

Nadine Dorries MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
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22 September 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing on behalf of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) and Council for British Archaeology (CBA) to welcome you into the post of Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Archaeology is the study of the physical evidence of past peoples' interactions with their environment; activities that have created today's places, landscapes, and traditions. Archaeology influences how people form a sense of place and contributes to identity, community, and wellbeing. More than this people love to take part and participate in archaeology. Despite COVID, in 2020 over 580,000 people participated in the annual CBA Festival of Archaeology and its digital events had a reach of over 24 million, and in 2021 this grew to over 70 million.

Our archaeological heritage is part of the 'historic environment' that is at the heart of our tourism offer, contributing £16.4 billion to England's economy each year. [As CIfA's recent Client Guide illustrates](#), archaeology also adds value to sustainable development through the planning system, driving exciting new discoveries and helping to manage risk and opportunities for developers.

We can demonstrate that heritage and archaeology are not brakes on growth, nor are they barriers to progress. Rather they are forward-looking; safeguarding what is valued and shaping places for the better by adding local narrative and meaning. While heritage often deals with complex and contested issues – we have the tools to explore these issues, reveal hidden stories, and build new common ground. Good heritage management does not shy away from these issues, nor deny the fact that our heritage is something that we actively shape – not something we preserve in aspic.

DCMS is the lead department with responsibility to protect this broad spectrum of interests, but the historic environment is intertwined with environment, planning, immigration, business, and other policy areas. It is therefore vital that DCMS champions the historic environment and its study through archaeology across government. For instance, the DCMS' leadership in setting up the Heritage Council and in working with experts from the historic environment sector has meant that the Department has been able to respond positively on a range of key challenges and opportunities in recent years.

As the leading bodies representing archaeology across the UK, ClfA and CBA have worked effectively with DCMS officials on a range of issues. Some current issues include

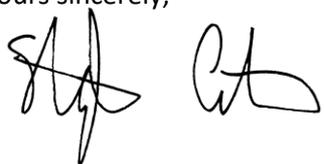
Supporting archaeology in higher education and a sustainably supplying skills for the profession: The archaeology sector is experiencing unprecedented growth, driven by increased infrastructure spending, with major opportunities to deliver public benefits from archaeology. Consequently, there are severe pressures on the UK labour market, particularly following changes to immigration post-Brexit. Part of the solution is to support the vital role of university archaeology departments in supplying skilled graduates into the archaeology profession, and further acknowledging that archaeology is an exciting subject delivering both career opportunities in archaeology and a blended science and humanities curriculum which provides transferrable skills for graduates who choose to enter other fields.

Ensuring that planning reforms strengthen provisions for heritage and archaeology & that heritage contributes to levelling-up: Whether through the Planning Bill, review of NSIPs, or changes to EIA, SEA and Permitted Development, the planning system is arguably the most important safeguard for over 95% of all archaeological heritage assets. One key issue is to ensure that local government Historic Environment Record services are protected, improved and involved in levelling-up strategies.

Ensuring that changes to environmental protection pay sufficient regard to heritage and landscape issues: The Government's 25-Year Environment Plan outlines an ambitious vision for maximising the public benefits of the environment and includes cultural heritage. However, the Environment Bill explicitly excludes it. Our rural environments are almost exclusively cultural landscapes, shaped by humans over millennia and overlapping with nature. We need legislation which promotes an integrated understanding of culture and nature and leads to mutually beneficial management.

We hope that you share our attitude of optimism and an openness to working together for the betterment of the historic environment and of archaeology. We look forward to discussing these issues in more detail with you during your tenure as Minister.

Yours sincerely,



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