



Councillor Adrian Hardman
Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance
Worcestershire County Council

23 December 2013

Dear Councillor Hardman,

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service: Proposed Budget Cuts

The Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) has learned with concern of proposals further to cut the budget of Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (WAAS) (see the report *Moving Towards Self-Financing Discretionary Services* presented to the County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board on 24 October, 2013).

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. Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service is registered under IfA's Registered Organisation scheme and a number of its staff are members of the Institute.

In relation to the historic environment Worcestershire County Council at present has an enviable reputation for engaging with the community which it serves, in addition to carrying out its important functions in the planning regime. Its development of a '*unique combination of services*' (including the Historic Environment Record) in the Hive at Worcester has rightly been held up as an example of good practice (see *Making the most of your heritage assets*, http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=5607c46f-1dc8-4f69-86cf-b81d0905751d&groupId=10180). Furthermore, the Service's ability to attract a significant amount of external funding highlights not only the quality of the services which it provides, but also the value for money which it delivers for the residents and businesses of Worcestershire.

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

Implementation of the proposed, drastic cuts must bring into serious doubt the Service's ability effectively to engage with the communities which it serves; to engage in the development management process in Worcestershire (including the provision of a Historic Environment Record (HER) and the expertise necessary to maintain it) and ultimately to safeguard the historic environment of Worcestershire for its residents.

The historic environment (and the historic environment services such as WAAS which manage and protect it) help to generate very significant investment in local areas through the operation of the planning system. More specifically, planning archaeologists play a crucial role in levering 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 Worcestershire. It is something the Council should be proud of. Such dividends are rarely equalled by other sectors and should not be put at risk.

We do hope that you are able to reconsider this proposal. Failing that, would you please provide details of how Worcestershire County Council proposes to fulfil its obligations with regard to the historic environment in the light of such a substantially reduced budget for the Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Hinton', written in a cursive style.

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