants to network would be useful, as would events and promotion of the scheme more widely.

The NCA would be happy to discuss any of the issues outlined above in more detail or discuss more generally the issues around collections development for archives. In the first instance please contact Louise Ray on 020 8392 5347 or louise.ray@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely



Jonathan Pepler
Chair
National Council on Archives