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Dear Sir / Madam,

The Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) has learned with concern of the proposal significantly to reduce the contribution made by Gateshead Council to the Tyne and Wear Specialist Conservation Service. We understand that it is proposed to reduce that contribution by approximately 50%.

IfA is the professional body for archaeologists and related professions concerned with the study and care of the historic environment. It promotes best practice in archaeology and provides a self-regulatory quality assurance framework for the sector and those it serves. IfA has over 3,000 members and more than 70 registered practices across the United Kingdom and abroad. Its members work in all branches of the discipline: heritage management, planning advice, excavation, finds and environmental study, buildings recording, underwater and aerial archaeology, museums, conservation, survey, research and development, teaching and liaison with the community, industry and the commercial and financial sectors.

IfA recognises the difficult financial circumstances faced by local authorities. However, undermining the continuing work of such a respected conservation service is not an acceptable way of addressing these difficulties.

Implementation of the proposed cuts must bring into serious doubt the service's ability effectively to engage in the development management process (including the provision of a Historic Environment Record (HER)) in Gateshead and ultimately to safeguard the historic environment of Gateshead for its residents. Indeed, failure to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in respect of the historic environment could leave the Council open to challenge in the Courts. In particular

- the NPPF makes it quite clear that archaeological knowledge and understanding are necessary to ensure informed planning decisions are made about the protection of undesignated heritage assets. Vitality this includes maintaining an up-to-date Historic Environment Record
- recognising that it is often the case that the benefits of development outweigh those of retaining sites and monuments, a planning authority is obliged to require the applicant to commission a programme of investigation, excavation, analysis and publication of the results, including opportunities for voluntary sector and community participation. This can only be secured by planning conditions or obligations: without adequate professional archaeological advice to planners this responsibility cannot be adequately discharged and important elements of Gateshead's heritage may be lost without record
- the role of planning archaeologists in applying such conditions is critical to leveraging in private sector investment in archaeology. Nationally the picture is one of each post bringing in c £1m annually of such inward investment – an annual return of 30 to 40 times the cost of employment
- this investment is directly applied through the planning process to bringing communities

new understanding and enjoyment. It is a major contribution to quality of life and sense of place for the people of Gateshead. It is something the Council should be proud of. Such dividends are rarely equalled by other sectors and should not be put at risk.

Gateshead's heritage (which includes but is not limited to its industrial heritage) is recognised nationally and locally and is valued by the people of Gateshead. The proposed cuts would also severely undermine the engagement of the conservation team with the community which it serves.

We do hope that you are able to reconsider this proposal. Failing that, would you please provide details of how Gateshead Council proposes to fulfil its obligations with regard to the historic environment in the light of a substantially reduced budget for the Tyne and Wear Specialist Conservation Team?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,



Peter Hinton BA MIFA FSA FRSA FIAM  
Chief Executive, Institute for Archaeologists