



Historic England Corporate Plan Consultation

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Dear Deborah,

Valuing Our Past Enriching Our Future: Historic England Draft Corporate Plan 2015 to 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft corporate plan.

The Institute for Archaeologists

The Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) is a professional body for 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.

The IfA has over 3,200 members and more than 70 registered practices across the United Kingdom. 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 has successfully petitioned for a Royal Charter of Incorporation which was granted on 03 June 2014.

Historic England Draft Corporate Plan 2015 to 2018

General

IfA welcomes the creation of Historic England and will strongly support it in its intended role as the government's independent expert advisory service for England's historic environment. The Institute recognises the importance of a clear and effective corporate plan to enable Historic England effectively to undertake that role and welcomes the publication of a draft plan for consultation.

Notwithstanding its general support for the corporate plan, IfA remains concerned that the plan should reflect more clearly English Heritage's recognition of the need for culture change and its commitment to collaboration, working with and supporting other stakeholders in the sector.

Detailed Comments

Page 2, 'The historic environment is the world around us made by our forebears'

1. This definition is not the one adopted by government in the glossary to its Planning Practice Guidance. Against a backdrop of organisational change, continuity is more important than originality in the definition of the historic environment and IfA would prefer to see the historic environment defined consistently with the above guidance.

Page 2, 'We have a number of roles that only we can fulfil: the most important of these is ...'

2. We do not disagree, but it would be helpful to specify the other roles which only Historic England can fulfil.

Page 3, '... we maintain specialisms that are not found in the private sector or universities'

3. Again, we do not disagree, but it would be helpful to specify these specialisms (and to acknowledge that some specialisms are also found in the private sector and universities), while indicating the value of retaining these in-house specialisms within Historic England.

Page 3, 'We will ensure that policy makers and politicians are aware of the rich benefits of our national heritage ...'

4. This is an important role but there is no indication as to whether the achievement of this aspiration will be measured and, if so, how.

Page 3, 'Our values'

5. It is crucial in this section to strike a more collaborative and outward-looking tone. For instance, 'We are expert. We have the knowledge, experience and technical expertise to ...' appears a little too imperious and might be better phrased as 'We employ expertise. We have access to the knowledge, experience and technical expertise to ...'.

6. The values as set out in the draft do not reflect the need for culture change and greater collaboration with the sector.

Page 3, 'Historic places need to be used, re-used, adapted and developed if they are to have a future'

7. This does not apply to all archaeological remains, particularly buried remains which should be specifically addressed in the corporate plan. The sentence should explicitly describe what is meant by 'historic places'.

Page 4, 'Many people want to work with us and we will work in partnership wherever that helps us to achieve our aims.'

8. This sentence recognises the need for partnership working and the subsequent bullet points, amongst other things, highlight issues relating to services and skills. Nevertheless, there needs to be greater, and more overt, reference to the need for collaboration and capacity building in the sector.

9. Furthermore, there needs to be provision to measure progress in achieving the prioritised actions set out in bullet points.

Page 4, 'We will: 1. Make the case for the value of heritage and Constructive Conservation.'

10. Here and elsewhere in the draft plan IfA would like to see the case expressly made for increased understanding of the historic environment (as a distinct issue and not simply as part of Constructive Conservation)

Page 4, '2. Ensure that the value of heritage is reflected in relevant laws, government policies and planning practice'

11. IfA applauds Historic England in its ambition and would welcome its vigorous championing of such causes as the introduction of statutory duties in respect of HERs and VAT reform. However, it is not clear that it is in Historic England's gift ultimately to 'ensure' that the value of heritage is reflected in relevant laws, government policy and planning practice.

Page 5, 'Aims 2 and 3'

12. Although the preamble to Aim 2 refers to 'undesignated heritage', it would be helpful for Historic England more clearly to explain its role as a national heritage agency in relation to 'undesignated heritage'.

Page 6, 'We will: Ensure that Historic England's expertise is accessible, relevant and of the highest standard'

13. Provision should be made for standards to be measurable and this should be by reference to IfA Standards and guidance (see <http://www.archaeologists.net/codes/ifa>).

Page 6, '2. Work with others to provide time-limited support for local authorities to develop new ways of delivering their heritage advice and services.'

14. IfA welcomes this commitment which is consistent with the evidence submitted by IfA (and others) to the Vaizey Review on the future of local government archaeology services¹. Nonetheless, Historic England needs to be clear as to how this support will be provided.

Page 6, '3. Work with others to assess and deliver the heritage skills required by local authorities, owners and others.'

15. Those skills should be delivered in accordance with IfA Standards and guidance (see <http://www.archaeologists.net/codes/ifa>).

Page 6, '4. Revive the Historic Environment Trainees scheme.'

16. This scheme is welcome, but this is a very specific action in a high-level document and is just one way in which skills shortages can be addressed. Furthermore, the scheme, itself, could be made more efficient and allow for a broader perspective

Page 6, 'We will: 1. Be transparent in our decision-making processes and open with information.'

17. This is welcome, particularly in the context of scheduled monument consent.

Page 6, '6. Be self-critical, regularly testing the quality and efficacy of our work and procurement.'

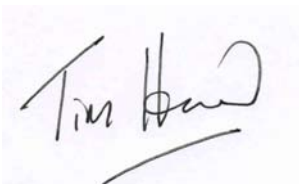
18. The summary business case for English Heritage talks about accredited heritage crafts. Will Historic England extend this to archaeology?

Page 7, 'The 'Grant to EH charity' line is the anticipated grant payable by Historic England to English Heritage to underpin its operations in line with the Trust's business plan' [my underlining]

19. Can Historic England confirm in its corporate plan that no further monies would be payable by Historic England to English Heritage in the event that English Heritage fails to generate the levels of income anticipated by its business plan?

IfA would welcome the opportunity further to contribute to the development of the newly-created Historic England. In the meantime, if there is anything further that I can do to assist please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Howard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Tim Howard LLB, Dip Prof Arch
Policy Advisor

DRAFT

¹ See <http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/node-files/The-future-of-local-government-archaeology-services-IfA-WRITTEN-EVIDENCE-final.pdf>