

21 years of planning-led archaeology in Scotland – and 21 years more?

Scottish archaeology has just celebrated a very significant anniversary – not the Battle of Bannockburn or any other historical event – but of 21 years since the introduction of planning guidance (NPPG5) in 1994. This might not sound very impressive at first glance, but it completely revolutionised the way in which the planning process ensures that the historic environment is treated sustainably. Developer-funded archaeological investigations became the norm, in line with the ‘polluter pays’ principle. This single step forward allowed us to gain access to highly significant information about people’s lives in Scotland from the very earliest times, by investigating the traces they have left for future generations to find. These traces are no longer destroyed without due thought or consideration, allowing development to be truly sustainable in terms of the historic environment.

Excavation of one of six Roman burials found by CFA Archaeology Ltd, working for Dawn Construction Ltd on the site of the new Musselburgh Primary Health Care Centre. The site was close to the Inveresk Roman fort, and these burials were part of a cemetery associated with the fort in the 2nd century AD. All six of the burials found were men, and four of them had had their heads cut off after death, and placed out of position in the grave. Analysis shows that the men were from Britain and northern Europe, recruited by the Romans from tribes within their Empire and stationed in Inveresk (© CFA Archaeology Ltd)



Developer funding

Before NPPG5, there was no system in place to check for archaeological remains in advance of building works. From the 1950s even into the 1980s, as post-war housing and infrastructure were built, as historic town centres were redeveloped, local communities found that the only way of protecting their heritage was to protest against the destruction and persuade developers to halt work while a few paid museum and university archaeologists assisted by volunteers rescued what they could from the bulldozers.

Now, more than half of all archaeological survey and excavations that take place are funded by private developers, and carried out as a result of conditions placed on planning applications. The people who decide whether an application warrants archaeological work are the local authority archaeologists, who amongst many other things, advise the planners on how the developer can best address the archaeological impacts of their development. The local authority archaeology service maintains a ‘HER’ or Historic Environment Record, which is a database of all known and suspected sites of interest; using their local knowledge and professional expertise, they can interpret these records to assess the potential for archaeological survival on any given site.

The current system offers developers a way to manage their risk and to find opportunities to add value to their development. Rather than going head first into the unknown, with the potential for unquantifiable delays and expense, archaeological issues can be identified and assessed at the very beginning of a project. Then, if survey or excavation work is found to be necessary, it can be costed into the project programme alongside all the other environmental requirements. Sometimes changes in the layout of a development can avoid damage to archaeological sites and the necessity of any investigation at all. Archaeological remains can even be used to enhance the character of a development, helping to ensure that it contributes positively to a community's sense of place. Archaeological fieldwork can be planned to take place well before construction starts, and often goes alongside preliminary site investigation works, allowing for any follow-up excavations to be completed in plenty of time before the main project gets going.

Adding value to development

There is growing evidence that proper understanding and enlisting of historic environment resources carries benefits across all three areas of sustainability – **environment, economy and society**. The Scottish Government, in *Our Place in Time*, a historic environment strategy for Scotland, states the following in support of the value of the historic environment to us all today:

Scotland's historic environment is intrinsic to our sense of place and strong cultural identity. It is diverse, but collectively it tells the story of our shared past. It is important in its own terms, providing key evidence of the lives and creativity of our forebears. It also helps to create a sense of place, identity and physical and social wellbeing, and benefits the economy, civic participation, tourism and lifelong learning. It is dynamic and ever-changing and that dynamism lies at the heart of the need for sound principles of stewardship. For the people of Scotland to continue to gain real, and increasing, benefits from their historic environment, it needs to be understood, valued and championed.

Sir Tony Robinson and Francis Pryor speaking to Nick Card, director of Ness of Brodgar excavations for Time Team. Behind can be seen a viewing platform for the general public used throughout these excavations. More than half of Orkney's visitors say that they choose Orkney as a destination because of the islands' archaeology and history (© Orkney College)





Quality and standards

Developer-funded archaeological work is usually carried out by commercial companies who may compete for contracts, so they are very cost-aware. Time is always of the essence, so commercial companies have to be able to mobilise quickly and work rapidly to meet urgent deadlines. However a balance must be struck between speed and quality, and adherence to professional standards is crucial. Excavation is a destructive process, and records must be sufficient to allow reconstruction of the site on paper or digitally, as there are no second chances.

Standards for archaeological work are set by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), whose members sign up to a *Code of conduct* and a series of standards and guidance documents. Archaeological practices can be registered with the Chartered Institute, and anyone seeking to find a professionally accredited company should check the list of Registered Organisations with CIfA. Monitoring of standards of work carried out under planning conditions again comes back to the local authority archaeologist, but this is an area where lack of resources and time has meant that many local services struggle to visit or check on all work carried out. They also ensure that reports on the work are submitted in good time and to the appropriate standard, allowing this information to feed back into the local historic environment record.

Developer-funded sites can extend to some of the oldest and most ephemeral archaeological finds. The dark, curving stain in the soil in this photograph (above) is all that remains of a nine-thousand-year old campsite, where hunter gatherers stayed for a short while at Fife Ness. This was discovered during work to extend a golf course and excavated by Headland Archaeology (© Headland Archaeology)

What do we actually mean by archaeology?

Most people would agree that a prehistoric stone circle or a ruined castle are examples of archaeological sites, but these remains are just one element of a wider historic environment. Since people first lived in Scotland after the Ice Age ended over 10,000 years ago, they have been making homes to shelter their families, finding food and commemorating their dead – all things that leave lingering traces on the landscape. History doesn't stop at an arbitrary point, so features that we might think of as being quite recent, such as wartime installations, derelict mines and factories and the remains of demolished tenement blocks are still part of our historic environment. Study of these physical remains can still yield information about our past that would otherwise be lost, and it is often this more recent past that communities can identify with the strongest.

What happens to the results of all this work?

Most archaeological projects carried out as part of the planning system will have to submit reports on the work to the local authority under the conditions placed on the planning permission. The local authority archaeologist will advise whether these are fit for purpose, and may require further study of the results if remains of any significance have been discovered. This further work, known as 'post-excavation analysis and reporting' may include radiocarbon dating of remains to establish their date, or might include the detailed examination of human remains if burials have been found. The detail that can be extracted from some archaeological finds now is extraordinary – reconstructions of people's faces from their skulls for example. Sometimes reconstructions of whole objects can be carried out, simply from a few fragmentary pieces of ironwork, such as this Iron Age chariot found outside Edinburgh. Finds from excavations can include a huge range of different materials and objects, from prehistoric pottery and stone tools to fragments of Pictish symbol stones and less glamorous but scientifically very significant samples of ironworking slag. Under Scottish law all these finds belong to the Crown, but may be claimed by local museums for their collections. Some exceptional finds may also be of interest nationally, and in more recent years some finds have been shared between the National Museums of Scotland and the local museum, so that both the local community and a wider audience can benefit from their discovery.



This is a reconstruction of an Iron Age horse-drawn chariot based on the remains found at Newbridge, just outside Edinburgh. The remains of the chariot consisted only of a few decayed iron fittings, and it was found during a watching brief during construction at Interchange Park. The excavation was carried out by Headland Archaeology and sponsored by Muir Construction. The City of Edinburgh Archaeologist had required the watching brief because of known archaeological features in the area, but the find of the chariot was completely unprecedented, as it was the first one to be found in Scotland. It has close links with similar finds in north-eastern France and Belgium, indicating direct contact between Iron Age Scotland and the Continent (© National Museums Scotland)

Can anyone get involved?

Local communities often feel strongly about their heritage and want to get involved. While it is not always possible to use volunteers on every site – work may need to be done very quickly and under stringent health and safety conditions – there are many other ways of getting involved. Again, this is where the local authority archaeologist can make a real difference and can specify outreach and community involvement as part of the conditions on the grant of planning consent to ensure some public benefit. If a need to involve local people is identified at the outset of a project, thought can be given to the best way of doing this, whether by public open days, oral history projects, school visits, exhibitions and so on.

If people really want to get involved in archaeological excavation, then the best way is often to create a project that is designed for public participation from the outset, where developers' deadlines are not an issue, and the project can be designed to improve understanding of and access to a site of local interest.



Community excavation at the Black Spout
(© Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust)

What local authority archaeologists do

- maintain Historic Environment Records (HERs)
- advise on strategic development and local development plans and policies
- advise planning authorities and developers on planning proposals that may affect archaeological sites, including input into development design
- monitor compliance with planning requirements including conditions on behalf of planning authorities
- advise on the management of the rural and urban historic environment
- work with all elements of the community to foster understanding of the historic environment
- where resources permit, lead community-based projects to explore the local historic environment, and through this contribute to skills development, learning and community cohesion

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' standard and guidance for advice by historic environment services stipulates that:

Archaeological advice on the historic environment must aim to benefit the public both now and in the future, through management and the advancement of understanding. It will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and the realisation of social, environmental or economic benefits.

Advice must be clear, consistent, compliant, reasonable, timely, informed and impartial, and should be proportionate to a reasoned and clearly documented assessment of known or potential significance.

Advice must be provided by suitably qualified, skilled and competent advisors and based on an up-to-date and publicly accessible information base maintained to nationally agreed standards.

This monumental industrial structure was revealed during excavations by CFA Archaeology Ltd on the site of the Commonwealth Games Athletes Village in Glasgow. It was the boiler house and engine house for the first municipal waterworks in Glasgow, built in 1806 (© CFA Archaeology Ltd)





What the Chartered Institute of Archaeologists does

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists is the leading professional body for archaeologists working in the UK and overseas. IfA was created in 1983 (as the Institute for Field Archaeologists) and achieved a Royal Charter in 2014, at which time it had over 3200 individual members. The Institute administers a Register of Organisations, which are run by accredited members and adhere to the same professional standards as individual members. In 2014 there were 74 registered organisations with ClfA.

ClfA champions professionalism in archaeology. It promotes high professional standards and strong ethics in archaeological practice, to maximise the benefits that archaeologists bring to society. Members of ClfA are professionally accredited and skilled in the study and care of the historic environment. They are committed to offering high quality service to clients and to the public. ClfA's *Code of conduct* provides a framework which underpins the professional lives of archaeologists.

Many archaeologists and archaeological organisations offering services commercially are not professional, ie they have no accredited competence, are not bound by an ethical code and are not accountable. You need to ensure that you are commissioning a professional – someone accountable to ClfA (or to one of the few non-UK-based professional registers).

For further information about ClfA, its *Code of conduct* and our Standards, you can visit our website at www.archaeologists.net or contact a member of our team on 0118 378 6446.



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