



## **1. Introduction**

The North East Culture Partnership (NECP) welcomes the opportunity to respond to this Review as the balance of responsibility between national agencies in London and the north east and the resultant relationships and levels of funding are vital to our regional vision. We also welcome the conclusions of the 2016 White Paper including the statements supporting leadership at regional and local levels, and fully agree that this is vital to place-making and increasing the 'Equality of Access' which was passionately supported in the introduction.

Since 2013 NECP has become the authentic regional voice for arts and heritage and is directly funded by our 12 Local Authorities, 5 Universities, and supported by the North East Chamber of Commerce, arts and heritage organisations across the North East of England. In 2014/15 we undertook a major consultation across 1000 people in the arts and heritage sectors in the North East to produce the North East of England's regional strategy. The strategy- Case for Culture (C4C) - which the recent DCMS White Paper cited as 'a template for what can be achieved and an ambitious vision for cultural development over the next 15 years', is now being delivered through partnership across the region, nationally and, increasingly, internationally.

As well as a Board and advisory group, NECP continues to have a network of sub-groups - including Universities, Business, Children and Young People, International and Festivals - and links to user and provider groups, such as culture-based What Next? and the regional Historic Environment Forum. As a result, the views of NECP are informed by the wider cultural, heritage and arts community in the region. Additionally, our links with the Local Enterprise Partnerships and the Combined Authorities as well as the regional Chamber of Commerce ensure that our strategy is linked to the wider socio-economic agendas. The views presented in this paper, therefore, are well based and founded on this network.

NECP is funded through a combination of allocations from all the regional local authorities, the universities, help in kind from partners including the North East Chamber of Commerce and, significantly in this context, national bodies, including the Arts Council and Historic England. Our launches for the regional strategy were supported by ACE and Historic England and their Chairs spoke at the House of Commons reception for the strategy – The Case for Culture.

## **2. Background**

As back ground, we would emphasise the following points:

- The innovative nature of the partnership developed in the North East – NECP - and the opportunity it provides for delivering regionally agreed priorities, as articulated in the regional cultural strategy: The North East Case for Culture.
- The record of collaboration and the value the North East has consistently attached to culture and heritage over the past 20 years. Additionally, the role culture and heritage

has played and continues to play in the socio-economic regeneration of the region. The region has shown itself willing and able to develop its own vision, based on wide-spread collaboration.

- The particular challenges that the North East faces in continuing our commitment to culture and heritage, including rurality, reduction in funding, potential loss of expertise and the need to invest in partnership building to enable new models of collaboration to be developed. We have come a long way on our journey and we are looking to continue.
- ***To achieve this, we want to ensure that the North East continues to have influence relating to heritage including legislation, policy and funding. Our agreed regional cultural strategy can continue to inform national policy-making and funding streams, including those of the exchequer and lottery distributors, including HLF.***
- ***We would stress the importance of these policy and funding agencies, both exchequer and lottery, to be innovative and to work both collectively and in partnership with regional organisations such as NECP.***

It is against this background that we make our comments on the questions raised in the tailored review of the NHMF and the HLF

### 3. Discussion

- C4C identifies investment as a critical component for the delivery of the regional vision. We have a priority to increase investment from £100 million to £300million in the next 15 years and, through C4C, identify where this would be made to help culture and heritage bring further benefits to the region and its communities. NE has had great success in recent years in securing major capital funds into heritage development projects in the NE ( such as Hadrians Wall, Auckland Castle, Beamish, Durham Cathedral, Middlesbrough Town Hall and many others) and partners in the region cite contact with the regional HLF team as supportive and developmental in developing funding bids
- ***Importantly, the HLF in the north East is a core part of this regional and sub-regional partnership building. They are, for example, an observer on the NECP Board and a key member of the North East Historic Environment Forum. This regional positioning by the HLF is a model of sectoral cooperation that could be repeated by other Lottery distributors.***
- ***We welcome and support the HLF's model of regional governance, with a strong regional team delivering both policy, partnership and resources. Involvement of their regional Board is critical to this engagement.***
- Our success in building cultural and heritage partnerships is evidenced by our successes in attracting the Great Exhibition of the North and the three Great Places Schemes in the region. Heritage remains a critical art of all of these initiatives and the work of the regional HLF in the strategy and now the delivery will be vital.
- An increasingly important issue is the loss of specialist skills, particularly in individual local authorities and smaller voluntary and commercial organisations. The local authorities' capacity for enablement, innovation and bringing together collective-working is therefore severely reduced. The NECP and sub-regional groupings have sought to address this through partnership, but the loss of heritage expertise in some areas remains a core issue in the region.
- This means that the future success of strategic, project and delivery plans rely not only on partnership, but also the voluntary and charitable sectors to supply some of the necessary expertise. The longevity of these organisations is critical to continuing the regional momentum – a pattern which is also evident in other cultural sectors.
- ***The Resilience Funding of the HLF is to be welcomed and a strategic approach to filling some of these longer term gaps would be a significant contribution to the heritage sector. Levels of investment and funding remain buoyant in some***

**sectors and in some areas, building on a record of innovative and creative partnership, but more remains to be done.**

- Philanthropic and other matching funding also remains challenging in the region and therefore the process of developing schemes relies on a certain degree of risk assessment for the future success of schemes. The HLF in the North East acknowledges this and seeks to work with partners, including the NECP, to address the issue.
- This is helped by the NE Region HLF team co-joining the development role of its staff with the grant-giving. In this way, the HLF again becomes part of the planning and delivery process and has a greater synergy with regional programmes of work – this too is a model that could be repeated by other lottery distributors.
- As suggested above, the issue of squeezed income is faced by smaller cultural organisations in general, where the lack of back-up of local expertise and the broader requirement to fit in to national funding frameworks means that they are placed under increased pressure. The work of the HLF in helping develop sustainable strategies for its partner organisations is to be welcomed, but more remains to be done to allow them to develop longer-term commercial strategies.
- We believe that if HLF and other lottery distributors were to allow its grant regimes and lottery decisions to be flexible, they would see greater benefits through closer fits with Local Enterprise Partnerships and Combined Authority priorities. This link could be supported both at a national level and through the work of the DCMS and its partner departments. By tighter local focus on successful and innovative schemes, greater impact can be achieved.
- The building of place depends to a great extent on the heritage and historic cultural values that are important – these too need to be defined at a local and regional level. We welcome the HLF involvement with the NECP and also the North East Historic Environment Forum. Such engagement allows the HLF to be part of the development of regional policy and place making and also seek to add value with its own contribution alongside those of the partners.
- ***Any work at regional level must be supported at national level in a two way conversation. We acknowledge the need to have some level of centralised organisation for efficiency, but this should not be at the expense of regional and sub-regional priorities. The HLF has kept and is strengthening its regional boards and localized decision making. This must continue to be supported not only nationally by the HLF but through the DCMS and central government co-ordinating its activity across departments.***
- ***This was exemplified recently by the confusion in the sector when the Great Places Scheme was run by HLF/ACE almost in parallel with the Great Exhibition process – run directly by DCMS. The sector was faced with a period of intense bidding when, in some cases, resources were not readily available to do this.***

#### **4. Review Questions**

In terms of the specific questions raised by the review, the NECP has a view based on its strategic positioning, and the detail of, for example, the grant giving process, will need to be better assessed by our regional partners in receipt of grants. We would, however, make the following observations:

- The current governance model allows us to engage strategically and, reciprocally, the HLF to engage strategically as well as operationally in regional decision making.
- There is a need to keep the work of the NHMF and HLF separate from Government, but as is argued above, Government also need to engage in the development of the appropriate policy, based on regional knowledge, as articulated by the partners including HLF. The recent Industrial Strategy, for example, is a case where national

policy and priority must be developed from regional strengths and need. As an independent organisation, the HLF can support Government and other partners to ensure heritage and culture has a role to play in wider strategies.

- HLF works with local partnerships and also provides the necessary local leadership. However, there could be more support nationally for its efforts to work more closely with the LEPs for example.
- Through this leadership and its partnerships with NECP and NEHEF, the HLF can help develop individuals and organisations, including small businesses. This is important in a regional sector where there are 4,600 cultural organisations with an average of 6 employees per organisation but where 7.7% of people work independently.
- We welcome the work by the HLF in identifying regional “black spots” in HLF investment; these provide some focus for attention, but would add a caution that these do not run counter to regional and sub-regional priorities, but provide a longer term assessment of where partnership and investment will be needed.

## **5. Recommendations**

In summary therefore, NECP would recommend to DCMS the following:

- Recognise the role that culture and heritage has not only within the sector itself, but also the impact it has on individual, organisational and wider socio-economic spheres. NECP working with HLF, Historic England and others can inform this regionally.
- Support and strengthen the regional structure of the HLF and explore it as a model for other lottery distributors in strategic planning, scheme development and funding.
- Provide central government support for the work of the NECP in partnership with the HLF in helping draw together all the relevant partners to deliver on our collective vision for the region – The Case for Culture.
- Celebrate the record of partnership in the North East by acknowledging the innovative model of NECP and investing in cultural partnerships developed in the region. We are delighted to have been cited in the White Paper and we now need to be given the responsibility to deliver on our aspirations. The support of government and organisations such as HLF’s are an important part of this.
- Continue to review cross-departmental government policy and funding across England both to redress the “urgent and significant” imbalance and complement the work of lottery distributors through involving all relevant departments.
- Use C4C as a delivery framework for the North East with the HLF’s partnership with NECP and the Historic Environment Forum as integral to its success.

NECP would welcome the opportunity to be further involved with the review and contribute additional information. We would also welcome a visit to the region by the review team and a face-to-face meeting as appropriate.

**North East Culture Partnership, April 2017**

[www.case4culture.org.uk](http://www.case4culture.org.uk)