

THE ARCHAEOLOGY FORUM

a grouping of independent bodies concerned with archaeology

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES BRIEFING TO APPAG

The role of local government archaeology services

- Complete geographical coverage of archaeology services in England (90 in total) has been achieved over the past 40 years with the active support of the sector
- Local government archaeology services are already responsible for protecting and managing the 95% of the archaeological heritage that is not scheduled
- They have a pivotal role in the archaeology and development process which currently generates £150m investment in archaeology, largely from the private sector. The role includes supporting government policy on sustainable development by ensuring that archaeology is dealt with at an early stage of large housing and infrastructure developments
- They maintain Historic Environment Records (HERs)
- They enhance protection of the rural heritage via agri-environment schemes
- They are important for local community engagement and education, and have a significant role in enabling local and regional research

In 2005 local government archaeology services

- employed 406 staff
- dealt with 14000 developments that had archaeological implications
- enabled 3500 archaeological projects to take place
- dealt with 2000 agri-environment schemes
- maintained records for over 1,000,000 archaeological sites in HERs, growing annually at 2-5%
- dealt with c20,000 enquiries from the public
- invested £4.5 million in HERs

Current status and threats to archaeology services

- Currently, funding of archaeology services by local authorities is discretionary and there are no local government performance measures for archaeology – or any other aspect of the historic environment
- There are no guidelines or standards that govern the composition or role of archaeology services
- Archaeology services are therefore very vulnerable to cuts resulting from the decisions of individual local authorities. This is rapidly becoming a crisis for sector because
 - local authority funding is under pressure
 - planning reform since 2004 has removed the statutory role of county councils from the planning system
 - local government performance indicators are all-important but there are none for archaeology
 - there is no statutory requirement to provide historic environment services
 - archaeology services deal primarily with the 95% of the archaeological heritage that is not statutorily designated

Evidence of problems

- In 2005, Northamptonshire County Council made severe cuts to its archaeology service including the HER. There is evidence that this has had a considerable negative impact on the archaeological heritage of that county
- TAF has good evidence of cuts happening or being planned for another 6-10 services in 2008-09

The Heritage Protection Bill and local government archaeology services

- The Heritage Protection Bill will substantially increase the role of local authorities in the conservation of statutorily designated assets in the new Register (Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments and Registered Parks and Battlefields) via the new Heritage Consents system and statutory management agreements
- Government also proposes to make maintaining or having access to Historic Environment Records (HER) a new statutory duty for local government
- This measure would have considerable public benefit in ensuring that the national network of information contained within HERs would continue to be available
- Crucially, it would also provide a mechanism to ensure that the archaeology services that support HERs would survive in the face of the current and growing pressure on services – currently, statutory status for HERs is the only realistic means of achieving this
- TAF believes that the current national network of archaeology services in England should be maintained at least to its current level: we are not looking for significant growth or new money, just to ‘hold the line’ at the level that has been so painstakingly built up by the sector

Planning reform and the future of historic environment planning guidance

- It is very important to ensure that if PPGs 15 and 16 do not survive planning reform their principles are carried through in authoritative new guidance that includes long-recommended improvements to safeguard the public benefits of archaeology.

APPAG's commitment to statutory HERs

- The support of APPAG for local government archaeology services, and in particular for statutory SMRs (*APPAG 2003, E. Sites and Monuments Records, para 61*), has been an important factor in securing the commitment of Government for statutory HERs
- APPAG will have a crucial role in 2008-09 in taking forward this vital recommendation to be part of the new Heritage Protection Act
- Draft Statutory Guidance on HERs is expected to be published with the Draft Heritage Bill. TAF urges APPAG to support this Guidance in principle. TAF wishes that Statutory Guidance to establish links between HERs and the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

The role of APPAG in securing the long-term future of local government archaeology services

- TAF urges APPAG
 1. **to support the proposal for statutory HERs** through the draft Heritage Protection Bill, as it will provide an enormous benefit to local government archaeology services – but because the measure alone will not secure the services that provide HERs, APPAG is also urged
 2. **to support calls for the statutory duty to be backed up by powerful guidance from government on the duties of historic environment services**, based on recent work by English Heritage, DCMS and TAF members on output measures, and ALGAO's work on a resource input toolkit for local authorities
 3. **to support calls for adequately resourced archaeology services in new unitary authorities and for the creation of unified historic environment services where this is possible:** the current round of local government reform has the potential through the creation of new unitaries to encourage the creation of unified HE services, although the opposite is also possible where reorganisation is less sympathetic
 4. **to emphasise to DCLG the importance of retaining and enhancing the principles of PPGs 15 and 16 in authoritative new planning guidance**

The Archaeology Forum's members are

The Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers UK

The Council for British Archaeology

The Institute of Conservation

The Institute of Field Archaeologists

The Institute of Historic Building Conservation

The Institute of Conservation

The National Trust

The National Trust for Scotland

Rescue: the British Archaeological Trust

The Society of Antiquaries of London

The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

The Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers

The Society of Museum Archaeologists