

# New Forest Archaeology: Volunteer and Community Group Resource Review Brief

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## Summary

The New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) is seeking to undertake a project to review, assess and evaluate the variety of resources UK wide that are easily accessible to local groups, volunteers and other interested parties who want to undertake self-guided work within the archaeological sector.

The proposed review is the first stage in a potentially larger scheme with the ultimate overall aim to produce a New Forest archaeology handbook for local groups and volunteers.

It is also recognised that the outcomes of such a review may be of value and interest to archaeological focused organisations such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Historic England (HE), Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA), Council for British Archaeology (CBA) and Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO) as such these bodies will be engaged at the various stages of the project.

## Project Background

The New Forest Archaeology team have a successful track record of undertaking and delivering guided field survey, geophysical survey and excavation with volunteers. Using Heritage Lottery Fund through our current Landscape Partnership Scheme; *Our Past, Our Future* we are seeking to build on this expertise and share it and other existing knowledge with local groups and individuals within the New Forest and beyond.

To this end we are ultimately seeking to create a '*How to guide*' focused on the New Forest, that would potentially take volunteers or groups through the process of undertaking desk based assessment (research), potential fieldwork (in varying forms) and then how to report and disseminate their findings. The guide would be aimed specifically at local community groups and volunteers, though students and others may also find it of benefit. Another outcome of such a guide would be to give individuals and groups the confidence and freedom to identify and expand their own interests and put that into practice.

Though considerable consideration has been given to how such a guide, it was realised that this was actually the final step in a much larger project. With this in mind our attention has been refocused on whether there is an actual need or demand for such a guide.

## **New Forest Archaeology: Volunteer and Community Group Resource Review, Assessment and Evaluation Methodology**

### **Review of Community Archaeology Guidance**

The NFNPA is seeking to commission a review of what currently exists in the way of guidance that is easily accessible to local groups.

This may be in the form of textbooks, digital, or printed media in varying forms from written to e-learning modules created by national bodies or local organisations and training sessions or field schools. We will also consider free guides funded by grants as well as commercially available guides.

The focus for this resource review will be as wide ranging as possible and not specifically New Forest focused.

The overall aim is to understand how various guidance is presented, who it is targeted at, how it is used, and its perceived strengths or weaknesses. A big goal of this work will be how this information can be captured and then evaluated/tested by engaged groups (below), and ultimately then built on in the future production of new or updating of existing guidance materials.

### **Some examples of existing guidance**

- BAJR guides: <http://www.bajr.org/BAJRread/BAJRGuides.asp>
- Council for British Archaeology Practical handbooks: <http://new.archaeologyuk.org/books-and-publications>
- Introduction to Standards and Guidance in Archaeological Practice (ISGAP): <http://www.isgap.org.uk/>
- Jigsaw Cambridgeshire: <https://jigsawcambs.org/>

### **Assessment of Community Archaeology Guidance**

The challenge of such a literature review will be comparing the various forms of guidance. It is suggested that in its most basic form results are presented in a table or something similar that can be used to quickly compare the different documents by categories like: *stated audience; length of resource (pages or words); availability (hard copy only, online, microfiche); published year; geographic coverage; topic etc.*

This table can then be used as part of the consultation and engagement with local groups (detailed below) adding columns like: *learning processes – reading, visual, practical etc.*

A further step, might be to consider how a constructive or critical assessment might be made of the 'usefulness', 'quality' and 'accessibility' of the available guides or material. However as this approach will potentially be very subjective it will be discussed and considered with the winning tenderer rather than being laid out here.

Where possible we would also seek to try and build in any existing or previous evaluations of guidance materials that might have been undertaken as part of past Heritage Lottery Fund projects or schemes.

### **Evaluation: Community Group Engagement**

Alongside the resource review and assessment we would also seek input and engagement from community groups. As the intended primary target audience for any outcomes it is important to build them into the evaluation. An essential part of this work will be to try and capture their own reviews of existing material, where they look for guidance at the moment and ultimately what they would like to see. Pitching the information at the right level and in the right format potentially provides the key to success and longevity

The NFNPA would like to see engagement at both a local and national level. The expected minimum level of engagement would be a general online survey open to all, supported by a number of focus with representation from different local community groups.

Specific New Forest focus engagement will be supported by the NFNPA Community Archaeologist. More national engagement will be supported by Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic England and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologist's Voluntary & Community Archaeology Special Interest Group.

### **Review Outcomes: A New Forest Guide/Handbook/Manual?**

This review has come about in response to a perceived need; the creation of a comprehensive guide for local groups and volunteers based upon existing good archaeology practice. Though any planned guide would have tried to avoid replicating what already exists in the public sphere, the review and assessment as set out above will help provide guidance and inform any approach going forward relating to resource creation. Depending on the results of what we learn from the resource review and assessment it may be that the creation of a new bespoke guide or handbook is not sustainable or correct, but the production of local case studies to sit alongside existing guidance would be the most successful outcome.

As such we would like to any reporting on the review and assessment phases to provide a series of lessons learnt, outcomes and conclusions. Along with some suggested toolkits, actions or proposals for future community resource creation.

Though the main outcome of the review, assessment and evaluation is to potentially inform the creation of a handbook, it is possible that there will be other useful outcomes. Where possible these will be shared with interested parties such as HLF, CIFA, HE, ALGAO and CBA etc.

## Questions

If you have any questions about this brief please contact:

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