

What about Southport?

A report to ClfA on progress against the vision and recommendations of the Southport Report (2011), undertaken as part of the *21st-century challenges in archaeology* project

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Executive Summary

This report provides a rapid, point-in-time review of progress against the long-term aspirations and specific recommendations set out in the Southport Report (2011). It has been prepared within the scope of the original Southport Report as an update and prelude to *21st-century Challenges in Archaeology*, a programme of cross-sector discussions in 2017 led by Historic England and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. The core of this report is a review of progress against the specific recommendations (with detail given in the accompanying table referred to as the *Southport Reporter*), a comment on whether the vision has been achieved, notes on what appear to be the main drivers and barriers involved and pointers for the future.

The Southport Report was the result of a one year project and consultation on realising the benefits from the archaeological services market. It was led by a group of individuals formed at the annual conference of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (ClfA, then IfA), held in Southport in 2010. Its focus was on the planning-led archaeology market in England, though with reference to practice across the historic environment sector and across the UK. It sought to provide a delivery framework for that market which would: facilitate sector collaboration and development; find ways to promote participative knowledge creation; focus as a sector on understanding and enhancing cultural significance; build the expectation of professionally accredited quality; and help the property sector create opportunities for better archaeology. The Southport Report was published with funding from Historic England, and launched by John Penrose MP, then Minister for Heritage.

The Southport Report painted a bright vision for the future of planning-led investigation into the historic environment, involving active public participation, with a collaborative and innovative sector providing high quality and highly valued services to the property and development sector in England.

In summary, Southport envisioned a future wherein:

1. The management of the historic environment is a partnership between communities and their local authorities, with public participation in commercially instigated projects becoming the norm, both in the field and during post-excavation work.
2. Research is a highly collaborative venture, integrating heritage, higher education, public and private sector practitioners, and focuses above all on interpretation, understanding, significance and benefiting the public.
3. Archives and archaeological collections are linked through a fully resourced national network of 'resource centres', able to draw on expertise to curate, provide access and disseminate as hubs fostering innovation, research and life-long learning.
4. The sector is overtly collaborative, drawing strength from the diversity of its specialisms,

sharing information and acting collectively and constructively to foster innovation, development and professionalism.

5. Historic environment projects instigated through the planning process consistently add value to development.
6. The market for services delivers maximum net value to society rather than least-cost compliance with regulation.
7. Quality in management and investigation is ensured through the leadership of accredited experts working to and accountable for adhering to agreed professional standards

A total of 32 practical, short- and medium-term recommendations were identified as being necessary to achieve the vision. These are detailed in the *Southport Reporter*, an internal document to track progress against the 2011 recommendations, which is appended to this report for further updating in light of 2017 workshop discussions.

Good progress has been achieved generally against many of the specific recommendations. This is due in large part to sustained commitment from a number of organisations including Historic England (HE), the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), the Council for British Archaeology (CBA), the Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers (FAME), the Association of Local Government Archaeology Officers (ALGAO) and other cross-sector special interest groups and committees. Importantly, the Southport visions and many recommendations have also been taken up in a range of corporate strategies and action plans, notably Heritage 2020 (HEF 2015), and the CIfA Strategic Plan. Overall, delivering against the recommendations has strengthened our sector and created a wealth of development and training opportunities. New and updated standards, guidance and knowledge sharing have been put in place, and these have created a more robust professional platform for the future.

However, the overall vision has not been reached. The envisioned partnership approach between local authorities and their communities has struggled, particularly in the face of budget cuts. There are many excellent collaborative research partnerships across the historic environment sector, but these are still in the minority. Despite very significant advances, there are still obstacles to gaining real value from archaeological archives and collections in many parts of the country. In the development and planning sectors, historic environment work is still more likely to be approached as risk mitigation than as value-adding. While there are many strong examples of best practice, the shortcoming is that these are not the norm. There appears to be a disconnect between policy and implementation – especially practical implementation in the field. Whether it was purposeful or not, the fact that the sector has not integrated new approaches, standards and guidance into its own practice, may leave it less well aligned than other professions, and the Southport Report envisaged a stronger commitment to professionalism than has actually occurred.

Part of the reason the Southport vision has not been reached is undoubtedly major change in the political, economic, social and technological landscapes around us. Set against the present-day context, some of the main drivers and barriers are presented in this report in a necessarily broad-brush 'PEST' analysis. Significant reductions in public sector budgets have resulted in lost capacity and expertise, with direct and indirect implications across national agencies, local government, the voluntary sector and planning-led archaeology (eg HE et al 2016). This affects, *inter alia*, the scope of research, supply of information and advice, and capacity for innovation and change. Political uncertainties resulting from the decision around exiting the European Union have numerous, yet-

unclear implications including possible impact on environmental legislation, reduced funding for research and potential restrictions on the movement of people and provision of skills.

Meanwhile, deregulation affecting the architecture of legislation and policy poses a real threat to the key principles and practices introduced by PPG16 and the National Planning Policy Framework itself. Given political and economic pressures there is a view that commercial archaeology is not secure in the planning process, that even the current planning process itself is at a crunch point (eg BPF 2015), and that we need a model for the future that is proof against long-term changes in public sector funding priorities and short- to medium-term trends in planning deregulation.

Our imperatives for the next 25 years include:

- Assuring the role of archaeology and heritage in statute and government policy, in a pragmatic structure able to withstand the pressures of budget cuts and planning process streamlining.
- Seizing opportunity: a forecast spike in demand for skilled archaeologists, largely associated with future infrastructure construction, offers an invaluable chance to establish a stronger model for archaeology in England. Coupled with this, there is clearer-than-ever recognition among policy-makers of the beneficial role and capability of archaeology as a contributor to socio-economic growth, and should be reinforced in the context of economic upturn.
- Prioritising the funding necessary to ensure we have the expertise, training, resources and confidence to design, manage and deliver innovative, quality-based archaeology that benefits development as well as society.
- Getting our sector fully aligned behind a shared definition and purpose of what we do and what outcomes we want – and then ensuring that we put policy into practice in all parts of the sector.
- Disseminating our research in ways that demonstrate its worth, and successfully convinces policy makers of the value of archaeology as a catalyst for regeneration and a focus of community and place, when weighed against other pressing domestic issues requiring limited funding.

Southport began by trying to make commercial archaeology do better. Looking back, it was a positive initiative that opened new, inter- and intra-discipline lines of communication, and appears to have helped to align strategic thinking across many but by no means all organisations. While we have strengthened systems and processes, the conclusion is that our approach and structure is not strong enough and not well-enough aligned. But these are things we can fix, and the sector now has an important opportunity to reorganise in ways which prioritise spending and investment (in project budgets and organisations as well as in government and local authority departments) to maximise the value of archaeology in sustainable development, education and wellbeing.

1. The context for Southport 2010-11

In 2010, individuals gathered at the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' annual conference – that year held in Southport, and agreed that the just published Government planning policy statement on the historic environment represented a rare opportunity in England to make a concerted, major improvement in archaeological practice in England.

The consensus in the room was that the planning-led investigation of the historic environment should deliver even better and far stronger socio-economic and other public benefits, and this would also dramatically benefit our own and our client sector. The new PPS5 contained all the right ingredients, and we needed to capitalise on this. Regardless of the unevenness in implementation across the country, it was recognised that PPG16 (DoE 1990) had built a resilient framework for protecting and managing the archaeological resource, and had led to a massive increase in new information: it had created strong platform for a structured commercial sector that was in an excellent position to be able to reach now for its ultimate goals. What the historic environment sector needed if it was to implement a real step-change in approach right across the sector, was an efficient and resilient toolkit that would also be understood and embraced by the development and construction sector.

Over the course of a year, a small group of individuals making up the Southport Group led a series of cross-sector workshops, both open and by-invitation, and conducted interviews, commissioned an independent economic analysis of the commercial archaeology sector and consulted widely online and through seminars and presentations across the country. Funded by Historic England (HE, then English Heritage) and project-managed by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, then IfA), the Southport Report was launched in 2011.

The objectives of the projects were to:

- Facilitate sector collaboration and development;
- Find ways to promote participative knowledge creation;
- Focus as a sector on understanding and enhancing cultural significance;
- Build the expectation of professionally accredited quality; and
- Help the property sector create opportunities for better archaeology.

The vision was strong and optimistic. The Southport Report envisioned a future for the planning-led investigation in which public involvement and active participation is built in to historic environment practice – throughout a project life-cycle, by a collaborative and diverse sector with all the tools it needed to enhance its performance, and providing high quality and highly valued services to the property and development sector in England.

In summary, Southport envisioned a future wherein:

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2. Research is a highly collaborative venture, integrating heritage, higher education, public and private sector practitioners, and focuses above all on interpretation, understanding, significance and benefiting the public.
3. Archives and archaeological collections are linked through a fully resourced national

network of 'resource centres', able to draw on expertise to curate, provide access and disseminate as hubs fostering innovation, research and life-long learning.

4. The sector is overtly collaborative, drawing strength from the diversity of its specialisms, sharing information and acting collectively and constructively to foster innovation, development and professionalism.
5. Historic environment projects instigated through the planning process consistently add value to development.
6. The market for services delivers maximum net value to society rather than least-cost compliance with regulation.
7. Quality in management and investigation is ensured through the leadership of accredited experts working to and accountable for adhering to agreed professional standards

In all, 32 practical, short- and medium-term recommendations were identified; a summary of actions taken against each of these recommendations is tabulated in the *Southport Reporter*, appended to this report.

2. Present-day context

The Southport work took place while the National Planning Policy Framework was being developed, and while advocacy efforts sought to ensure that the right principles would be carried forward into the National Planning Policy Framework. It took place as the sector developed its thinking around the language, principles, interests and values of significance (HE 2015a). It took place against a backdrop of pressure on resources, with evidence of some truly excellent practice examples, but generally uneven implementation.

Since the Southport Report, we have seen political, economic, social and technological changes we did not begin to imagine, with far reaching implications well beyond our sector and well beyond England. The present-day context, and the influences and pressures now faced by the historic environment sector include major shifts:



Key political, economic, social and technological influences, challenges and opportunities.

3. Summary of progress against the Southport recommendations

This section gives an overview of progress against the visions and recommendations (the short- and medium-term measures identified at the time as being necessary to achieve the vision). This section is intended to be read in tandem with the *Southport Reporter* (Appendix 1) which provides a more detailed account of specific initiatives and actions undertaken.

It should be noted that while Southport's remit was limited to England, its thinking, vision and philosophy extended to and were widely supported elsewhere in the UK and Europe (CifA 2012) and, importantly, there are many powerful best practice projects and approaches from across the UK.

3.1 MANAGEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AS A PARTNERSHIP OF LOCAL AUTHORITY AND COMMUNITY:

Southport envisioned the management of the historic environment as a partnership between local authorities and community groups – where decisions proactively, confidently and genuinely take account of public values and concerns, in the interests of a place and its significance, and where decisions are founded on sound knowledge from HERs mediated by expert professionals.

The vision was that public participation in professional projects would be the norm not the exception, and that professional, community and voluntary sector projects alike would comply with professional standards and contribute to the HER.

Overall progress in the last 5 years?

Overall, progress against the individual recommendations set out in 2011 has been good. A great deal of work has taken place across many organisations, resulting in the delivery of comprehensive guidance and training opportunities. As a result, there is now a sounder platform to enable and encourage public inclusion and active participation than ever before; and there are many excellent project examples (see notes against Actions 1 to 7 in the Appended *Southport Reporter*) which in themselves illustrate best practice and the benefits they have delivered.

However, it is hard to see that we are nearer to the overall vision and some have suggested we have gone backwards. Notwithstanding considerable spend (eg through HLF, CBA, CifA and RO projects, and many others) the cuts and austerity regime experienced in the heritage sector since 2008 have taken their toll, and we cannot say that active partnership, in the interests of significance, place and a stronger society, are the norm. Shared services have been advocated for greater resilience (eg Howell and Redesdale 2016). But local authority expertise and experience has been lost. There is strong concern as to whether, in the current model, the curatorial sector can wield the confidence necessary to drive real changes in the design and management of archaeological work, and to continue to be the main vehicle for the protection and management of undesignated archaeological sites, structures and landscapes.

Furthermore, economic pressures on service providers, in a highly competitive commercial market, mean that they hesitate to design any perceived extras into a project – and public engagement can still be perceived as an 'add on' – by archaeologists as well as by clients.

Overall, whereas there are some outstanding project examples from across the UK that illustrate the benefits of this approach, we need to broadcast them better. Moreover, effort is needed to drive home a sector-wide understanding of, and consequently a commitment to, the purpose, power and potential of the partnership approach.

The main drivers / barriers include:

- Recent and ongoing changes to the planning system, driven in particular by the need to achieve house-building targets.
- Steadily increasing self-recognition across our sector of the positive impact and force for good that heritage/heritage projects can represent.
- Funding cuts and staff reductions in local government: cuts are threatening and potentially undermining the consistency and implementation of the NPPF, the accuracy and currency of the Historic Environment Record and the confidence necessary to design and specify quality-based, collaborative projects that deliver real benefit as well as greater certainty of outcome.
- Reductions in funding of national organisations, in particular Historic England, and the effects of this not only on their own capacity but on sector initiatives and organisations that they help to support.
- Competitive sensitivities: commercial imperatives stand in the way of practitioners sharing their innovations and successes; similarly, decades of effort to build professionalism among service-providers can be painted as undermining.
- Non-statutory status of HERS: without statutory status planners and developers cannot be certain that they can rely upon them; and heritage services are an easy target for cuts in austere times.
- Resistance to, or reluctance to commit to, embedding professional standards and ethics.

Pointers for the next 25 years?

- A pragmatic model and structure for the future which decisively maximises the benefit to society from archaeological work;
- Rethinking the place of heritage in legislation and national policy as part of a 21st century system;
- Funding models that support pre-application discussions, innovative project design, training and leadership development;
- Getting the necessary commitment to and alignment with the vision from right across our sector;
- Using strong comparators from other sectors, such as the natural environment, especially with regard to pre-application discussion and the drive for quality-based outcomes.

3.2 COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH:

The Southport vision was that planning-led research into the historic environment should be a highly collaborative venture involving commercially funded, local authority, higher education, special interest groups and the voluntary sector, studying the built, buried, and underwater historic environment, focused on interpretation, understanding and significance rather than record alone.

Overall progress in the last 5 years?

There are many, very positive exemplars for collaborative research. Several of the commercial archaeological service providers are now conducting collaborative research with partners in academia and supporting doctoral and post-doctoral work; one has gained IRO status enabling it to create and lead even wider academic partnerships; there are strong examples in licensed maritime

archaeological work (HE 2014); HE and Worcestershire County Council have highlighted the value of community involvement in research (Hedge *et al* 2016).

However, collaboration is not the norm, and the default position for the majority of archaeological projects initiated through the planning process is for research to be tightly scoped within pre-defined budgets. There remains a disconnect between the cost of archaeological work and the value of the research it might generate.

Archaeologists appear to be good at harvesting innovations and new methodologies from other sectors; archaeologists tend not to invest in innovation. If they do, then the (admittedly anecdotal) reasoning seems to be that this is driven by commercial imperative and the drive for greater organisational efficiency for greater profitability.

The main drivers / barriers include:

- Lack of common agreement on the reason and purpose of research, lack of required impact or outcome objectives in project specifications;
- Financial constraints;
- An expectation on the part of archaeologists and developers that collaborative research will cost more.
- Organisations and individuals have not put into practice the improvements made to ClfA Standards and Guidance in the light of Southport recommendations.

Pointers for the next 25 years?

- New models for dissemination, consistently making open scholarship and open access a requirement of planning-led projects, and popularising research so the public can better see the benefit;
- Better and quicker flows of information to HERs on the results of investigations (see recommendation 16, enhancement of HERs in *Southport Reporter*);
- Better understanding which sources the historic environment sector reads, and rethinking publication as the digital world develops;
- Using comparators from other sectors, to developing new and consistently adopted models for measuring and demonstrating the value, benefit, impact and success of research;
- A focus on synthesis – not only as a driver for scholarly knowledge transfer and innovation, and as a powerful tool to demonstrate to funders and society at large the economic, cultural and social value of investment in collaborative research, but also to inform methodology and practice improvements.

3.3 ACCESSIBLE ARCHIVES AS HUBS FOR LEARNING AND RESEARCH:

Southport envisioned a network of resource centres, related to existing museum structures and their expertise, to curate archaeology collections and make highly accessible archives with wide dissemination for a variety of users.

Resource centres were seen as hubs for research, linked to life-long learning for research interest groups, museums, schools, on-line groups and others, with sustainability assured through standardisation.

Overall progress in the last 5 years?

Considerable progress has been achieved in this area, which has been a priority for the sector. There is sustained effort in this area through HE, the Archaeological Archives Forum, a ClfA Special Interest Group (SIG), survey data from HE (Edwards 2012) and FAME (on the quantum and storage costs of undeposited archives in England), a solid infrastructure of standards and advice (AAF 2012) and recently the Society for Museum Archaeologists' first annual survey of museums collecting archaeology, commissioned by Historic England (Boyle *et al* 2016) – an invaluable source for addressing the future of archaeological archive provision in England.

However, the Southport vision was far-reaching and very ambitious, and despite a comprehensive toolkit of standards, guidance and best practice procedure advice, it is still a long way off. A wide range of organisations have responsibility for a variety of archaeological archives and collections, which tends to obscure leadership in this area. This is compounded by the separation of responsibilities between DCLG (for creation of the archive via the planning process) and DCMS (for maintaining and presenting the archive). And by default, archives are generally seen as an obligation with some – but not enough – power and draw to attract users and visitors. There are still large, unfunded backlogs to be tackled, still archives with fragile or even no curatorial access and still parts of the country with no receiving repositories. Very robust socio-economic research would be needed to develop a proposal for self-sustaining, viable, networked, fully curated hubs for research and lifelong learning.

The main drivers / barriers include:

- Leadership and the lack of clearly defined financial and policy responsibility for archaeological archives;
- Financial pressures – public sector cuts and slim contractor margins;
- Ongoing challenges stemming from inconsistent or even unthinking selection processes in the field;
- The fragmented historic environment sector – increasing numbers of specialists working freelance, away from archives.

Pointers for the next 25 years?

- A return to first principles, to really demonstrate the benefit and purpose of archaeological archives to society – and so determine what to collect, what to keep and why;
- Vision: a robust socio-economic study into the viability and public benefit potential of networked archives as hubs for learning;
- Clear definition of national, regional and local responsibilities and leadership plan to bring a disparate, remote-working sector together to collaborate and support access to and curation of archives;
- Unanimous sector commitment to putting policy into actual practice in the field with all the training that implies.

3.4 A COLLABORATIVE SECTOR:

The Southport vision was for a collaborative professional sector, drawing strengths from its diverse range of specialisms, mutually respecting what the other has to offer, fostering innovation and development, acting collectively to influence and implement policy, collaborating to maximise efficiency and effectiveness, sharing approaches, cultures, working practices and standards that are applicable to the investigation and management of all types of heritage asset

Overall progress in the last 5 years?

Unsurprisingly, the sector has made big improvements in efficiency, capability and process – though arguably, these could be better promoted within the development world. This is a theme in the Heritage 2020 Framework (HEF 2015), an initiative to strengthen partnerships and collaborative working across the historic environment sector; Heritage 2020 brings a range of organisations together to addressing five strategic themes: capacity building; constructive conservation and sustainable management; discovery identification and understanding; helping things to happen; and public engagement.

Greater collaboration in advocacy is now evident, creating a stronger voice both within and outside the historic environment sector. Organisations such as The Archaeology Forum, as well as informal groupings, have worked effectively together to influence government policy, while the Historic Environment Forum and the Heritage Alliance bring together both archaeological organisations and the built historic environment players. Heritage is clearly part of the ‘culture sector’, as evidenced, for example, in the recent Culture White Paper (DCMS 2016) – which would not have been the case a few years ago.

The underpinning proposition holds: that we do better, more creative work if we can draw on wider skills and broader, deeper thinking. Subject-specific conferences and seminar series are valuable in drawing different disciplines together. However, as illustrated for example through the British Academy Reflections seminars (British Academy, forthcoming), there is a gap in understanding and cross-sector engagement between academia and the commercial archaeology organisations.

The main drivers / barriers include:

- In the private sector, competitive sensitivities stand in the way of sharing new ideas and innovations;
- Cross-discipline, subject conferences contribute well, though attendance is often *ad hoc*: arguably there is no single, ‘must attend’ intra-discipline meeting;
- Scarce investment in developing individual leadership;
- Mergers and acquisitions have helped to consolidate the private sector with greater knowledge sharing;
- The anticipated need for nearly 2,000 additional field archaeologists over the next four to five years (HE 2016) presents a perhaps unprecedented opportunity;
- Potential for future loss of expertise from continental Europe relating to free movement of people and the UK’s stated intention to leave the European Union.

Pointers for the next 25 years?

- Step change in required training and CPD;
- A completely new workforce model, meeting the demand for greater numbers of skilled archaeologists, allowing for more flexible and remote working, overcoming the turbulent employment patterns for field archaeologists, rising to the challenge of good communication, learning and knowledge transfer;
- Investing to ensure knowledge and experience is shared between Local Authorities to ensure best practice;
- Exploring the potential for existing regional structures (for example those that exist in HE, CBA, ClfA and other bodies) to be used or reframed, for greater cohesion and value, in effect making them stronger knowledge transfer networks;
- Developing the sector leaders of the future.
- The Chartered status of the professional Institute, and *Chartered Archaeologist* proposals.

3.5 CONSISTENTLY ADDING VALUE TO DEVELOPMENT:

The Southport vision was for a sector that consistently adds value to development, not facilitating low quality historic environment services but delivering services and products that reconnect communities with their history, that support sustainable development throughout its life cycle of and that contribute to design, brand, place-shaping, risk and consent management, marketing and end user value.

Overall progress in the last 5 years?

There is no doubt that the sector has matured beyond measure since the publication of PPG16 initiated the creation of a new market structure. The publication *Building the Future, Exploring our Past* (HE 2015b) rightly celebrated the vast advances in knowledge achieved through planning-led investigation of the historic environment. There are several strong examples of projects where archaeology has added value and where this has been recognised, even monetised. There is a broad acceptance that historic environment work is presently part of the planning and development process.

At a more granular level, however, although there is now a good body of research demonstrating how the historic environment may enhance or drive regeneration or tourism, we appear still to lack the power of persuasion. We struggle to influence policy makers that routine archaeological work adds direct value to a particular scheme or place, and a piece of fieldwork or research or heritage-based engagement can contribute to strengthening society. This raises questions about the language we use, the degree to which we cross-examine the purpose and objectives of specific projects, and whether we consistently design and invest in projects proportionate to the value they will add.

The main drivers / barriers include:

- Budgetary constraints limiting investment in training and developing staff to see the bigger picture;
- The opaque nature of archaeological processes and methods to the development and construction sector, and the perception that projects involve ‘essential’ (risk removal) and ‘additional’ (research, engagement and place-making) activities.
- A continued emphasis by some on marketing archaeological services in terms of mitigating risk rather than adding value.

Pointers for the next 25 years?

- Significantly improved funding models – as distinct from improved funding;
- Charging to reflect the actual cost of dealing with planning applications, to ensure pre-application discussions and design based on value and impact;
- Establishment of a mediated case-study portal to share and cement best practice;
- Advocacy to persuade the development sector to demand greater socio-economic benefit and impact from the work they sponsor, and stronger integration of heritage work into placemaking.
- Knowledge partnerships between ClfA and property/ development professional/ trade organisations.

3.6 PROCUREMENT AND DELIVERY BASED ON QUALITY:

Southport envisioned a market that delivers maximum net value to society rather than least-cost compliance with regulation, that weighs procurement models toward quality over price, that demands adherence to standards (for person, process and product), and that sustains projects which produce use value as well as existence value.

Overall progress in the last 5 years?

As with other Southport actions, progress has been good, but the overall vision is still a long way away. We tend to default to using the language of risk management, and are less good at using the language of place-making, and it is hard to find examples of procurement on quality over price, other than on major schemes.

Nonetheless, a large number of ambitious development, infrastructure build and regeneration projects across England over the coming years, offer an opportunity to bring about consistent delivery of a range of powerful and imaginative public benefits than has ever been achieved before.

The main drivers / barriers include:

- Competitive market drivers;
- Lack of compelling evidence to illustrate how projects designed around public benefit will support the objectives of an individual developer or scheme.

Pointers for the next 25 years?

- Better specification by all relevant parties of work that helps to shape and celebrate identity and place;
- Defining quality standards in terms of socio-economic impact;
- Use story and synthesis to demonstrate convincingly and compellingly why work was done, what was learned, and how it made a difference and was worth the investment;
- Requirements that projects contribute appropriately to synthesis (through for example Allen *et al* 2016).
- New models of dissemination that, for example, require every significant project to deliver teaching resources and a short illustrated synopsis.

3.7 PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS & GUIDANCE:

The Southport vision for ensuring quality was that work should be led by accredited experts working to a full range of agreed professional standards for types of work and their products, and that the standards and guidance would be readily available, consistent and framed in the relevant language to support and inform professional judgements on what is proportionate and reasonable, placing greater emphasis on professional implementation over reliance on local authority monitoring of work.

Overall progress in the last 5 years?

The standards and guidance now in place represent the most robust infrastructure we have yet had. A great deal of work has gone into enabling work to be carried out to high quality professional standards regardless of who is leading the project or how it was initiated, and this is a major advance.

Where the sector seems weakest is in ensuring consistent commitment to standards, and in ensuring that sufficient training and familiarisation has taken place right across organisations.

The main drivers / barriers include:

- A disconnect between policy and practice, with organisations not consistently investing in internal communications and training, and individuals not consistently relating their personal work to the underpinning standard.
- A reluctance to specify the use of accredited expertise, and assumptions that to do so is anti-competitive or disenfranchises the voluntary and enthusiast sector.

Pointers for the next 25 years?

- Individual Chartership representing, among other things, a pledge and commitment to quality work based on agreed standards and guidance;
- Growing sectoral leadership skills
- Managing the tension between demands for more tightly defined process standards than the ClfA outcome-based model, and the need to encourage innovation and creativity.
- Responding to the challenges arising from the synthesis of information from developer-funded archaeological work for professional practice in the field and beyond.

4 Opportunity

This necessarily high level and rapid review, some five years after Southport, has highlighted the following imperatives for the next 25 years:

Authority in statute and policy: the public passion and value for archaeology and heritage at the core of the community continues to grow and, proportionate to this, the position of local and national historic environment records needs to be secured. Their maintenance, enhancement, accuracy and access are the resources needed to plan effective, evidence-based projects with any certainty. To withstand the pressures for further streamlining of the planning process, we may need to find alternative means of adequately identifying, designating and protecting heritage assets.

Prioritising funding: there appears to be widespread agreement that charges for local authority services should increase to reflect the true cost of providing a services that give value, speed and certainty (eg BPF 2016). Moreover, it is essential to have properly resourced stewardship roles with the expertise and experience (and associated confidence) to design and require innovative, quality-based outcomes. Given the loss of expertise in recent years, we are now in a position of requiring an investment boost to recruit, train and develop that expertise.

Alignment of purpose: a current weakness appears to be that historic environment professionals are not all aligned behind a single, shared definition and understanding of the purpose and value of heritage in strengthening civilised society. Economically sustainable models for understanding, providing access to and enhancing our heritage assets can only stem from these first principles, and this may be a prerequisite if policy is to be successfully integrated into practice.

Integrating policy into practice: if principles and policy are not put into practice and if messages are not sent through to the front line, then any overarching vision will fail. An investment at all levels may be needed to develop the professionalism of the sector as one, grasping the value of compliance with agreed standards, focusing on the value and impact of the products and services they deliver and organising around a culture of sector development and innovation. The Southport Report proposed that collaboration and partnership were routes to achieving this, and the potential and consequences of these approaches may yet need to be teased out. The Southport Report had a strong focus on the quality of outcome, but it may be better to focus on the impact of what we do. We need a way of absorbing into actual practice the many 'Southport-friendly' changes that were made to ClfA Standards & Guidance and to WSI guidance; it would be important to understand why they have not been absorbed – because they were inadequately promoted or not prioritised by service providers or both.

Successful communication: it appears that there is still much work to do to promote, broadcast and even market the purpose, value and benefits that archaeology can deliver. It is suggested that a great deal of archaeological work takes place in the context of the planning framework with little apparent public benefit and that there is often no planning requirement to demonstrate that any public value has been added. Conversely, archaeologists could be required to deliver meaningful impact, against specified standards, using agreed measures and innovative dissemination processes. Synthesis and accessibility are important watchwords: we have come a long way already in making archaeological results more understandable and showing what the point of the work really was – but not always, and that is an underlying weakness.

Looking back, Southport was a positive and unifying initiative born of a desire to make commercial archaeology do better. It opened new, inter- and intra-discipline lines of communication, and appears to have helped to align strategic thinking across many organisations. While Southport had an ambitious vision, many of its recommendations were very closely defined – and in some cases merely good housekeeping – actions that were identified at the time as being necessary in order to reach subsequently for the envisioned, big picture changes. The cumulative result of many of those actions has been to strengthen the sector’s capability for the future. Over the last five years our sector has grown, become more astute and more professional while embracing the value of working with community groups and the people for whom our information is produced. We are far better established within the planning framework than ever before, with nearly ten times more overall funding (in real terms) to hand than before 1990, and a consequent influx of new data from which to build new narratives (Trow 2016).

We currently face strong external pressures, certainly. Given political and economic pressures there is a view that commercial archaeology is not secure in the planning process, that even the current planning process itself is at a crunch point (eg BPF 2015), and that we need a model which is proof against long-term changes in public sector funding priorities, major political shifts and short- to medium-term trends in planning deregulation.

Yet at the same time we face a significant, perhaps even unprecedented opportunity. With evidence for global economic upturn, in the context of investments in economic stimulus there is clearer-than-ever recognition among policy-makers of the beneficial role of archaeology as part of that stimulus. We use the same language of sustainable development as our client sector. The forecast increase in demand for quality archaeological services in coming years, largely relating to major infrastructure projects (HE 2016b), represents an extraordinary opportunity for our sector to reassess and realign behind a shared vision. Importantly, this is an opportunity to reorganise in ways which prioritise spending and investment – in project budgets and organisations as well as in government and local authority departments – to maximise the value of archaeology in sustainable development, education and wellbeing.

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