

Lottery Landscapes

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Introduction

The National Lottery is an important source of rural funding: according to the Cabinet Office (1999), in 1998-99 Lottery spending was the second largest source of funding for rural areas at £208m. This article provides a brief assessment of the impact of this funding on countryside conservation and recreation. The research upon which this article is based involved the development of a database of all application and award data kept by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Millennium Commission and figures released by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) concerning awards made by the respective Sports and Arts Councils and National Lottery Charities Board (NLCB) for the period November 1994 to 31 December 1998. As well as allowing us to explore the quantitative impacts of the Lottery on the countryside, the database was used to select a series of Lottery funded countryside projects as case studies for more in-depth investigation.

Defining 'Countryside Conservation'

We make no apologies for beginning with a discussion of the scope of our research. If this is not clear, there are bound to be questions about the significance and value of the study. Deciding whether particular projects should be included in our analysis and then dividing them into specific types is complicated by the incidental nature of the benefits of some projects, the fact that some projects include suburban or semi-rural locations, and by the limitations of the source data.

Included within our definition of 'countryside conservation' are 'wildlife' or 'nature' conservation and 'landscape' or 'aesthetic' conservation; but also public access to, and enjoyment of these environmental assets. The selected projects therefore include those that incorporate one or more of the following components:

- land acquisition to safeguard flora and fauna, cultural landscapes and scenic areas;
- habitat or landscape restoration or creation;
- education and interpretation about nature and

landscape and/or the means to help the public have access to, and enjoyment of, them;

- surveying and site assessment;
- demonstration programmes to spread good practice; and
- staff and volunteer training to enhance the skills needed to protect the countryside heritage

Thus the term 'countryside conservation' embraces a wide range of projects and programmes funded through the Lottery.

In classifying countryside conservation projects into categories for our analysis we encountered a number of issues including: Should we include projects where the countryside conservation benefits are incidental? Should environmental projects (such as the ex-situ conservation of UK biodiversity) be included? What is countryside (many projects cover both town and country)?

In answering such questions, we have had to be pragmatic and arrived at rather subjective conclusions. For example, the analysis excluded consideration of city farms; projects involving Groundwork Trusts located in urban areas, urban parks and arboreta, but included parks and Millennium Greens located in the countryside and urban fringe. Our definition of countryside conservation included the protection of broad countryside landscape areas, and the preservation of historic designed landscapes, but excluded the restoration of gardens, and of urban parks. Also excluded were the preservation of conspicuous built features in the countryside such as churches, follies or windmills.

In order to reflect better the wide range of countryside conservation projects funded by the Lottery, a distinction was drawn between 'primary' and 'secondary' countryside conservation projects, which were then sub-divided into a number of project types:

- **Primary countryside conservation** includes projects involving the restoration or conservation of countryside habitats and wildlife, the improvement of public access to the countryside, and training, education and research.
- **Secondary countryside conservation** projects include those concerned with the conservation of inland waterways, collections of biotic material relating to UK biodiversity, historic parks, archaeological and historic landscapes, and the construction or enhancement of conservation centres and open spaces linking town and country.

The Impacts of the Lottery on the Countryside

The Lottery has provided significant additional finance for countryside conservation. During its first four years, from November 1994 to 31 December 1998, the Lottery Distributing Bodies (LDBs) awarded £364 million for 429 countryside conservation projects (Bishop et al., 2000a). This equates roughly to the combined grant-in-aid to the government conservation agencies for this period.¹ It represents an average of nearly £15.00 per ha of land in the UK or just over £6.00 per person for the whole of the UK.²

The £364 million is made up of £154 million for projects whose primary purpose was countryside conservation and £210 million for projects with secondary benefits for countryside conservation (see above). Funding for countryside conservation (both primary and secondary) represents 7% of the £5.5 billion awarded by the LDBs to all good causes over the same period. As Table 1 indicates, a broad range of countryside conservation work has been funded through the Lottery:

Table 1: The Range of National Lottery Funding for Different Countryside Conservation Activities

<p>Primary countryside conservation projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • habitat and landscape conservation (£113.9 million). Many of these projects also provide improved public access, training, education and research, and so overlap with the other primary countryside conservation categories listed below. Some of these projects involved land acquisition, which was a significant aspect of the countryside conservation funded by the HLF;³ • the improvement of public access to countryside habitats and landscapes (£19.1 million); • training initiatives and awards (£2.4 million); • educational initiatives (£1.9 million); • research (£0.4 million). <p>Secondary countryside conservation projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the conservation of inland waterways (£90.8 million); • the conservation of collections of biotic material relating to UK biodiversity (£51.7 million); • the conservation of historic parks and gardens (£27.2 million); • the conservation of archaeological and historic landscapes (£12.2 million); • the construction or enhancement of conservation centres (£11.1 million); • Millennium Greens (£10 million); • integrated, area-based schemes (£6.5 million).

The Millennium Commission and Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) have been the principal funders of countryside conservation projects amongst the LDBs. The Millennium Commission has awarded grants totalling £211 million (58% of the total Lottery funding for countryside conservation) whilst the HLF has awarded grants totalling £148 million (41%). The other LDBs (the National Lottery Charities Board, respective Arts Councils and Sports Councils) have provided some finance for countryside conservation (a combined total of £4.9 million).⁴

These headline figures for total funding for countryside conservation hide some important distinctions between the practice of the two main funders. Millennium Commission funding was focused on large-scale 'landmark' projects, such as the award of £14.5 million for the creation of a coastal park along 22 km of South Wales' coastline, incorporating community forests, woodland, major open spaces and redevelopment areas. Millennium Commission awards larger than £1 million account for four in five of the number, and 98% of the total value, of awards for countryside conservation.⁵ In comparison, the HLF has tended to fund more small-scale projects: 45% of total value and 96% of the total number of HLF awards for countryside conservation have been for amounts less than £1 million.

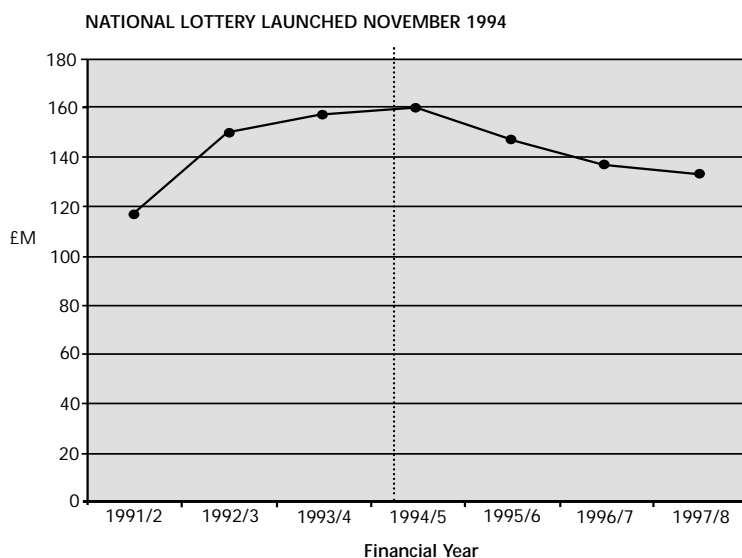
Application success rates for countryside conservation projects have generally been higher than for other good causes. For the Millennium Commission, 17% of applications for countryside conservation were successful, which compares with a 6% success rate for other capital projects. For the HLF, 81% of applications for countryside conservation were successful, which compares with a 52% success rate for other heritage sectors. There are a number of potential reasons for this relatively high success rate but we believe that it represents a number of factors including: low number of total applications from the countryside sector and associated lack of competition within this sector for Lottery funding.

Additionality

When the Lottery was established, the Government gave a commitment that the funds distributed through the LDBs would be additional to government funding.⁶ In recent years, this issue has received renewed attention with the funding of health and education programmes by the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) (which some would argue should be supported entirely from tax revenue) (Goodwin, 1998) and the use of NOF as a funding source for the Prime Minister's recently announced initiatives on the environment (Blair, 2000).⁷ It is very difficult to calculate whether Lottery funding has in fact been 100% additional to

traditional sources of funding for countryside conservation, since there has never been any comprehensive study into its funding base. However, in broad terms, our research shows that the advent of the Lottery has coincided with a period during which government funding of countryside conservation, as measured through the funds made available to the countryside conservation agencies, has remained generally static (see figure 1).

Figure 1: The Level of Grant-in-aid to the Countryside Conservation Agencies (RPI adjusted to 31 December 1998)



Notes

1. Figure 1 shows the finance paid by agencies through grant schemes since before the advent of the Lottery and the grants announced for primary and secondary countryside conservation projects by the LDBs, adjusted to take account of inflation using the RPI (all items) index. This chart does not include finance paid through agri-environment schemes or management agreements, only grants paid by the agencies and awarded by the LDBs
2. The government agencies for countryside conservation comprise: the Countryside Commission (now Countryside Agency), the Countryside Council for Wales, English Nature, the Environment and Heritage Service (DOE NI) and Scottish Natural Heritage.

The 'Lottery Winners' - Organisations

The distribution of Lottery awards has varied greatly between sectors, with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) receiving two thirds of the Lottery funding for countryside conservation. By far the most important recipient of Lottery awards for primary countryside

conservation were the Wildlife Trusts, who secured 160 grants totalling £35.8 million by 31 December 1998. Of this, £33.9 million was through 147 grants from the HLF. As a whole, local authorities had collectively been awarded £38.4 million through 36 grants for primary countryside conservation projects. Other conservation bodies that have been awarded relatively high levels of Lottery funding for primary countryside conservation include the Woodland Trust, the National Trust for Scotland, the RSPB and the National Trust. As of 31 December 1998, British Waterways was the largest single recipient of Lottery awards for secondary countryside conservation by value, having been awarded £57.2 million through two grants. Also successful were trusts set up expressly to apply to the Lottery (for example the Millennium Forest for Scotland Trust). By 31 December 1998, such trusts had been awarded £49 million from the Millennium Commission.

In comparison with NGOs and local authorities, the government agencies involved in countryside conservation have collectively not received a high level of Lottery funding. By 31 December 1998, the value of Lottery awards made to the agencies for countryside conservation, much of which is being 'routed through' to other recipients, totalled £30 million. This is less than the HLF's funding of the Wildlife Trusts and represents a fairly small proportion (8%) of the value of Lottery awards for countryside conservation.

However, there is significant variation in government agency involvement with the Lottery. The Countryside Agency (formerly the Countryside Commission) and English Nature are the only government agencies to have secured Lottery funding for several large scale projects. The most important of these are: the Millennium Greens programme, (lead by the Countryside Agency and supported by the Millennium Commission), to create new greens for the 21st century; Tomorrow's Heathland Heritage (English Nature/HLF) which aims to restore areas of heathland in Britain; and the Local Heritage Initiative (Countryside Agency/HLF) which offers smaller grants to community-led heritage schemes in England. While

English Nature and the Countryside Agency have attracted grants worth £27.9 million (98% of the funds awarded to countryside agencies by the HLF and the Millennium Commission). The Countryside Council for Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage have secured Lottery funding worth £0.6 million.

The 'Lottery Winners' - Areas

The distribution of Lottery funding for countryside conservation varies significantly between countries and regions. Lottery funding for primary and secondary countryside conservation has been distributed unevenly between UK countries, if measured on a **per capita** or **per hectare** basis (see figures 3 and 4). England and Northern Ireland have received lower levels of funding for countryside conservation **per capita** than other parts of the UK (see figure 3). Northern Ireland has been awarded significantly less for countryside conservation **per hectare** than other UK countries (see figure 4). This distribution is largely due to the Millennium Commission's distribution of finance for large-scale eco-restoration projects and conservation centres. The regional distribution of Lottery funding in England is very uneven, with the North East, North West and the South East receiving markedly less finance per capita than other regions. Such analysis must be treated with some caution as it is not related to 'heritage need', however calculated.

Figure 3: Millennium Commission and Heritage Lottery Fund Finance for Countryside Conservation by Country per capita between November 1994 and 31 December 1998

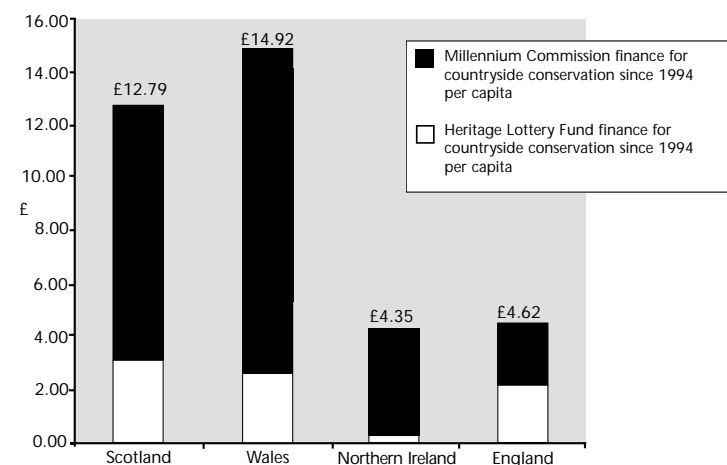
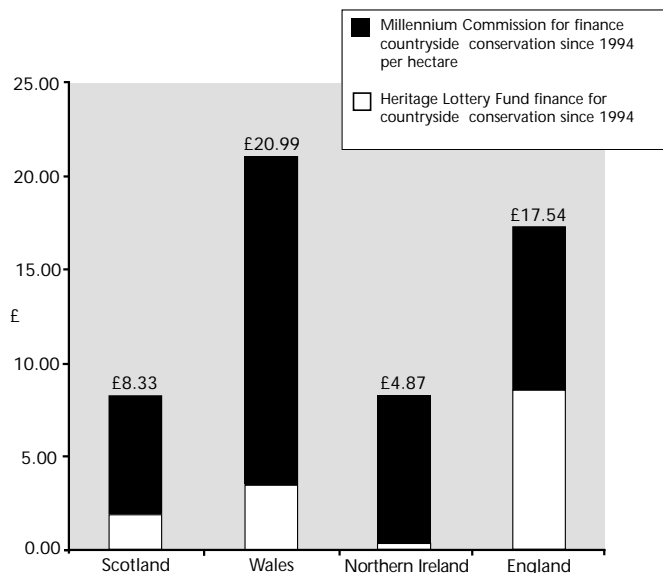


Figure 4: Millennium Commission and Heritage Lottery Fund Finance for Countryside Conservation by Country per hectare between November 1994 and 31 December 1998



The Lottery Landscape of 2020

The funding of countryside conservation has shifted in extent and direction since the advent of the Lottery. The LDBs have emerged as new and significant funding agencies for the land and countryside.⁸ The Lottery money channelled to countryside projects has enabled conservation bodies to expand the scale of work with benefits to biodiversity and landscape conservation, and more public access.

The Lottery funded countryside of 2020 will be one with more woodland, new areas of ‘created’ countryside, improved opportunities for public access, enjoyment and understanding and more land owned by countryside conservation bodies. Nearly 60% of the Millennium Commission’s funding for countryside conservation has gone to woodland creation schemes such as the Millennium Forest for Scotland. HLF has funded a series of ambitious ecological restoration schemes aimed at re-creating lost landscapes (e.g. RSPB’s creation of wetland fen from intensive arable land in East Anglia). The need to assure public benefit has meant that the LDBs have often required public access and interpretation of the conservation measures they are funding. Lottery funding has been a powerful ‘glue’ to link different aspects of countryside conservation: access

with conservation; the natural environment with the built environment; the visual with the scientific; and, access with understanding. The Lottery is also increasing the amount of land owned by conservation bodies: grants from the HLF have helped such bodies acquire over 200 sites covering 50,000 ha.

Beyond the Figures

The influence of the Lottery goes beyond a physical impact on the countryside and its conservation value. Lottery funding is altering the relationship between different bodies in the countryside sector and impacting on countryside policy.

The advent of the Lottery has established a new policy and practice framework for countryside conservation. In particular, it has introduced the Lottery Distributing Bodies as new actors. The LDBs have developed beyond mere funders. Over time, the LDBs and the HLF in particular, have established a policy competence of their own through the appointment of specialist advisors, expert panels and their own staff. Initially the policy role of the LDBs was implicit through individual grant decisions and advice, but more recently the government requirement that they develop distribution strategies has made their policy role explicit.

The government conservation agencies have responded to the opportunities of the Lottery in very different ways. The advent of the Lottery has significantly altered the roles of English Nature and the Countryside Agency in particular. Both of these agencies, unlike their sister organisations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, established dedicated Lottery Units at an early stage of the Lottery’s development. The aim of these Units was to both influence and advise the LDBs on individual grant decisions and to facilitate the development of applications from the agencies for funding related to their own work programmes. Increasingly, conservation agencies are no longer just grant givers but also grant bidders. This new role can put them in competition with some of their partners in the countryside sector (notably conservation NGOs and local authorities).

The Lottery has enhanced and promoted the role of the NGOs as providers of countryside conservation and

enjoyment opportunities. The LDBs now route over 60% of their support for countryside work through NGOs. This has both increased the status of some groups (notably the Wildlife Trusts) and encouraged partnerships and a co-operative style of working. It has done this by funding existing partnerships (e.g. the Tweed Forum) and encouraging the development of new partnerships (e.g. the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust) (Bishop et al., 2000b).

Conclusions

The Lottery has accelerated the amount of conservation and access work, bringing significantly more land into conservation management and opening it up to public access and enjoyment. However, the impact of Lottery funding goes beyond this, it has impacted upon the systems that support countryside conservation and recreation, with qualitative results in terms of what takes place, where, how and by whom.

The picture of impacts painted above is but a snapshot of the early years of the development of the National Lottery and much will change when the new policy directions and devolved structures introduced under the Labour Government work their way through to completed projects. Nevertheless, despite the sums of money flowing to it the countryside sector has yet to maximise the potential benefits of Lottery funding (Gay, 2000). It needs to become more co-ordinated in its contacts with the LDBs and ensure that, where possible, it speaks with a united voice in order to maximise its influence. Such action is important if the 'countryside sector' is to position itself competitively with other calls upon Lottery funding and thus ensure it remains an identifiable and worthwhile 'good cause' that can compete effectively with other sectors such as museums and sport.

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Footnotes:

1 The combined grant-in-aid to the government agencies involved with countryside conservation for the three financial years from 1995/96 to 1997/98 was £373 million.

2 The land area of the UK is 24.419 million ha (Government Statistical Service, 1998). The population of the UK is 59,009 million (ONS, 1998).

3 By May 1999, the HLF had awarded £46.3 million to enable the acquisition of 200 sites with substantial nature conservation interest totalling approximately 52,000 ha. This represents an area three-quarters the size of Exmoor or one third larger than the Isle of Wight.

4 NOF's Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities programme may also benefit countryside nature and landscapes when it is up and running.

5 These statistics hide the distribution of smaller grants through the Millennium Greens programme, which is counted as one award with a value of £10 million. Yet, the programme has involved the distribution of smaller grants for the creation of 250 green spaces in England, averaging between 2 and 4 ha, located in towns, villages and cities.

6 Brooke, P. (1994) National Lottery: Section 26 Directions. Policy Directions issued to the National Heritage Memorial Fund, 20 June.

7 Goodwin, S. (1998) 'The big gamble that has brought riches beyond expectations,' in *The Independent Our* Outdoor Heritage section, 4 March, p4.

8 Department of Culture, Media and Sport (1999) First Report: The HLF. The Stationary Office: London