

Discussion 4 in the 21st Century Challenges for Archaeology series: 'Local Authority Archaeology Services- What kind of services do we want and how we ensure their survival' 20th-21st September 2017

Project members participating

Duncan Mcallum (Director Government Advice: 2nd Historic England representative for this discussion)

Edmund Lee (Historic England, Project Assurance officer for this project)

Jan Wills (ClfA)

Robin Page (HE LinkedIn Group owner)

Trevor Mitchell Historic England, Planning Director, Yorkshire, 1st Historic England representative for the discussion.

Discussion Participants

Aisling Nash (Historic Environment Advisor, Worcestershire CC)

Andrew Armstrong (City Archaeologist at Gloucester City)

Andrew Ward (HER officer, East Sussex)

Bob Sydes (Research Associate/ Heritage Consultant University of York)

Christopher Bowles (Archaeology Officer at Scottish borders Council)

Helen Wells (Senior HER officer, Leicestershire)

Ian Sanderson (Principle Archaeologist at West Yorkshire Joint Services)

James Dinn (Archaeological Officer, Worcester City)

Jane Golding (Historic England, Heritage Information Partnerships team leader)

Judith Plouviez (Chair at RESCUE)

Kate Geary (ClfA)

Lee McFarlane (Historic England Inspector of Ancient Monuments)

Louisa Matthews (ADS)

Martin Locock (Project Officer, University of Wales)

Mike Heyworth (CBA)

Nigel Neil (Nigel Neil Archaeological Services)

Owain Lloyd-James (Historic England Head of Development Research)

Rob Lennox (ClfA)

Stuart Bryant (Policy Advisor for ClfA, formerly County Archaeologist for Hertfordshire CC)

Tim Grubb, Archaeologist Gloucestershire HER)

Toby Catchpole (Heritage Team Leader at Gloucestershire CC)

Tony Howe (County Archaeologist at Surrey CC)

By email distribution (via HER Forum), posted by Robin Page on their behalf:

Hugh Winfield (Archaeologist, North East Lincolnshire Regeneration Partnership/ NE Lincolnshire Council). His comment was seconded by Peter Insole (Bristol HER)

We also received a comment from Margie Hoffnung (Gardens Trust) relating to designed landscapes rather than archaeology directly. The interesting aside was about the risk of non-specialist advisors being unfamiliar with relevant statutory consultees in planning.

Introduction and Setting out the Questions

Welcome to this 4th discussion in the 21st-century Challenges for Archaeology series taking place here on this thread between 20th – 21st September 2017. Local authority Archaeology Services and Historic England teams between them deliver the information and advice that is essential for the protection and management of archaeological sites, structures and landscapes. At a time when all public sector budgets are reducing we will be talking about the future: what kind of services do we want, and how can we ensure their survival?

Further information about the online discussion, including background briefing papers, is available through the ClfA website: <http://www.archaeologists.net/21st-century-challenges-archaeology>.

You can catch up there too on the three online discussions and workshops that have taken place so far.

You can also find out more background about the '21st Century Challenges for Archaeology' project via the Historic England website:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/research/21st-century-challenges-archaeology/>

Comments on the recommendations of the workshops are invited. Please send comments to Jan Wills (janwills@keme.co.uk).

[Robin Page](#) So you can see them 'up front', here are questions 1-3 of 7 that we'd like to tackle:

1/ To what extent are the current roles and functions of public sector (local authority and Historic England) archaeological services appropriate for the future? What are the pressures and the opportunities for change?

2/ What examples do we have of modifications/developments in regional and local structures that have occurred to date? How successful/unsuccessful have these been? Does practice need to change to meet new pressures? If so how?

3/ Are there other ways, tested or untested, of delivering these services? What can we learn from new/different service models e.g. Wales; GLAAS; Worcestershire; South West Heritage Trust?

[Robin Page](#) questions 4-6 of 7:

4/We have both local authority services and HE regional teams. Is this the most-appropriate division of labour/responsibilities? Would more-collaborative working, both regionally and nationally, be more effective?

5/ What is Historic England's strategic role in respect of local authorities? How can Historic England and the rest of the sector work together, post-Howell Redesdale report and the Culture White paper, to sustain and develop local advisory services?

6/ Statutory local authority services – is this a concept worth fighting for or is it a nonstarter? Would improved definitions of services/standards/performance be beneficial? Should these be linked to funding and in what way e.g. payment by results?

[Robin Page](#) Question 7 A plan for the future: what are our short and long term priorities for change?

Are there lessons we can learn from recent experiences in England and elsewhere?

Are there changes we as a sector need to make to the way we do things? What short-term/long-term strategies exist/need to be developed?

Are there specific legislative and/or policy changes that we need to lobby for?

Main online discussion

[Jan Wills](#) Welcome from me too. We want to focus today on the roles of those who provide information and professional advice on archaeology at local and national level: Local Authority services and Historic England teams. All public sector budgets are reducing; against this background what kind of services do we want and how can we ensure their survival? In each of the three preceding 21st-century challenges discussions (on archives, standards, and designation/planning) the reduction in local authority capacity has been identified as a problem, and the decline in staff numbers continues as we can see from the latest survey.

Robin has posted our suggested themes/questions but you may have others too...

[Kate Geary](#) The starting point should surely be the Standard and guidance for archaeological advice by historic environment services which sets out the agreed standard for advisory work?

The Standard

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.

http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/ClfAS&GArchadvice_2.pdf

[Robin Page](#) We will be joined over the course of the discussion by representatives from ClfA and Historic England. Before we tackle the questions in detail, perhaps especially useful for the first central can we say what it is that we want to achieve through advisory work? What outcomes do we want?

[Martin Locock](#) To me the critical outcome is that an informed judgment is made by someone with the relevant information and skills. If first-pass curatorial decision making is simple screening on a GIS then it may be perceived as a non-specialist role that can be undertaken by a generic planning assistant or by a newly qualified heritage specialist. Questions about organisations and critical mass need to follow a decision about how work is supposed to be organised, and in particular whether it is desirable or feasible to hold the line that decisions about heritage should be made by heritage professionals following the agreed standard, or can be opened up to treat heritage as just another constraints layer.

[Robin Page](#) Thanks Martin. Numbers of the specialist staff that you note as critical are falling, so, in a post NPPF world, are there ways that limited resources can be focused on the most "significant" archaeology?

[Duncan McCallum](#) Hi. I'm going to be at the discussion next week and am looking forward to it. Martin has a very good point about the right level of expertise being engaged so that as much of the time of the more specialist staff is focussed on important technical decisions.

Another issue I'm really keen to explore is about HE's role alongside the LAs in helping to deliver an effective service to the customers and public. In these lean times I think HE needs to look carefully at the way it engages with Local Authorities. Are we involved in the right kind of casework and how can we best help Local Authorities?

[Martin Locock](#) That would seem to be conceding immediately the principle in the Standard that archaeological decisions should be made by heritage specialists.

[Kate Geary](#) A driving force behind the development of the ClfA S&g was the perceived need for a clear quality standard which might be used to support existing arrangements but also to provide a benchmark for alternative service delivery models if necessary. I suspect the extent to which it has been used as such is limited but it would be good to get some feedback on that...

[Jan Wills](#) I also think that the Historic England/Local Authority interface needs to be re-examined. On planning casework, given the known extent of and the potential for further undesignated heritage assets with archaeological interest it can be difficult to be selective on casework. The better the information we have in HERs and the more predictive work we can do the better - but this needs resources too.

[Mike Heyworth](#) I agree with Jan that we need to look at all the options, and not be too bound up with supporting existing structures/services. There is unlikely to be a 'one size fits all' model, but we need to think broadly - and in doing so we shouldn't just think about the archaeology services, but also the conservation advice available. In CBA's role as a National Amenity Society looking at applications for Listed Building Consent across England and Wales it is clear that often it is assumed that conservation officers alone will deal with these applications and yet they are part of the archaeological resource so a more joined up and informed approach is needed.

[Lee McFarlane](#) Robin I think that is a potentially dangerous avenue to go down. Much "significant" archaeology is brought to light during development led archaeological work. This work in turn is specified by the LPA's archaeological specialist having made professional advice to the developer or LPA. If we say we will only concentrate on "significant" archaeology then surely the implication will be to only concentrate on what we currently know about?

[James Dinn](#) Interesting that the discussion is nearly 4 hours in and as far as I can see there hasn't been a single intervention from anyone in a local authority service. Either we are all too busy doing the job, or perhaps we don't want to be turkeys voting for Christmas.

I'd like to take a slight issue with Mike's comment about 'not being too bound up with supporting existing structures/services'. Certainly we don't want to be in a position of just defending existing posts etc but it is what we have and also what our colleagues in other services understand and can work with. There are examples from across the country of most of the existing models (unitary, district, county/district, cross-council - eg old metropolitan counties) breaking down catastrophically, but unless we can be sure that what is proposed in place of the status quo is going to be robust, and understandable by / acceptable to the LPAs who actually carry the duties set out in NPPF, we had better not break what we have.

[James Dinn](#) We already concentrate attention on 'significant' archaeology through requiring assessment / evaluation to help define what is significant. Then mitigation can be focussed on advancing understanding.

[Mike Heyworth](#) I appreciate your point James, and we are all working hard to be strong advocates for what we currently have in place, but at the same time one of the opportunities provided by these discussions and the seminars that follow is to

look ahead. Resources are falling and the legislative/policy context is shifting. It is in that context that I suggest we need to think creatively ...

[Helen Wells](#) I know various counties have rogue districts/boroughs that offer their own archaeological advice on planning applications and often don't have proper access to an HER. In a time when we need all the income we can get from districts/boroughs in order to provide a good service, how can the acquisition of specialist advice/HER data be enforced?

[Robin Page](#) Picking up on what James has said- if there people following the debate but who'd rather prefer to remain anonymous please message me , [Robin Page](#) or [Jan Wills](#) and we can post anonymously on your behalf. (or email me at robin.page@HistoricEngland.org.uk).

[Nigel Neil](#) Helen has hit the nail on the head here. Speaking from the perspective of a sole trader contractor, in the North West we have seen instances recently of local authorities - even those who buy-in to the latter-day equivalent of the former county archaeology system - being misled by influential developers to avoid imposing suitably robust and detailed mitigation conditions. I wish there was some way that developers on whom an archaeology / historic building recording condition had been imposed to FORCE them to obtain a specification from the county archaeology service or equivalent. I have had an acrimonious debate with a client for over a year after a project started, because they were able to undertake their project without agreeing with the local authority as to which HE 'level' of historic building record, and the content of that record. The client and archaeological contractor should NOT be specifying the level of record; the local authority + ex-county archaeologist should.

[Ian Sanderson](#) I think we ought to be start exploring how e maintain a system of informed access to expertly managed HER information in a time of extreme austerity when undoubtedly some archaeological advisory services are likely to fold or become so small as to be largely ineffective. Could, for instance, HE maintain regional HERs that used modern technology to provide information to more locally based archaeological development management officers who provide advice & recommendations to Planning Authorities? Would there be away of HE obtaining funding from LAs to help maintain these regional HERs?

[Ian Sanderson](#) Dear All. Speaking from a LA advisory service position in West Yorks. I wonder if I could attempt to address some of the questions that Robin posted. We have seen our budget cut by over 50per cent in the last 5 years & have lost 4 core posts (2 dc officers, 1 HER officer & our Education & Outreach officer). There are now 3 core staff left. We have our own robust research agendas that we have had produced over the last 10 years or so. We use these to concentrate on the most significant archaeology within the staffing capacity we have left to deal with, but effectively we are operating an archaeological triage system & not spending time on what we perceive to be less significant archaeology or where we think we would be wasting our time commenting. We are just about holding our head above water I think but there are probably additional cuts to come & I know some of our neighbours are also under extreme pressure. I think we ought to start thinking about possible future models of service.

[Rob Lennox](#) I agree with Helen that there is a definite concern that where we in the sector have championed good examples of archaeology services (GMAAS, Worcestershire, etc) these services have shown themselves to be vulnerable to being undermined by the 'rogue districts' that Helen describes.

Council leaders are unlikely to choose a well staffed, experienced, shared service (though it will be good value for money) over the slightly cheaper but in-reality paper thin in-house service or external contractor relationship which just about squeaks in under standards and NPPF guidelines, which fails to deliver rigorous advice, engagement, etc. If we give Council bosses this choice, what can we expect?

(Non-exhaustive) potential options: (a) Continue to try to win hearts& minds, (b) Seek stronger advice from Government that services have to meet a number of additional delivery tests, or (c) get support a new model, perhaps a regional one, which is - if not imposed - given strong backing by sector & HE?

[Jan Wills](#) I've just come back into the discussion after a break, and I'm glad to see some local authority contributions. If anyone wants to provide comments off line directly to me (janwills@keme.co.uk) I am happy (with your permission) to feed these into the workshop and the subsequent notes/recommendations on a non-attributable basis, or Robin can post material similarly.

I appreciate James' point about defending existing services and I think that our national organisations are working hard to do that. However, I also think we should be looking ahead; as Ian says things are not going to get any better. So maybe we should also be looking at the hard questions of how we might do things differently. This is an opportunity to do just that.

What about the question, too, of statutory duties, and other ways of 'encouraging' local authorities to achieve compliance with govt policy (Helen's point)?

[Owain Lloyd-James](#) I think we should avoid talking of a single model that could be supported. The fact is that financial pressures (like development pressures) are not equally distributed and so what is workable in A might not be workable in B. This inequality is only going to increase as the way in which local government is funded continues to evolve.

[Jan Wills](#) I think that's probably right - but we can look at options. Will, for example, changes to planning fees help services in high levels of development areas become more viable, while changes to local govt funding (i.e. loss of central govt grant) result in even worse prospects in most of the north and the midlands?

[Robin Page](#) Thanks for all the contributions so far. I have to sign off for now but please do keep on posting your opinions and proposals!

[Trevor Mitchell](#) Hi All, Thanks for joining in Ian. Single management of an all-England HER might be a big ask of anybody. But I wonder how many HERs are needed to cover the country at a size which brings efficiencies and sustainability?

[Andrew Ward](#) As a recent graduate who has just joined a HER I think one of the issues we face is that of awareness. Many academics, and students are either unaware or unwilling to utilise the great resource a HER can offer. I think that because if this lack of awareness for many people, they don't see the point of HERs or they see them as "roadblocks" to their development. One solution I believe could be to raise the awareness of HER and the role of archaeology in the planning system in schools/universities. Many students end up working for commercial units or developers, if they don't know or understand what their local HER can do for them or their employers then how can we expect them to want to work with us rather than ignoring us or finding their own ways around the system to 'cut costs'.

[Jan Wills](#) Some work done on this at the time of HPR, in prep for the Heritage Bill, looking at different options. We've just dug this out (thanks to Stewart Bryant) and can circulate if people don't have it and are interested. The conclusion from the cost-benefit analysis was that the current model (in its 2008 form) was the preferred one. I can't vouch for the rigour of the methodology!

[Andrew Ward](#) [Jan Wills](#) I'd be interested in giving that report a read!

[Jan Wills](#) Hi, Andrew - we'll try and make this available tomorrow. Signing off now, and hope to continue the conversation tomorrow.

[Duncan McCallum](#) An interesting comment from Andrew earlier about whether there was a way of better promoting HERS. Does anyone have any suggestions of ways in which Historic England and others could further promote HERs? Clearly for many the idea of statutory HERs is very desirable and HE, among others, continues to remind government officials of the advantages, but change, in the short term at least, doesn't seem likely.

[Bob Sydes](#) Good morning! 1/5 I mentioned in the last debate, that I felt we have done little over past decades to draw the various strands of academic, 'professional' and community archaeology together to the extent that I think we can legitimately question all our current business models and modus operandi. Kate kicked off with a reminder of ClfAs Standards and Guidance for archaeological advice and for me, public benefit and the advancement of understanding are key. But how are we currently providing that public benefit? (do we even know what we mean by public benefit?) And how are we advancing understanding? Are we happy with how this is currently being delivered via local authority services, Historic England and commercial archaeology.

[Bob Sydes](#) 2/5 Whilst local communities of interest might appreciate why 'significant' 'nationally important', archaeology will be contested by professionals in the planning system, they might be less appreciative when their own 'significant', locally important archaeology is ignored. This matters if we are thinking of more sustainable models for local heritage services. Local Politicians will respond better to demands from residents than demands from their own Officers.

We need to be much smarter at providing opportunities for communities to engage with their own heritage and to provide them with meaningful data and understanding so that they can become active participants. This will do more than statutory duty to

sustain an appropriate local authority specialism. But what sort of models might we explore?

[Bob Sydes](#) 3/5 Heritage Lincoln Connect with its underlying LARA data and Know Your Place Bristol are surely excellent models for how HERs might develop as both a resource for professionals and for local communities of interest. To address Trevor's question, I see much to gain from taking a regional approach to developing new HERs building on these excellent examples of best practice. Regional HERs make sense academically, they allow a much more coherent understanding of past landscapes and the relationships between places. They have the potential to provide users with a richer and more meaningful experience, and, economies of scale will help make the best of ever decreasing resources. North Yorkshire for example currently has four separately managed and maintained HERs. Sensible? I think not.

[Bob Sydes](#) 4/5 HE might help develop models like this through identifying funding streams partly from its own budgets and largely through working with Heritage Lottery, using its influence to develop programmes of funding for HER development. I also think it would be worth re-visiting the concept of Local Environmental Management Systems and potentially merging with ecological databases which are often regionally based.

We might also start to think about regional local heritage advisory services in the same way where expertise, including a more integrated building conservation element, can be shared across administrative areas. More local coverage can be achieved through the third sector for instance, regional CBA groups. To pick up on Ian's point, HE clearly have an important role in brokering the legal and financial agreements that would be necessary.

[Bob Sydes](#) 5/5 Steps could also be taken to integrate these regional HERs and advisory services with appropriate university departments through research and development as well as teaching and learning opportunity. This may help develop much needed regional centres of excellence providing sustainable futures for archaeological specialisms such as ceramics and palaeo-environmental studies.

All this might seem fantastical to some cynics but my experience working in local government, strongly suggests that this kind of approach is needed, necessary and urgent.

[Jan Wills](#) Two thoughts following on from Bob's thoughtful comments; if we seek to aggregate services or build new services for example at regional level for reasons of economy and other benefits how do we maintain the appropriate links with individual local authorities and also with communities.

And, secondly, big change requires leadership, carrots and sticks etc. Where is this going to come from?

[Robin Page](#) Good morning all, thanks for your comments so far this morning- keep them coming.

[Robin Page](#) I've received a comment from David Hopkins, County Archaeologist
1 of 2 posts-

"I think part of the problem when presenting our case is a willingness to highlight that it is a non statutory service. We must find some way to express the idea that although non statutory it is none the less a mandatory function. The planning system requires access to an HER and expert advice. Planning decisions made in the absence of these could be challenged. This Common Inheritance 1990 makes it clear that the planning system is charged by government with delivering environmental protection, and subsequent advice notes through PPG 16 to NPPF have reinforced this planning duty. Government commitments via the Valletta Convention are overtly delivered by reference to the planning system."

[Robin Page](#) 2 of 2 posts David Hopkins continued: "We must find a way to counter balance 'non statutory' or at least to qualify it, in a way that has an appropriate strength to it that properly reflects the fact that it is not a 'planning indulgence' but a 'planning duty' that our services meet. We, the archaeology community, but particularly local government and Historic England, must identify that having a heritage advocate within the planning system, although non statutory, is mandatory rather than discretionary. (It is unfortunately discretionary as to who is charged with providing the service but it is not discretionary that such a service must exist in some form)".

[Robin Page](#) David further clarified "It is not that I think it should be statutory (although being passionate about the role of heritage in quality of life that would be nice), my point is that in the 'reality' of our position we allow non statutory to be disguised as discretionary. But we are not, in my opinion, discretionary. So we must find stronger (but none the less true and honest) words to describe our role".

[Trevor Mitchell](#) Hi Bob, you make some good points. I feel that we do need to ponder why we do it - public benefit, enhanced understanding etc. But for the purposes of this debate, 'it' is not 'archaeology', but advisory services. The planning system exists 'To control the development of land in the public interest' (or similar). Insofar as advisory services inform decisions on the development of land, how might this provide a starting point?

[Bob Sydes](#) Hi Jan, I think the more local element can be achieved through as I say, links with the Third Sector. With a greatly enhanced web based HER such as the Lincoln and Bristol models, local communities will have greater access to data and research about their areas of interest. Local eyes and ears.

[Trevor Mitchell](#) In my compartmentalised construct, curation of HERs is a separate matter. Similarly, the promotion of the discipline and community engagement, both important, may not be key outcomes for advisory services. I wonder whether there will be time in Monday's workshop to consider all strands of LA archaeology services?

[Bob Sydes](#) Also, Jan, thinking about CBA resources such as LHEN and how that might develop in the future

[Helen Wells](#) I think HERs belong in a local planning advisory service, not a big regional service of some kind - you know your local data, and the dialogue between the HER and planning archaeologists is constant, enhancing the HER and enabling

us to provide the best advice we can. However this doesn't mean that data can't be more joined up. The Heritage Gateway could be useful for this (though not for commercial purposes!), however at present it is fairly clunky. And it makes sense for HERs to share buffers around other authorities to enable better advice to be given. The best thing about HERs is not being able to access the data online, in my opinion, but access to knowledgeable staff who can look at people's questions and work out what data they ACTUALLY want. :-)

[Bob Sydes](#) Hi Trevor, Of, course, heritage issues are but one of many constraints and opportunities planning officers need to balance. They are also under huge pressure and in the main significantly under resourced. Anything we can do to make their lives easier is ultimately in our own interests. crib sheets, constraint and opportunity mapping, reference to local and regional case law all becomes that much easier with a more integrated and regional advisory service...I think!

[Jan Wills](#) still pursuing Bob: in any regional or other structure not directly within local authorities how would we make the link between local authority that needs the service (and would have to contribute funding) and the other organisations? (I'm not arguing for any particular outcome, just keen to get people's ideas on possible scenarios). Our experience of multi-LA services hasn't always been very good.

[Andrew Armstrong](#) Worth noting that most of the HERs in the southwest are now on the Know Your Place website (developed from the Bristol model) - in Gloucestershire we post our monuments data on to the website. So that is regional integration (in terms of promoting info to the public) whilst keeping the higher level data at a county level. This seems to work well. it also maintains the important close relationship between the DC archaeologists and their planning colleagues at district and county level. Also worth noting that the HER I maintain (for Gloucester City) sits within the Gloucestershire County system and I access it remotely. This means there's no double handling of data and no confusion at adam boundaries - but again we keep that local relationship.

[Tim Grubb](#) Andrew is right that KYP is a very good way of expanding the user base for HERs. The fact that the monuments data sits beside the historic OS, tithe and enclosure maps (soon!) immediately means it is available to users who might be familiar with the latter but not what we do.

[Tony Howe](#) I'm a bit late to this discussion - hi all. Jan has had some thoughts from me on some of these issues following Discussion 3, but picking up on points above: I think there are huge dangers for us as a profession if we continue to endlessly circle around service provision. As Jan points out, there is a 2008 report which indicates that the "current" system - and by this I take that to mean having County Archaeological Advisory services and HERs in planning departments - is the preferred model. We need to support this & move on. The principle advocacy bodies are not helping the situation by constantly taking the view in discussions that there are "many methods of delivery" and leaving it at that - this perspective is clearly diluting and undermining the case for resource maintenance and/or increases. We need them to be saying - "there are a number of methods of delivery and we as the experts and advocates for the sector are telling you that this is the most efficient and preferred one."

[Tony Howe](#) What we need is a series of clear messages: there **is** a best practice way of service delivery: HERs and advisory services **should/must** be statutory: resources **should/must** be adequate and available to provide for these: where they are not, it's not our job to talk down our profession and the services we provide to accommodate this, but rather to highlight the inadequacies and fight to address them.

[Bob Sydes](#) Hi Jan, Maybe the workshop next week could examine that! The devil is in the detail but what I would say is that rather than impose a model on a needy LA service, perhaps we could ask them what they would like from an expanded regional service.

[Bob Sydes](#) Hi Tony, The world changes very fast and from 2008 to 2017 a lot has happened. my sense of where this discussion is trying to go is in exploring models more suited to the 21st century. As a profession, we have rather sat on our laurels a bit.

[Andrew Armstrong](#) I think a regional model runs the risk of further reducing the number of professional archaeologists for a given area (already over stretched) and of detaching those archaeologists from the context (in both planning and archaeological terms) of the advice they are giving. Local knowledge is really important. That doesn't mean we can't work regionally to engage with the public however (as KYP shows). It's fairly easy to get funding for public engagement - but the HLF are (quite rightly) not going to fund a database that fundamentally exists to provide baseline data for the planning system - that's up to LPAs and represents a tiny fraction of their spending.

[Bob Sydes](#) Hi Andrew, There are risks with everything and at the minute we know that pressure will increase on LA advisory services year on year. With a regional model you could actually end up with more advisers per head of population. depends what you go for and where you are. You are right that at the minute HLF will not fund databases that provide for the planning system but HERs can be so much more than that as KYP Bristol and Lincoln demonstrate. This is why I suggest a role for HE using their influence to affect change in HLF position.

[Toby Catchpole](#) Bob's points might make sense for North Yorkshire but my understanding is that joint/residual services are generally first in line for cuts, as there is a strong tendency for them to be seen as an optional extra, rather than integral, by the individual authorities who fund them.

[Tony Howe](#) Hi Bob. The preferred model from 2008 is (with a bit of local variation maybe) broadly the same one as post-PPG16? Qualified archaeological/conservation professionals sitting in the appropriate local authority planning departments with access to adequately-supported databases (ie HERs). Are there are **actually** better ideas out there that we've not thought of (A few have even been tried)? - or are we just compromising ourselves into acceptance of constant reduction in our services and expertise- and diminishing our own value accordingly? We've been having these service delivery discussions for as long as I can remember, and unless we start defending our work properly as far as I can see the only result of the post-2008 approach -and therefore the 21st century delivery

model we're definitely heading for, is an acceptance of inadequate resources and depleted services countrywide as the way forward. I can't support that and I don't think the profession should either.

[Jan Wills](#) I'll be feeding the collated comments from this discussion into the workshop on Monday. The emphasis of the workshop is open discussion about the issues but also then reaching a set of proposed actions. The latter will probably be around pieces of work that need to be done to progress ideas/proposals that have come up. So, for example, responding to Tony and Bob, there was a study in 2008 which supported the current LA service structures for HERs but that was nearly 10 years ago and much has changed. Its no longer a very good basis for advocacy. Is there some work to do here on the shape of services, their status and their funding? More talking I know but we're not actively working on these issues at the moment (pace all those who are doing really good things in LAs despite the problems) other than surveying the staffing numbers. Howell Redesdale happened but not much follow up...

[Robin Page](#) I have had a further comment via email from Hugh Winfield at North East Lincs who reinforces previous postings on the strength of local knowledge of the data in smaller HERs and the relevance of the data to the local populace and thus to elected representatives potentially making them more resilient

[Bob Sydes](#) Hi Tony, you are absolutely right we have been talking about this for a very long time but the best form of defence is.....and we can change our perspective and take a glass half full view of change and be excited about the opportunities a different way of working might offer.

[Bob Sydes](#) Hi Toby, There are obviously a lot of potential challenges in setting up any new or changed system or process and we can see this in the plethora of out sourced LA services such as libraries, economic development Parks and gardens and, here in York, allotments. The LA model is changing around us and will continue to change. South Yorkshire Advisory Service is still around and I well remember the anxieties of those early days setting up a joint delivery service. Ian will be in a better position to articulate the challenges from a West Yorkshire perspective I am sure.

[Bob Sydes](#) Hi Hugh via Robin, please look at the Lincoln or Bristol model and ask yourself whether the local community could still be served in an appropriate way? HERs that are tucked away and only accessible through supervised visits are not really the thing I would suggest.

[Aisling Nash](#) I agree with Helen with regards to the fact that one of the benefits of a county HER is that those people who work with it regularly know their area/data etc. With regional HERs, there are also the practical aspects such as how to facilitate such a huge database. We have c.80,000 records in Worcestershire so a regional HER would be massive. There are also issues with regards to who maintains, hosts, updates etc. With regards to facilitating access to community groups, my colleague Rob and I recently carried out a project called 'Assessing the value of community generated research' where we have made a number of recommendations around HERs, research frameworks etc. This project was commissioned by Historic England

and they are working with ClfA and CBA amongst others with regards to these can be taken forward.

[Helen Wells](#) I'm not sure many HERs are 'tucked away and only accessible through supervised visits' - we might not have a fancy website but we like to think we're very helpful at answering requests and sending scans of documents etc! (We don't have the office space for visits these days anyway!) I think this is a little off-topic in some ways, since the HER's main use (like it or not) is for planning purposes. Though ways of making the data more accessible to the public are great, the HER is most used for planning purposes, and there's no obstacle to acquiring data for that.

[Tony Howe](#) Hi Jan. Historic England was tasked with taking the recommendations from the Howell/Redesdale report forward last year. Perhaps this would be a good opportunity to ask for a progress update?

[Bob Sydes](#) Hi Helen, perhaps I should scrub "supervised visits" but "tucked away" I would still contend goes for many HERs. I think the status and purpose of a HER is absolutely germane to the future of LA heritage services and there is more to land use planning than dealing with planning applications surely? Place making is back on the agenda, at least with some Urbanists and the huge volume of data, and analysis held by LAs either as part of an HER or as an adjunct to it (characterisation etc.) is of huge value to anyone interested in the evolution of place. How that is managed and how that is accessed and moderated for the widest possible audience is crucial. Andrew Ward's point earlier on about the lack of academic interest in HERs is interesting.

[Jan Wills](#) Hi Tony - yes that's true (cf Culture White Paper). Sector reps and others, including ClfA and ALGAO, met with Historic England last autumn to discuss how to do just that. I'm anticipating an update from HE on progress since then which we can feed into the workshop on Monday, and make more widely available through the notes from the workshop which will be accessible through the ClfA web page.

[Helen Wells](#) Bob we do have involvement with Neighbourhood Plans etc as well, I was including that in the remit of our team as it is planning related...

[Toby Catchpole](#) One thing no-one has yet mentioned in relation to HERs is the need for closer liaison with our IHBC colleagues. I don't know if everyone struggles to get hold of historic building surveys, I guess it's easier in unitary authorities? Establishing HERs as the main repository for such information would certainly broaden knowledge of their existence.

[Bob Sydes](#) A useful piece of work either for next week or as an action coming out of next week might be to model the impacts, risks and opportunities associated with a regional model of heritage advice delivery and data management. I should think that we have most of the information needed, current staffing levels, salaries etc. to make a good fist of it. You could factor in volunteer contributions etc. and think about how a service level agreement might work out. Once the model is created, I am sure someone could devise a way of testing it against a variety of factors or forces for change that might act for and against service delivery over the coming years. Just a thought.

[Christopher Bowles](#) Hi All. Sorry, late to the conversation but very interesting. Just thought it might be worth looking at us north of the Border (I'm the LA archaeologist for the Scottish Borders). We run a number of systems here that are worth considering. In many cases we are far less resourced than English authorities, but I like to think we make do despite the same pressures. We have the traditional DC/HER teams based in LAs, advisory services based in trusts, LA services providing advice to neighbouring authorities through SLAs and services partly based in universities, several in museums services. It's not one size fits all and does work at the moment.

[Christopher Bowles](#) That said, there are LA services (such as mine and Dumfries & Galloway) that are struggling with, in our cases, one member of staff doing both DC and HER work. Those with SLAs struggle to maintain the agreements because, as was said somewhere above, those are an easy chop even with advocacy. This has led to at least one LA not having advice at all. But as a potential solution we're looking at linking some services (such as provision of RRFs) through partnerships where we can. Given the policy environment in Scotland this seems like a sensible way towards regional services, without actually getting there 100%.

[Bob Sydes](#) Hi Toby, I agree absolutely, and I alluded to it earlier on as I think did Mike H. I might be very useful Jan/Robin to invite IHBC colleagues to next weeks deliberations. Perhaps they are already part of the inner sanctum ;-)

[Judith Plouviez](#) Hi all, afraid I've not had much chance to contribute to this as I'm away. But I strongly agree with those who see the discussion as focused on the role of archaeologists and archaeology within the planning system and the need to maintain and improve that vital local service despite the cuts and ideological reductions of recent years. We need to remember it took a couple of decades to get protection of archaeology into that system in the 1980s - 1990s and there is no intrinsic reason to suggest dismantling it now. Nor are there any sensible alternative funding sources (sorry Bob but citing HLF is a non starter) and it has always been a tiny percentage of local budgets. Indeed one of the looming issues now is that local authority pay scales have been held back so badly that it is probably not an attractive career route for many graduates nor for tired excavators. I hope that now Historic England has settled into its new organisational structure that it will focus more publicly on the need to promote and protect the role of local authority archaeologists (and indeed all those involved in historic environment protection) rather than endless discussions of change for the sake of minimal savings.

[Jane Golding](#) Thinking about improved definitions for HER services/standards/performances: in April we re-launched the HER audit programme following extensive revision in consultation with ALGAO UK HER Committee. The audit defines good practice and identifies agreed standards (thereby encouraging development). In a process of bringing these up to date, the new structure now accords with a range of service outcomes based on nationally agreed requirements set out in 'HER Guidance' (HE, ALGAO, IHBC 2016).

We'll build on the experience of the 10 HERs auditing this year to ensure that the audit is a baseline quality standard which helps guide HERs to be the best they can

be for current and future users.

Recognising that achievement of a national standard gives confidence to all stakeholders and users of HERs, a move to an accreditation scheme might offer greater certainty. Do you think this direction is worth exploring?

[Stewart Bryant](#) Coming to this late, and picking up on the regional option: I think its time has come, or is approaching rapidly. Local knowledge is best where you have it, but how do we address the large areas that don't - or might not in 5 years time? Regional solutions must, though have sufficiently flexibility to cope with the variable levels of provision (and income from charging) and the messy local gov. structures. Building on existing regional structures (RRF groups and ALGAO regional groups - which already have broader sector representation) is likely to be the easiest and most flexible. Solutions could for instance range from closer working and sharing of expertise (including from the wider sector) to scoping new structures where provision is clearly below the minimum.

[Ian Sanderson](#) I think in areas where Local Authority provision is stretched to the point where there are non-viable advisory services emerging, I think there may be scope for regional HERs managed by HE, perhaps based in the HE regional centres. HE will (a) be sympathetic to funding them properly & (b) have some clout in extracting financial contributions from LPAs. With the use of digital technology & remote working, Local Authority based archaeological development officers would be located to influence planning decisions. Local Authorities understand the need for expert advice. They don't always appreciate the scale of resourcing needed to maintain adequate HERs.

[Bob Sydes](#) Hi Jude, HLF might be a non-starter now but...forever? Has HE no influence at all? Can we not dream? :-)

[Jan Wills](#) Although this workshops project is HE funded and therefore England focused we have invited other UK nations, and also other professional institutes and service users. So HES, ALGAO Scot and Wales reps, CADW, IHBC will be at the next workshop, as will LGA, BPF and CLA.

[Aisling Nash](#) With regards to promoting HERs, this is something that the whole profession needs to do. There is a disconnect within our own profession about what HERs do and how they fit into the wider profession. HE are running their HIAS strategy which involves among other things, how to make HERs more accessible and how to link in more with things like Heritage Gateway, OASIS/ADS so people are working on it although it's taking time. I don't think anyone who works in a HER is denying the advance of technology etc. but methods of delivering HERs on a regional level is fraught with difficulty. For example, the HER Content and Computing Survey 2016 report by the HE Heritage Information Partnership Team found that nationally, there are nearly 1.5 million monument records. While I know what we have been talking about regional HERs, this would still represent a huge undertaking in terms of technical specifications etc. in terms of number of records, who holds sources, what do we do with paper records,

f academia, in my experience they're not interested in engaging with HERs - there is work to be done in that respect but I'm not entirely sure how we go about it considering that universities in general (there are some exceptions) don't see themselves as responsible for training potential commercial archaeologists and everything that goes with that.

[Bob Sydes](#) Forgive me Aisling, but for me the Heritage Gateway is very much yesterdays thing - a quick fix at the time. ADS is a brilliant resource and a fruitful place to start thinking about alternative models to delivering evidence and understanding to a wider audience. I don't know the HIAS strategy thing but really we have some great examples of accessible HERs so why don't we just morph them into something that can be rolled out? Why do we endlessly navel gaze about data standards etc. I'm in total favour of getting stuff out there warts and all and let the raw edges be sorted over time. As long as there are appropriate caveats clearly visible, what's not to like? Paper records? scan them. Lots of local volunteers I am sure...

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[Jan Wills](#) Late yesterday there was an exchange about the cost-benefits of various service models for HERs and I made a reference to work done for the heritage protection bill. You can see the basic outcome of this in Stewart Bryant's background paper on statutory HERs prepared for Monday's workshop here:

<http://content.historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/research/21st-century-challenges-workshop-4-statutory-notes.pdf>

Stewart might want to comment further if he's out there??

[Bob Sydes](#) Hi Aisling, sorry I didn't realise you had more to come! Its true, Universities do not see themselves as responsible for training potential commercial archaeologists but at York, post-grads at least, are introduced to methodologies and processes designed to enhance existing skills etc. I am certain that we need to make more of links to academia, hence my earlier suggestion that regionally based advisory services might explore it.

[Robin Page](#) For all wishing to learn more about HIAS:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/support-and-collaboration/heritage-information-access-strategy/>

[Bob Sydes](#) Hi Jan, thanks for sharing that. It would be useful to understand how that scoring would pan out now, 10 years on.

[Aisling Nash](#) Bob, yes HG was a quick fix at the time but it's now being looked at to redevelop it. In terms of scanning documents etc, it's easy to say just do it but it's not that easy to do in practice. Lots of local volunteers? Perhaps but there is still the issue of space/resources etc. I understand where you're coming from in principle but my experience of running a HER and liaising for the last 5 years or so with HE, and other HER colleagues show that the reality is much different and there is no easy fix. Have a look at the link to HIAS that Robin has put up - HE are addressing issues of accessibility etc.

Why do we navel gaze about data standards? Because high quality and consistent data is key. Look at the Roman Rural Settlement project for example. They weren't able to look at some aspects due to the lack of good quality consistent data. I know that you would probably argue that a regional approach would resolve this but not necessarily.

In terms of training archaeologists in uni - yes

[Aisling Nash](#) you may be right in this but building links to academia is hard when you're pushing against a closed door in some instances. I don't think a regional advisory service approach would resolve this.

[Aisling Nash](#) you may be right in this but building links to academia is hard when you're pushing against a closed door in some instances. I don't think a regional advisory service approach would resolve this.

[Bob Sydes](#) Sorry Aisling, data standards and all that goes with it have been part of my career for so long I have just become so frustrated with (my perspective) the lack of progress towards accessible HERs.

[Aisling Nash](#) There are also other issues around regional HERs such as what happens if one LPA pulls their funding? How do you work out what level of funding each LPA contributes? What happens for those that are two tier authorities? What happens if one LPA doesn't sign up to support a regional HER? does that mean they have a separate HER or forgo access?

[Aisling Nash](#) I think data standards is part of every archaeologists career or should be. You might think there is lack of progress towards accessible HERs but there is work being done on this. Part of the reason why more HERs haven't signed up to HG is the lack of financial funding to be able to do this. Not every HER has the resources to have everything online.

[Aisling Nash](#) And data standards are very important if we want to facilitate greater access to HERs.

[Louisa Matthews](#) 1of3) Sorry to be late to the conversation. I feel that (with notable exceptions) arms-length organisations not embedded within their planning authority are often more vulnerable to cuts – if only by virtue of the fact that it's easier to make someone redundant in an arms-length organisation than someone you interact with (even if it's just in the kitchen) every day (equally local support for services tends to come from the fact that the most vociferous campaigners have often met their HE teams in person more than once). We shouldn't undervalue proximity – geographical, social and professional.

Joint services can work very well – often most successfully where you have large urban unitary authorities (such as South and West Yorkshire – but as Ian has said, even they have significant problems at present)....

[Louisa Matthews](#) 2of3)..In other areas it's much harder to establish joint working – and not just in archaeology. To take the North Yorkshire example – there's been talk for many years of 'unitarising' to form 2 or more single-tier authorities, to bring efficiency savings, reduce bureaucracy etc. At first glance it looks like a no-brainer. However, it's never happened (and the couple of instances of shared services instigated in the last few years have been expensive failures). The reasons are complex and down to political and socio-economic factors beyond anyone's control. To give one example of why it might not work – there would be a 'fight' over who had to take certain districts into their authority – areas of North Yorkshire have populations density of less than 44 people per sq km, making the revenue brought in from planning fees and council tax minuscule, and the services expensive to run – it's a matter of geography. This wider problem would be a consideration for any joint/regional HE service.

[Louisa Matthews](#) 3of3) There's also the 'what's in it for me?' attitude in some authorities towards merging services. As Jude says, HE teams are small-fry in terms of staff numbers and budgets. Combining two overstretched budgets gives a net gain of nothing - but you now have two task masters instead of one and an extra HER to look after when you didn't have the staff to look after the one you had already! It's a different matter if the two budgets have some slack in them – combining would indeed bring a benefit, you might even squeeze a half time post out of it, but I can't remember the last time I heard anyone of my acquaintance say they underspent, or had enough from search / enquiry fees to countenance buying anything other than paper clips.

[Robin Page](#) On sharing services Historic England (then EH- report dates from 2015) supported IHBC to look at the pros and cons of sharing local conservation services: <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/analysis-of-impact-sharing-local-conservation-services/analysis-impact-of-sharing-local-conservation-services.pdf/>

[Trevor Mitchell](#) The discussion has been really interesting and will fuel our workshop. But the chat has been mainly about defending or adapting existing systems. I hope we will be able to dream about new services to meet new outcomes. What should advisers be doing to deliver public interest outcomes, such as growth and housing?

[Trevor Mitchell](#) The workshop will be about new models for future roles. Throw away the desk instructions and standard operating procedure - how can archaeological advisers make a positive difference to society? What should we care about? Where should we put our efforts?

[Edmund Lee](#) Just a thought on resources for local services (my thought, not an HE position). Is there anything we as a sector could do with the Community Infrastructure Levy, which was introduced to help councils benefit from development in their area?
https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200126/applications/70/community_infrastructure_levy

[Edmund Lee](#) On the regional versus local discussion. Any thinking along those lines will need to bear in mind the very different character and planning regimes of

different regions. The Northern Powerhouse, for example, is a different beast to the Sou...

[Edmund Lee](#) ... and a final one from me (again not HE). Remember that hosting of a database (local, regional, national, whatever) can be done anywhere. The delivery of services based on the knowledge in those database records is a separate consideration.

[Robin Page](#) I have to sign out now- many thanks for all the useful comments- we'll leave the discussion open till tomorrow morning for more thoughts on [Trevor Mitchell](#)'s invitation- "Throw away the desk instructions and standard operating procedure - h...

[Ian Sanderson](#) To try & answer Trevor's post re what should advisers be doing to deliver growth & housing. A case needs to be made that a properly resourced archaeology advisory service speeds up planning decisions & helps provide certainty for the va...

[Jan Wills](#) Thanks, Ian, that a good note of positive action to end on. I'm signing out now, but as Robin said we'll leave things open till tomorrow am for any further thoughts. We'll be circulating the comments to the workshop on Monday. The draft outputs from all of the workshops are added to the ClfA website (see link above in Robin's opening introduction) and comments are invited up until the end of 2017 after which we'll be finalising the report. I hope to add the draft notes and actions from workshop 3 (designation and planning) by the end of this month. Thanks again, everyone.

Appendix: Thoughts on potential additional workshops (from BAJR Facebook group members)

During the course of promoting the discussion, Archaeologists Andrew Hoaen, Kevin Wooldridge and others from this group suggested additional dedicated sessions on the challenges of:

- Brexit
- Climate Change
- HS2
- Archaeology as a career: pay conditions etc...

Lorna Richardson also stressed the need to involve communities/community archaeology in the project.