

THE ARCHAEOLOGY FORUM

a grouping of independent bodies concerned with archaeology

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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT ENABLING PROGRAMME (HEEP)

I am writing to you on behalf of The Archaeology Forum following the successful launch of *Impact* last month.

You will not be surprised to learn that the Forum is a great believer in HEEP, a programme that has done so much to support and develop the sector. The Forum recognises how English Heritage has worked with the sector to identify where strategic investment is required, whether for research, training, good practice guidance or capacity building. We commend English Heritage for directing funds where needs most pressing, opportunities are greatest and returns are best; and support the principle of investing now in changing systems, processes and understanding to reduce future damage to the historic environment, and of building capacity in the sector to meet needs at source rather than paying to mitigate its shortcomings in the future.

The Forum is therefore concerned about the shrinking value of HEEP and in particular the cuts English Heritage has been forced to make this year as a result of its inadequate funding by government. We understand that in 1991 the budget for such work stood at just over £5m, whereas in 2007 it amounts to £4.6m. Taking account of inflation, the programme now has 61% of the spending power it had in 1991. While we recognise that there has been some mitigation through the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, which has been enormously useful for the sector in improving practice and ensuring that communities affected by sand and gravel extraction benefit from the archaeology done in their name, the ALSF budget does not have the scope and flexibility of HEEP and can only be viewed as a supplement not a substitute.

The Forum is aware that when you spoke to the IFA conference in April you indicated your clear intention to reinstate the £500,000 cut, providing you receive a reasonable settlement from government, and we were very relieved to hear that.

The Forum will of course continue to use such influence as it has to argue for a better settlement for English Heritage.

Peter Hinton
Convenor

The Archaeology Forum's members are

*The Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers
UK
The Association of Regional and Islands Archaeologists
The Council for British Archaeology
The Institute of Field Archaeologists
The Institute of Historic Building 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 Archaeologist UK*