

## **HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT INFORMATION RESOURCES NETWORK**

Report of a meeting held in the offices of the Council for British Archaeology, St Mary's House, 66 Bootham, York on Friday 15 July 2005.

Present: Dr Elizabeth Hallam-Smith (Chair / National Archive), David Baker OBE (CBA), Dr Dave Barrett (ALGAO), Jonathan Bateman (CBA), Dr Stewart Bryant (ALGAO), Nigel Clubb (EH NMR), Kate Fernie (MLA), Gillian Grayson (EH NMR), Catherine Hardman (ADS), Dr Mike Heyworth (CBA), Rebecca Jones (RCAHMS), Hilary Malaws (RCAHMW), Prof Julian Richards (ADS), David Thomas (RCAHMW), Stewart Waller (ADS).

Apologies for absence: Dr Roger Bland (PAS), David Dawson (MLA), Vince Devine (Cadw), Dr Andrew Foxon (Manx National Heritage), Christine Longworth (SMA), Dr Paul Miller (JISC CIE), Diana Murray (RCAHMS), Ian Shepherd (ARIA).

### 1 Welcome

Mike Heyworth welcomed everyone to the meeting on behalf of the CBA who were hosting the meeting.

### 2 HEIRNET User Survey

Julian Richards gave a report on the main results of the online user survey, which had been run by Jon Kenny of the ADS on behalf of HEIRNET members. This information is available on the ADS web site at:  
[http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/heirnet/survey/cfdocs/view\\_data.cfm](http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/heirnet/survey/cfdocs/view_data.cfm)  
(please note that this address should not be made public as the survey results available contain personal information)

It was agreed that the survey had been useful, that it would be useful to repeat it on a regular basis to identify trends (with some tweaking of the questions and format to take on board lessons learned from the first survey), and that the initial survey data should be analysed more closely, particularly breaking down the results by type of user. A sample should also be analysed to see whether there was variation depending on the web site through which the user had come to reach the online survey form.

Julian Richards offered to oversee the detailed analysis of the survey data and the production of a report on the conclusions, using someone with relevant experience within the University of York. He estimated that the costs involved would be of the order of £4,500 and offered to contribute £1,500 from ADS funds. Gillian Grayson offered to match this contribution from EH NMR funds, and CBA and ALGAO both offered to make smaller contributions.

It was agreed that Julian Richards would approach RCAHMS and RCAHMW to see if they could each contribute £500 to make the project viable. If so he would aim to have the results available in the late autumn and they could be published on the HEIRNET web site as an HEIRNET report.

Liz Hallam-Smith suggested there may be appropriate models for sustaining an annual cycle of surveys, eg the Public Services Quality Group (see <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives/psqg/>). Mike Heyworth agreed to see if there would be any interest and possible funding from the Heritage Counts team in England, and the emerging equivalent in Scotland.

### 3 HEIRPORT

Hilary Malaws reported on the addition of the Welsh NMR as an HEIRPORT target, made possible through the SWISH partnership with the RCAHMS, with the cooperation of the ADS.

Jonathan Bateman reported on the addition of a further target to HEIRPORT to allow users to search the CBA's pilot Online Guide to Archaeological Research (OGAR) database. This includes summaries of many postgraduate theses from UK universities submitted during 2004. Mike Heyworth noted that it was also hoped to add the online biab database into HEIRPORT, and also offer the database as a Z39.50 target for others to build into their own web services.

### 4 Reports on work in progress

The meeting heard short presentations on work in progress from:

Stewart Waller (ADS): CIS Phase 2 faceted classification systems

Stewart Waller (ADS): CREE portal development work

Catherine Hardman (ADS): OASIS update

Nigel Clubb (EH NMR) & Stewart Bryant (ALGAO): Heritage Gateway to England

Hilary Malaws (RCAHMS) & Rebecca Jones (RCAHMS): SWISH update

Kate Fernie (MLA): MICHAEL project and MLA's plans for a Collection Description Service

Mike Heyworth (CBA): biab online development plans

Liz Hallam-Smith commented on the number of exciting projects in the sector.

### 5 HEIRNET conference

It was agreed that many of the projects currently underway could usefully be presented and promoted at an HEIRNET conference, which would be aimed at colleagues within the historic environment sector and also other cognate sectors. The two themes to be addressed would be how the current projects and technologies were making life easier for users, and how they were opening up possibilities for new ways of working. The results of the first HEIRNET user survey could also be presented.

It was agreed that the conference should be held in London, perhaps at the British Museum, in mid-late January 2006. Liz Hallam Smith undertook to find staff resources to take on the administration, with support from Mike Heyworth and Julian Richards to organise the programme.

6 Protocol for encouraging and facilitating interoperability within the historic environment sector

Gillian Grayson agreed that the ongoing work linked in with the Heritage Protection Review in England meant it would be logical for EH to take the lead in working up a general high level statement which encouraged interoperability and a user-led perspective in the development of HEIRs, with a more detailed statement that gave more specific guidance on issues which needed to be considered to ensure that interoperability was possible between data sets.

Mike Heyworth suggested that it would be useful for HEIRNET to publish these two documents to encourage best practice in the sector, jointly badged as appropriate with the logos of all HEIRNET members.

MH  
20/7/05