

St Peters' Bethnal Green PCC - Discussion Paper

We are applying for a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (Enterprise). This is almost exclusively directed at turning the church crypt into a multifunctional community space with a leaning towards enterprise in the business plan. The HLF is the largest grant-making body for heritage buildings and we are in advanced pre-application discussions with a grant of up to £2m the current figure.

Before we go too much further down this road we need to agree as a PCC whether or not we would agree to receive funding if it was offered for our Development works. This brief paper is intended to help our discussion and has three sections: 1. Views of other leaders in our family of churches, 2. Notes sent to a church PCC to help with their thinking, 3. Summary of a report by Theos (the public theology think tank).

1. Church Leaders FB Group discussion - Q: Do you apply for and receive Lottery Fund money?

Richard Frank (St Luke's Redcliffe Gardens) I've always resisted, from the perspective of believing the Lottery to be an enormous problem morally re: the issues of gambling and the 'tax on the poor' stats of who actually pours money in.... On the other hand, given that the money is going to go somewhere, then if I were in a position where that money could be channelled back towards the poor I'd be more open to it... I think! My mind is gradually changing on this (in favour of applying whereas I've been absolutely dead set against until recently).

Graham Hunter (St John's Hoxton) It is entirely legitimate to simultaneously decry the presence of the national lottery in our society (and even campaign for its abolition!) while also receiving money and grants from it. We're not Amish! The only thing to beware is the 'tail wagging the dog' syndrome - money from the Lottery and such sources often comes with strings attached - and we need to be free to turn it down if conditions will undermine our mission goals - the Lord provides for his mission plans after all!

John Valentine (St George's Holborn) We have taken grants from them on the basis that it is how the government has chosen to raise tax now. We had an excellent but heart-felt PCC talking through everything, and were able to come to a unanimous position on it. There are some conditions (eg opening the building and acknowledging the source of the funding). Not straight forward, I know!

Fraser McDermott (St Cuthberts Wembley) When William Booth was criticized about receiving "tainted money" from wealthy donors, he replied, "We will wash it in the tears of the widows and the orphans and lay it on the altar of humanity." In his words we find identification with the poor and redemption for the lost. Instead of piously turning aside proceeds from gambling, we can accept the gift, pray for the giver and use the money for the good of the poor.

2. The Use of Lottery Funds for Church Activities - as addressed by another PCC

- a. The funds arise from gambling - so we need to answer the question "what is wrong with gambling?"
 - i It appeals to our covetous nature and natural greed
 - ii It glorifies chance rather than relying on God's provision
 - iii It runs counter to the principles of stewardship
 - iv It seeks to profit from someone else's loss
- b. We are called to be salt and light (Matt 5:13)

We need to act in a way that is consistent with Biblical principles.

- c. Questions to ask:
 - i Would acceptance of lottery money undermine my witness? (1Cor 10:23-11:1)
 - ii Would acceptance cohere with 'keeping oneself from being polluted by the world'? (Jas 1:27)

Beware of pragmatism, greed or a lack of faith. These can win over principle.

3. Notes on the Theos report 'The National Lottery – is it progressive?'

Using a combination of polling undertaken by ComRes and analysis of existing research into the Lottery, the report reveals that people in Britain's lowest socio-economic groups are more likely to play the lottery than their more affluent counterparts, but they are less likely to benefit from lottery funding. In summary, the research finds that:

- People in C2 and DE categories are significantly more likely to play scratch cards than their counterparts in AB and C1 categories (34% and 25%, compared with 20% and 18% respectively, playing once a month or more). Those in receipt of state benefits are more likely to play scratch cards (26%) than those who are not (22%);
- C2 respondents are the most likely to play draw-based games, with over 67% of interviewees in this category participating once a month or more, compared with 47% of ABs;
- Spending on scratch cards is higher among lower socio-economic groups:
- C2s spend £70.60 per year, while ABs spend £40.64 per year, and the average across the whole sample is £44.18;
- On average, people who earn less than £20,000 spend £55.39 per year on scratch cards, compared with the national average of £44.18;
- Spending is, therefore, considerably higher as a proportion of income in lower income categories (i.e., the average annual spend, £44.18, equates to 0.2% of the income of a household earning £25,000 but 0.4% of the income of a household bringing in £10,000);
- On average, people spend £142.88 on draw-based games annually. Those earning £15,000-20,000 per year have an average annual stake of £174.53;
- Looking specifically at frequent players of draw-based games, those earning £15,000-£20,000 per year have an average weekly stake of £6.73 (£349.96 pa or at least 1.74% of annual household income), the same as respondents with a household income of over £75,001 per year (£349.96 pa or less than 0.47% of annual household income);
- C2s and DEs are the most committed Lottery players, 28% of whom, in each case, say that a reduction in the maximum prize money or withdrawing funding from local projects would not prevent them playing the National Lottery, compared with 20% of ABs;
- The research not only examines Lottery spending, but also where Lottery funding is distributed. Insufficient funding is being invested back into Britain's deprived communities. eg, Blaenau Gwent is the poorest area in the UK, having the highest average IMD score of 67.50. However, it ranks only 133rd when it comes to the amount of lottery funding it receives. Bridgend is ranked second using the IMD index but only 224th in terms of the amount of lottery funding it receives.

Commenting on the research, Paul Woolley, Director of Theos, said:

"This research adds to a growing body of evidence which shows that Lottery players come from poorer backgrounds. They also spend significantly more, especially as a proportion of their household income, than more affluent players.

"National Lottery distributors have an obligation to ensure that all parts of the country have fair access to funds and that awards should be made with a view to reducing economic and social deprivation. In reality, Lottery funding across all the streams – arts, sports, heritage and charitable expenditure – is insufficiently targeted on the communities that need it most.

"The Lottery might have created a new source of funding for projects that would otherwise have remained un-funded, but this has come with a high price tag for Britain's poor. This is about social justice. If the Lottery is to continue, it is essential that a greater proportion of funding is invested back into the communities from which it is taken.

"The old argument that the National Lottery is a 'tax' on the poor for the benefit of the middle classes may have some justification."

(For the report <http://campaigndirector.moodia.com/Client/Theos/Files/NationalLotteryreport.pdf>)