

Summary of English Nature's response to Heritage Lottery Fund's consultation on 'Our Heritage, Our Future, Your Say' document.

The Heritage Lottery Fund's (HLF) funding for natural heritage projects has made a significant contribution to nature conservation across the UK, especially with respect to delivery of the England Biodiversity Strategy. For example, English Nature welcomed its partnership working relationship with the HLF in managing delivery of the highly successful Tomorrow's Heathland Heritage programme. Through this programme more than 145 partners working on 28 projects will collectively deliver in excess of 70% of the Lowland Heathland Biodiversity Action Plan habitat restoration target. There is demand and an unmet need to develop and deliver further partnership, transformational projects such as this focusing on other habitats. This is a niche which HLF could continue to fill with sufficient resources at its disposal.

Demand for funding natural heritage projects continues to far outweigh the funds available. This is evidenced by the Defra England Biodiversity Strategy report produced to analyse the cost and funding of biodiversity in England which indicated a sizeable funding shortfall. Further evidence comes from English Nature's recently launched 'Countdown 2010' biodiversity grant scheme which received 140 applications in one month requesting £18million with only £2million available for distribution.

There is an increasing awareness in society of the vital role that a healthy, diverse natural environment plays in everybody's quality of life and the importance of safeguarding natural heritage assets for future generations. HLF funding has enabled the delivery of many innovative and successful natural heritage projects, raising awareness and improving understanding of the natural environment as well as enabling community involvement. Funding must continue to be made available to maintain this momentum and sustain these benefits in the long term. English Nature is particularly keen to see delivery of natural heritage projects which truly integrate environmental, social and economic objectives and the English Nature led, HLF funded, Minerals Valley project in the north east is a good example of this approach.

As a result of this and the DCMS 'National Lottery Shares 2009' consultation, English Nature is very keen to see the proportion of funds available for the natural heritage at least maintained and preferably increased.

28 February 2006.