1. **Introduction**

1.1 The British Heart Foundation (BHF) is the largest independent funder of cardiovascular research, and the third largest charitable funder of medical research in the UK. We are working to achieve our vision of a world in which people do not die prematurely or suffer from cardiovascular disease. In the fight for every heartbeat we fund ground-breaking medical research, provide support and care to people living with cardiovascular disease and advocate for cardiovascular disease to be a priority.

1.2 Each year, thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we fund around £100 million of new research across all four nations of the UK, which accounts for more than half of the funding for independent cardiovascular research in the UK. Our funding portfolio extends from laboratory science to clinical trials and population studies. We fund people from PhDs to professors as well as investing in large programme and project grants.

1.3 Due to modern treatments built on our research, huge progress has been made in saving lives. Most babies born in the UK with heart defects now survive and 7 out of 10 people survive a heart attack. But cardiovascular disease still kills 1 in 4 people and affects 7 million people in the UK, so there is so much more to do.

1.4 The BHF welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement to demonstrate the impact of charities such as the BHF in fulfilling a unique role in fostering and supporting civic engagement. This submission will focus on areas where the BHF is active in promoting and stimulating civic engagement and discusses:

- The role that large charities, such as the BHF, play in modern civil society
- Tackling health inequalities
- Volunteering and Employability
- Fundraising and the Community
- BHF retail
- Trustees

2. **The Role and Purpose of Charities in civic society**

2.1 The BHF is proud to be part of the long tradition of the charitable and voluntary sector forming an essential part of fostering, creating and maintaining a strong civic society in the UK. The sector is uniquely placed to mobilise and support people and to undertake activities solely in pursuit of charitable aims and not for private gain or profit. The charitable and voluntary sector is a partner with government to encourage civil society and civic engagement, to contribute to economic growth, support the delivery of public services and help to shape and influence public policy for the benefit of the many thousands of beneficiaries represented by the sector. The voluntary and charitable sector makes a considerable contribution to the UK economy in terms of employment, volunteering and in the case of medical research charities, investment in scientific innovation and medical advancements.

2.2 Medical research charities invested £1.6bn in medical research in the UK in 2016, the biggest proportion of public funding for medical research in the UK. As such, they play a vital role
and unique role in supporting game changing breakthroughs in treatment and care for people living with conditions such as heart disease. For over 50 years, the BHF and its funded professors and researchers have pioneered life saving research and improved outcomes and survival rates for the people living with cardiovascular disease in the UK and beyond and we are proud of the progress we have made and the global impact our research continues to have, representing the interests of our beneficiaries.

2.3 As the sector grows in size and income, thanks to the goodwill and generosity of the public, modern charities must adapt their governance, accountability and management structures to keep pace. In order to continue to operate effectively and efficiently in the modern social, political and economic landscape, larger charities, such as the BHF which employs over 3,600 staff, works with over 19,000 volunteers and runs the largest charity retail network in the UK with over 720 shops, need to invest in their growth to achieve the outcomes that their beneficiaries deserve. Charities highlight and champion the importance of inclusivity, transparency and accountability of the institutions that serve civil society and take responsibility for shaping and fostering civic engagement.

3. Tackling health inequalities

3.1 The BHF’s ambition is to continue to invest £100 million into lifesaving research each year until 2020 and we are making solid progress towards that aim, thanks to the generosity of our supporters and donors. In 2016/17, the BHF invested £107.5m in life saving research, supporting over 550 of the UK’s leading cardiovascular scientists. Through partnering with other research funders and government, the BHF and other medical research charities can achieve great advancements in scientific innovations and outcomes for patients and represent those voices that need to be heard in society. Public investment in scientific research leads to economic growth through increases in private sector productivity and has positive economic and social impacts through successful collaboration between the academic and private sectors.

3.2 The BHF is currently funding over 1,000 critical research projects seeking to make breakthroughs in all aspects of heart and circulatory disease and supports six Centres of Research Excellence across the UK, providing vital infrastructure for our world class researchers. BHF-funded research has led to the development of new drugs, treatment guidelines, policy change and scientific resources that have improved the lives of millions of patients and families in the UK and beyond. Through the BHF’s contribution to the Whitehall Study that uncovered the link between social factors and heart health, it has informed the development of UK governments’ public health policies and World Health Organization guidelines to tackle health inequalities and improve access to preventative interventions and treatment, helping to achieve social inclusivity and cohesiveness.

3.3 A major finding of the Whitehall Study, set-up in 1967, and its sequel was that those in the lowest employment grade were more likely to develop heart disease and die prematurely than their bosses. The studies have also shown that this inequality can’t just be attributed to risk factors such as smoking and obesity but that factors like stress, job-control, and work-family conflict have also been shown to impact a person’s risk of disease. These findings formed the basis for a report on addressing health inequalities by Professor Sir Michael Marmot for the Government in 2010.

1 http://amrc.org.uk/news/charities-funding-contributes-to-uk-medical-research-excellence
This influential report, stemming from pivotal BHF-funded research, is now helping to shape UK governments’ public health policies and showcases how the BHF is central to improving outcomes for disadvantaged and often underrepresented groups in our society.

3.4 The BHF’s Hearty Lives programme aims to reduce these inequalities in heart disease through working in partnership with local authorities, the NHS and non-profit organisations to improve the health of people at greatest risk of CVD and since 2009, over 159,000 people have taken part in Hearty Lives activities. An external national evaluation took place in 2012, which undertook a review of the operation of Hearty Lives over its first three years. The evaluation showcases a variety of key findings, case studies and in-depth evidence of local impact and behaviour change as a result of these community projects being run across the UK.³

3.5 **Nation of Lifesavers**

The BHF’s ambitions are to take the findings from research and use them to drive the best possible patient outcomes in clinical settings, the community and at home. The BHF’s approach to prevention, survival and support drives the implementation of research into practice to improve support for patients, their families and carers. To this end, the BHF provides information and guidance to everyone affected by heart disease and empowers patients and healthcare professionals to join the fight and engage in improving outcomes for all and to take part in supporting their community.

3.6 Across the UK, there are over 30,000 cardiac arrests outside of hospital every year but the survival rate is less than 1 in 10. The BHF aim to increase the rate of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillation through the Nation of Lifesavers campaign, reaching more schools and communities than ever before. Since launching the BHF’s vision of a Nation of Lifesavers in October 2014, around 2.4 million people have been trained in CPR across the UK through the Heartstart and Call Push Rescue schemes, working with community groups and with secondary schools across the UK. Over 3,000 (46% of eligible) secondary schools in the UK have already received BHF CPR training kit and, to support European Restart a Heart Day in 2016, the BHF joined with three other major charities and ambulance services to support the delivery of CPR training across communities, managing to train over 150,000 young people on the day.

3.7 The BHF supports the introduction of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) as a statutory subject for all secondary schools in England and, as part of the Every Child Lifesaver coalition, advocates that first aid and CPR training should be a mandatory component of a new, statutory PSHE curriculum. Teaching first aid as part of the PSHE curriculum for just one hour a year, each year would ensure all children and young people have the opportunity to learn this crucial life skill, building up knowledge and confidence over the course of their time in school and help to foster a sense of civic responsibility for helping to save lives.

4. **Volunteering and employability**

4.1 The BHF’s volunteers continue to make an extraordinary contribution. To many people across the UK, volunteers are the public face of the BHF and they therefore play a vital role. The BHF’s 19,600 retail and fundraising volunteers inform people about the BHF’s work and services and also act increasingly as passionate and informed advocates, campaigning and helping to recruit more supporters. The BHF provides many volunteering opportunities to meet many different needs, including working in our shops, fundraising in the community and at events. The

role of large charities, such as the BHF, in promoting and providing meaningful and varied volunteer opportunities is key to fostering and encouraging a society in which civic participation and engagement is welcomed and facilitated.

4.2 National Citizenship Service
The BHF has some involvement with the National Citizenship Service (NCS) which creates a welcomed opportunity for fundraising as part of the NCS volunteering project and it is an area of collaboration which it is hoped will grow over the coming years. However, the BHF does not support the notion of compulsion in volunteering as this does not help to create the necessary environment to foster meaningful and engaged volunteering relationships.

4.3 Retail Volunteers
Across the retail operation, the BHF plays a big part in helping to deliver employability and support many people referred for work experience from Job Centre Plus – in July 2017 this amounted to around 6,000 volunteering hours across the BHF retail estate. The BHF sees volunteering as a route to employment and is working with a consortium of large employers to provide work experience placements for the NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) population through the Movement to Work programme. In the last year, over 600 BHF retail volunteers achieved or were working towards an NVQ and over 2000 of the younger volunteers worked towards a Duke of Edinburgh Award.

4.4 In 2016, 20% of all paid vacancies in the BHF retail operation were filled by previous volunteers and following the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in April, the BHF has appointed its first Apprentice to the BHF Apprentice scheme, who was a former volunteer and winner of the South West Young Volunteer of the Year award. The BHF is working hard to establish a career path from volunteering to apprenticeships and beyond.

5. Fundraising and the Community
5.1 The BHF is almost entirely reliant on public donations to fund its lifesaving and pioneering research and does not directly receive any government funding for its research via contracts or otherwise. Without successfully achieving broad engagement and reach amongst the community in order to gain the support of the generous British public, the BHF would simply not be able to carry out its work and we therefore take our responsibilities to our supporters very seriously. The BHF is committed to ensuring that the charity sector values long-term relationships with donors and upholds a duty of care by charities to their supporters. Charities are the bridge between donors and beneficiaries, allowing the generous British public to help those people and causes they care about and engage in civil society through raising awareness and helping others.

5.2 Community Fundraising
The over 250 BHF Community Fundraising groups spread across the UK are at the heart of the BHF’s fight for every heartbeat. They are the voice of the BHF in local communities across the UK and help the BHF to reach more people at a local level. BHF groups are made of empowered, dedicated volunteers who raise vital funds and awareness on behalf of the BHF, by hosting fundraising events and activities such as extravagant balls to bag packing, collections to ceilidhs, golf days to garden parties. BHF Community Fundraising groups often forge lifelong friendships and help to build social capital in their local communities by bringing together skills, experience, talent and knowledge to inspire communities for a common shared cause.

5.3 Mass Participation Events
Thousands of people across the UK also take part in our mass participation fundraising events, such as ‘Dechox’, where in March 2016 over 16,000 people signed up via our social media campaign to raise funds by giving up chocolate for a month, the London to Brighton Bike Ride which in 2016 attracted over 14,000 cyclists and ‘MyMarathon’, another social media campaign which was successful in gathering over 30,000 people to raise funds for the BHF over the course of the year. It’s clear that by offering people opportunities to come together to engage and participate in events with a philanthropic cause, charities help to engender a sense of common purpose for the benefit of wider society and therefore foster civic engagement. The broad reach and engagement that the BHF achieves across the UK is testimony to the unique role that large charities, such as the BHF, play in encouraging and facilitating civic engagement.

5.4 Working with Partners
The BHF’s partnerships with industry and corporates are key to broadening reach and engagement and essential to helping meet fundraising goals. Through the National Charity Partnership with Tesco and Diabetes UK, the organisations worked to support people to make better choices and live longer and healthier lives. More than 17 million people have been reached through the ‘Let’s Do This’ campaign and 254,000 people have been helped to eat more healthily or become more active, helping to improve their health outcomes. A partnership with Nationwide, who funded CPR kits for over 220 schools, also resulted in CPR training for 3,000 of their staff, and training has also been delivered to other corporate partners – Airbus Operations, Travelodge and David Lloyd.

6. BHF Retail
6.1 As the largest charity retailer in the UK with over 720 stores, the BHF is taking the fight against heart disease into communities across the UK and the shops welcome around 60 million visitors each year. BHF shops contribute to the wider social fabric of local communities by being a resource centre that provides information and support to people with heart disease and a hub for volunteering and training opportunities. All BHF shops are professionally run and very well presented, playing a vital role in helping to develop thriving high streets and are an asset to the local community.

6.2 BHF shops provide invaluable additional services to the local community through a number of unique activities which mean that a BHF retail outlet is more than just a shop:

- BHF Furniture and Electrical stores offer a free furniture collection service and help to redirect over 65,000 tonnes of furniture a year that local authorities would otherwise have had to deal with, including 130,000 sofas and 5 million books
- Community Boards in all stores highlight information for heart patients, provide leaflets and promotion of our confidential Heart helpline staffed by cardiac nurses
- All shop staff and volunteers are trained in CPR through the kits held in store and which are also lent out to the local community. Some stores also hold training sessions for the local community
- Many BHF shops hold information on where defibrillators the BHF has helped place are located
- There are strong links to our thousands of BHF-funded researchers across the UK who often come to the stores to give presentations
- The BHF has an award-winning partnership with 80 top Universities and local communities through our ‘Pack for Good’ campaign encouraging students to donate unwanted items to their local BHF stores
The virtuous cycle of charity retail is one in which there are no losers and there are tangible benefits for wider society: through the reuse and recycling of goods, shared value is created which allows the generation of funds for the cause, regenerates local high streets, creates jobs and volunteering opportunities, which in turn helps to build awareness and an emotional connection to the cause for the wider benefit of all and a visible presence on the high street of the benefit of civic engagement and participation.

7. Governance and Leadership – Promoting Trusteeship
7.1 The BHF’s ability to retain its position as the UK’s heart charity and the biggest funder of cardiovascular research is underpinned by strong, effective governance and leadership. Every charity needs a strong board of Trustees to guide and shape it and becoming a charity Trustee is an important example of a significant commitment to civic engagement and participation. The BHF Board of Trustees is made up of 14 highly skilled volunteers who bring knowledge and insight from business, the voluntary sector and medicine whose breadth of experience ensure that the Board is well equipped to support the charity in moving forward with its strategic aims.

7.2 The increased scrutiny and attention to charity governance in recent times has highlighted the extent of commitment, expertise and personal dedication involved for charity Trustees of large, modern charities generating significant income and expenditure. In an increasingly complex regulatory environment where the risk to individuals is heightened and where the nature of participation is voluntary, the ability to attract and retain such talent in time may be a challenge. The BHF therefore welcomes further investment via the Charity Commission to bolster the recruitment, retention and ongoing support of Trustees and to promote the role to encourage civic engagement.

8 September 2017