

The future of local government archaeological services

CIfA statement on the publication of evidence to the review

In September last year, the All Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group (APPAG) published a review into the *Future of Local Government Archaeological Services*. The review was undertaken in 2014 by John Howell MP and Lord Redesdale. In addition, the evidence which national bodies submitted to the review was published this week on the website of The Archaeology Forum (TAF), which assisted in the original evidence gathering.

The belated publication serves to highlight the important issue of cuts to local government archaeology services, which has worsened since the time of the review. CIfA is extremely grateful to both John Howell and Lord Redesdale for their work on the report and for their personal efforts to raise the issue to Government and nurture the ideas for politically amenable solutions.

CIfA Hon. Chair, Jan Wills, said:

“It is gratifying that the evidence which national organisations across the historic environment sector submitted to the Review has now been published. The evidence paints a detailed picture of the state of local authority archaeology services and provides clear insight into a shared desire for action. The advice given at that time continues to be relevant in the context of accelerating changes to the planning system and increasing financial pressures on local government. We hope that it will influence the development of government policy as it affects the historic environment, especially the future of the services that are essential for its protection.”

CIfA wishes to highlight the following key issues from the Review evidence:

- The high level of agreement among contributors as to the scale and nature of the problems
- The overwhelming agreement that there was a growing problem in delivering sustainable services which meet requirements necessary for effective protection; through screening, specialist design and monitoring of mitigation, effective risk-reduction and prevention of harm to heritage assets
- The strong emphasis on the benefits that statutory protection for HER services would bring. It is also worthy of note that since the review was undertaken, Wales has passed legislation which will give statutory protections to the Historic Environment Record in Wales
- There is no one-size-fits-all solution, but there are a range of potential options which need appropriate commitment from national government, local government, Historic England, and the wider profession in order to provide a realistic opportunity to ensure transformation where it is needed.

Although the Government has made efforts to recognise the issues that the report raises, for example in the Culture White Paper¹, published last year, the clear message of the collated evidence to this review suggests that the issue is deserving of much higher priority. CIfA are therefore calling for

- Historic England to recognise the obligation on them to take a lead role in finding sustainable solutions and enabling transitions to new service models in problem areas
- Government to earnestly consider the need for a statutory duty to maintain Historic Environment Records as a way to improve the recognition of historic environment services in upholding principles of sustainability and protection of the historic environment in the NPPF.

¹ DCMS, *Culture White Paper*, p.36: “Historic England will identify how it can offer more support to local authorities, reduce demand on local services through clearer guidance, and encourage new delivery models that make the best use of resources, in the light of the review of local authority archaeological services.”