

National Heritage Memorial Fund given clean bill of health by government

02 July 2003

Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, has today announced the satisfactory conclusion of the Quinquennial Review of the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF).

The cross-departmental government review reveals widespread support for NHMF to continue as a public body, covering a broad range of heritage interests as of present. The Review also recognises the need for the UK to retain a fund of last resort to protect heritage at risk and that NHMF should continue to provide financial assistance to rescue items of outstanding national importance at risk of loss or destruction.

The Review found that both the NHMF and its sister organisation the Heritage Lottery Fund enjoy widespread support, with performance and services to applicants continuing to improve.

The Review also welcomes the Fund's broad and flexible remit which enables it to respond to the widespread needs of the UK's heritage.

Liz Forgan, Chair of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, said: "Today's announcement indicates welcome government backing and complements our own evidence of the widespread support for the work of both the Memorial Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is also very good news that the Memorial Fund will continue to rescue and protect the very best of heritage at risk. The reasons for creating the Memorial Fund, and the importance of saving our inheritance for the benefit of future generations, are just as relevant today as they were in 1946.

"With limited resources and depleted reserves since coming to the rescue to save Tyntesfield, our ability to act as a memorial to those who lost their lives for the UK has been hugely reduced but we look forward to carrying on our work with up to £5million available in each of the next three years."

Notes to editors

The National Land Fund – the precursor of the National Heritage Memorial Fund (see below) - was established in 1946 by Hugh Dalton, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer (and wartime head of the Special Operations Executive). It was set up to safeguard the national heritage and was given £50million raised through the sale of surplus military stores. Hugh Dalton's vision for the National Land Fund was that it would be "a war memorial which many would think finer than any works of art in stone or bronze."

The National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) was set up by Parliament in 1980 with the proceeds of the National Land Fund, in the aftermath of an enormous public outcry over the failure to save the Victorian country house, Mentmore and its contents. The Fund was established as a memorial to those who gave their lives for this country and it continues to operate as a fund of 'last resort', focussing on saving heritage which is under threat, whether from sale overseas, the break-up of collections, or, in the case of land, from unsympathetic development.

Since then more than 1,200 items of national importance have benefited from more than £212million, safeguarding items which would otherwise have been lost. These have ranged from the acquisition of the 13th-century Mappa Mundi for Hereford Cathedral to the last surviving World War II destroyer, HMS Cavalier, and the acquisition and subsequent management of Orford Ness nature reserve in Suffolk.

In 1994, the NHMF was given the task of distributing the heritage share of Lottery money for the good causes, which it operates through its Heritage Lottery Fund arm.

Further information

Please contact Katie Owen, National Heritage Memorial Fund press office,
Phone: 020 7591 6036

Images of treasures saved for the nation by NHMF are available from the NHMF press office.