

Council for British Archaeology

Councillor John Weighell
North Yorkshire County Council
County Hall
Northallerton
North Yorkshire
DL7 8AD

5th March 2014

Dear Councillor Weighell,

Budget Cuts to North Yorkshire County Council Waste and Countryside Service

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) the national amenity society concerned with protection of the archaeological interest in heritage assets. We have a membership of 620 heritage organisations who, together with our thousands of members, represent national and local bodies encompassing state, local government, professional, academic, museum and voluntary sectors.

The CBA was extremely worried to hear of the decision by North Yorkshire County Council to reduce the budget for the Waste and Countryside Service over the next year (2014-15) and in particular of the proposed reduction in staff costs in respect to archaeology (and other specialisms) mentioned in appendix J of the Executive Report from February, published on the Council's website.

We understand that the current economic situation is extremely difficult and that Councils across the country have been forced to make some very difficult decisions because of this. However, we are also deeply concerned that any cuts to the already streamlined Historic Environment Team will severely undermine the ability of the Council to fulfil its statutory duty to heritage across the region.

As I am sure you are aware, the Council has obligations as a planning authority to 'recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance' (National Planning Policy Framework, pg 30). The NPPF also clearly states that Local Authorities should either maintain or have access to archaeological information in an Historic Environment Record (HER) as well as expert advice to inform its planning decisions.

The North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Environment Team currently undertake a number of vital heritage roles for the county (a number of which are required under the NPPF) including:

- Providing archaeological advice to local planning authorities
- Providing pre-planning guidance to developers and residents, and archaeological advice to landowners and agents
- Providing guidance on archaeological work across the county, including commercial and community-led excavations
- Maintaining and managing heritage information and access to it (including curating the North Yorkshire Historic Environment Record)
- Promoting the historic environment of the region

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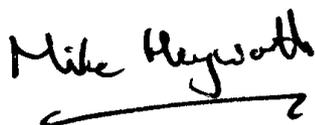
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The council budget report from February states that opportunities are being taken where possible to generate further income in order to protect services. Archaeology can generate a large amount of investment from the private and commercial sectors through the planning system. However, this is only possible by maintaining suitably qualified, experienced staff in post to monitor planning applications and to update and manage the Historic Environment Record. Any staff cuts are likely to decrease the amount of commercial revenue the service is able to bring in rather than increasing it, which is clearly at odds with the Council's future strategy.

Please can you provide more details about how the new budget will affect the Historic Environment Service, particularly in terms of the capacity of the team to undertake key activities and the potential loss of in-house expertise, and how the council will ensure that it is able to fulfil its responsibilities to the county's archaeological heritage in future?

We would be grateful if you could please keep us informed of any decisions on this matter, and we would welcome the opportunity to contribute to any future discussion. If there is any further information the Council for British Archaeology can supply, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Heyworth". Below the signature is a horizontal line with a small upward curve at the right end.

Dr Mike Heyworth MBE
Director
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