

Correspondent

Mike Heyworth says campaigning to promote archaeology is critical for its future



Above: Roman mosaic at Dinnington, Somerset, torn apart by ploughing

Below: Recording a high status Roman burial on the line of the A2 Pepperhill–Cobham widening scheme, Kent, during investigations by Oxford Archaeology contracted by Skanska Civil Engineering and funded by the Highways Agency



In recent weeks, the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) has been working with colleagues in other key national archaeological bodies to explain to the government why archaeology matters.

Of particular concern in England has been the review of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which appears to downgrade archaeology by moving key policies to footnotes or a glossary. It also proposes that historic environment records should be known as “resources”, not “services” – for no clear reason – apparently downplaying the critical role of expert staff who maintain and interpret databases for public benefit.

Most of our archaeological sites are protected through the planning system. Any changes to the NPPF, on top of other recent changes which introduce permission in principle for

developers and limit pre-commencement conditions, are a cause for concern.

Another government department has been seeking views about farming policy – particularly important as we anticipate withdrawing from the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy. A new Agriculture Act is expected, and we hope archaeology will feature in the bill.

Our rural archaeological heritage is particularly vulnerable to changes in farming, and needs careful stewardship. Landowners and farmers are well placed to protect archaeological sites from plough damage, animal erosion, treasure hunting and so on. It is important funding remains available to support these “public goods”.

National champion

Without such protections and policies for archaeology, sites will be damaged or destroyed. There will be no opportunity for archaeologists to investigate, record and research, and to pass on the results to a public which has huge interest and enthusiasm for stories about our past.

If developments are not monitored by local authority expert staff, who can specify planning conditions to protect and record significant archaeology,

evidence will be lost forever: there is only one chance. If environmental stewardship funding drops, farmers may have no choice but to bring land back into cultivation and destroy fragile archaeological remains. Discoveries and research which regularly feature in this magazine would not have happened without these planning and farming policies. They safeguard archaeological remains.

Our work to persuade ministers and officials that archaeology matters is fundamental to why the CBA exists. It builds on the reasons why the CBA was established nearly 75 years ago by archaeology societies across the UK who wanted a national champion.

Support for our campaigning and advocacy work comes only from our members. Just as we need to stand up and make your voices heard even more loudly, our resources have diminished. We may not be able to continue to speak out on issues that matter to us all.

That is why we have launched a fundraising campaign to ask our members to support our work. Please give generously as we strive to ensure that we can continue to promote archaeology for all.

Mike Heyworth is director of the Council for British Archaeology ■

Dig deep for archaeology

The CBA’s 2018 appeal aims to raise £50,000 in the next year. Our dedicated donations web page at <http://donate.archaeologyuk.org> is straightforward and easy to use, and we welcome donations via any appropriate channel – every penny counts. We promise to put your money to good use in continuing our efforts to speak up for archaeology across the UK