

The Heritage Alliance

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Communities and Local Government Select Committee
House of Commons
7 Millbank
London SW1P 3JA

By email to clgev@parliament.uk

12 April 2012

Dear Sirs,

Re: European Regional Development fund

Please find enclosed our evidence pertaining to the Committee's Inquiry on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). For further details or information please contact:

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Yours faithfully,
Emma Robinson

The Heritage Alliance

Our members are non-government, voluntary and private organisations that promote, conserve, study and involve the public in our heritage.

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Communities and Local Government Select Committee

Evidence from The Heritage Alliance

European Regional Development fund: April 2012

The Heritage Alliance

- The Heritage Alliance is the largest coalition of heritage interests in England. Together its members own, manage and care for the vast majority of England's historic environment. Established in 2002 as Heritage Link, the Alliance was established to promote the central role of the non-Government movement in the heritage sector
- The Heritage Alliance represents 92 Members - major national and regional non-Government organisations, from larger bodies such as the National Trust, to many smaller organisations such as the Association of Building Preservation Trusts – which are in turn supported by over five million members, thousands of local groups and over 450,000 volunteers
- Alliance Members range from specialist advisers, practitioners and managers, volunteers and owners, to national funding bodies and organisations leading regeneration and access projects. Their specialist knowledge and expertise across a huge range of issues - regeneration and asset transfer - is a highly valuable national resource, much of which is contributed on a voluntary basis for public benefit
- This evidence has been prepared following feedback from Alliance Members with particular experience of the ERDF.

Summary

- The historic environment makes an important contribution to all three ERDF objectives, and the ERDF has been an important source of historic environment funding in the past
- The benefits to English taxpayers of ERDF-funded heritage-led regeneration schemes in England are significant. These include economic, social and environmental benefits
- There are many strong examples of heritage-led regeneration projects across the regions, from town-centre urban renewal schemes to match-funded revitalisation of internationally important heritage sites such as Hadrian's Wall
- As many of the schemes were strongly supported by the RDAs this type of scheme has become much more difficult to promote since their abolition
- Under the new system DCLG should ensure it 1/ promotes continuously ERDF funding across the regions, especially to the small local and community groups 2/

ensures sufficient support mechanisms are in place to enable local and community groups to access ERDF funding 3/ ensures the knowledge base and contacts accumulated by the RDAs are not lost, 4/ simplify the processes for administration, assessment and payment of ERDF, and 5/ ensures historic environment representation on the regional Local Management Committees.

The questions

1. How, and on what, is ERDF spent?

- The historic environment makes an important contribution to all three ERDF objectives, and the ERDF has been an important source of historic environment funding in the past. Within England, Cornwall and the Scilly Isles receive funding under the convergence objective; all other English regions receive funding under the competitiveness and employment objectives
- One of the many uses for ERDF funds has been its contribution to heritage-led regeneration, particularly of town centres. Examples of areas that have benefitted from regeneration schemes funded through ERDF match-funding include: Wisbech, Great Yarmouth, Cromer, Thetford, Swaffam, Halesworth, North Lowestoft (East of England); Chatham (South East); and Wakefield waterfront (West Yorks / Lancs)
- Internationally important heritage sites – irreplaceable public goods, which also contribute significantly to the tourist economy – have also benefitted from ERDF funding, including Hadrian’s Wall and Dover Castle
- We believe this has been an effective use of the funds with many good examples across the Regions. But as many of the schemes were strongly supported by RDAs this type of scheme has become much more difficult to promote since their abolition

2. Is the taxpayer in England obtaining value for money from the ERDF?

- The purpose of the ERDF is to reduce disparities both within and between member states, so it is important to remember this is not entirely a question of value for English taxpayers
- However, we believe the benefits to English taxpayers of ERDF-funded heritage-led regeneration schemes in England are significant.

Economic benefits

- The tourism sector - driven by our heritage - is Britain’s third largest export earner, worth around £115 billion a year to GDP and supporting around 2.6 million jobs (Source: Visit Britain ‘GREAT campaign’ 2012 <http://bit.ly/HtZ6RI>). Heritage remains the most cited reason for people to visit Britain (Source: Heritage Lottery Fund ‘Investing in Success’ 2010 <http://bit.ly/IGnbm>).
- Every pound invested in the historic environment directly contributes on average an additional £1.60 to the local economy over a ten year period (Source: English Heritage ‘Heritage Counts’ 2010 <http://bit.ly/fshbet>).

Social benefits

- All over the country people care passionately about their historic environment. 93 per cent of adults agree that 'when trying to improve local places it is worth saving their historic features'. And 2011 saw a sharp rise in membership figures for heritage groups at a time when people are tightening their belts (Source: English Heritage 'Heritage Counts' 2011 <http://bit.ly/p4M9om>).
- Heritage-led regeneration can provide important community spaces and house key community services
- Restoration of much-loved local landmarks gives people pride in their local area and contributes to community cohesion
- Urban renewal reduces the number of derelict spaces available for crime and antisocial behaviour
- Urban renewal fosters wellbeing, enjoyment and a strong sense of place.

Environmental benefits

- The most environmentally-friendly approach to regeneration develops brownfield land first. The re-use of our existing building stock has much to offer in the process of sustainable development and meets environmental needs by reducing the loss of embodied energy
- There is considerable overlap between the natural and historic environment because our landscape has been fashioned by the hand of humans over the centuries.

Example: Manningham Mills in Bradford

Grade II listed Manningham Mills in Bradford, once the largest Mill in the world, now houses flats, a conference space and a community centre. The conference space and community centre – which houses all sorts of community services, from a community café and IT suite to keep fit classes and the local performing arts group – was funded through Objective 2 of the ERDF.

Manningham Mills Community Association (MMCA) was formed in 1995 by a group of local people who expressed concern over the future of one of Bradford's major landmarks. Its aim was to ensure the long-term development of the mill and its contribution to economic and social development of the surrounding community.

Manningham Mills Community Centre opened its doors in July 2007 and started providing services to the people who live and work in the area. The centre generates income through short daily, weekly and monthly lets and its IT suite is currently being utilised by Bradford College. It provides co-hosted group activities such as keep fit and a community cafe. The MMCA has generated substantial income streams that have allowed a shift from 70 per cent grant funded to 10 per cent grant funded in 2011 with 90 per cent as income revenue.

3. Could the funds contributed to, and paid out on, regeneration through ERDF be spent more effectively by repatriating ERDF to the Government in London?

The Alliance finds it difficult to answer this question without clarity on what this proposal would mean in practice.

Before answering this question, we would appreciate clarity over the following issues:

- Is this question suggesting England might not make payments into the Fund and that DCLG should decide whether or not it makes any funding available within England?
- Is this possible under article 167 of the Lisbon Treaty, which requires the EU to take cultural heritage into account in all its actions? If the ERDF is repatriated to London, would it remain an action of the EU?
- Would the funding change? Would the objectives change?

4. With the abolition of the Regional Development Agencies responsibility for ERDF in England passes to DCLG. What effects are these changes having on the administration, assessment and payment of ERDF?

It is the view of The Heritage Alliance that disparities within England are arguably better dealt with by the centralised system brought about by the abolition of the RDAs, because this allows for a countrywide overview. However, in the past the processes for accessing ERDF have been notoriously complex and must be simplified and made easier for local groups and community groups to apply for.

It will also be important that DCLG considers how it will transfer the valuable knowledge-base and existing relationships with funders and heritage bodies held by the RDAs.

As the ERDF is now one of the few remaining sources of funding for larger heritage-led regeneration projects outside the Heritage Lottery Fund following the loss of RDA funding, it is important it is continuously promoted.

We would like to see DCLG:

- Provide simplified processes for administration, assessment and payment of ERDF
- Related to the above, consider carefully how the new system will meet the needs of and support local and community groups, in line with the Localism Act 2011
- Ensure local and community groups are provided with clear signposting and advice on how to access ERDF funding, and how to get involved with the design of the ERDF programmes
- Ensure the knowledge base and contacts accumulated by the RDAs are not lost in the transfer
- Invite regional historic environment voluntary groups to join the Local Management Committees. The Heritage Alliance would be happy to help DCLG to identify interested regional groups.

The Heritage Alliance
April 2012