

Council for British Archaeology

The Rt. Honourable David Cameron MP
10 Downing Street,
Westminster,
London.
SW1A 2AA

CC the Rt. Honourable Owen Paterson MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

31st March 2014

Dear Prime Minister,

Biodiversity Off-Setting – Archaeological Significance of Ancient and Historic Woodlands

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.

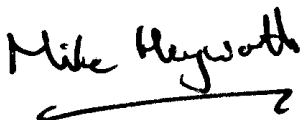
The CBA is deeply concerned about the Government's current proposals for biodiversity off-setting and the impact of these sorts of schemes are likely to have on Britain's important ancient woodlands. These woodlands are not only important ecological habitats, but are also significant historic landscapes containing a wide range of irreplaceable archaeological features, including worked and veteran trees.

Historic woodlands have the potential to provide a unique insight into land use and land management practices, and the development of local industries over hundreds (and in some cases thousands) of years. However, this significance is currently often not well understood or recognised. In the past, woodlands across the country were actively managed to produce essential raw materials for agriculture, construction and for local craft and manufacturing industries. The physical evidence of these past uses is often preserved within the woodland and should be recognised as a unique and important part of our country's archaeological heritage, which cannot merely be 'replaced' by re-planting.

We therefore strongly support the Woodland Trust's call to exclude ancient woodland from biodiversity off-setting schemes. We also call for an open and constructive discussion of the different options for ensuring a more in-depth understanding of the potential archaeological significance of historic and ancient woodlands within the planning process, and for more meaningful engagement with local communities in decisions over planning decisions that impact on historic woodlands in their areas.

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 faithfully



Dr Mike Heyworth MBE (Director)

Council for British Archaeology
St Mary's House, 66 Bootham
York YO30 7BZ
Tel: 01904 671417
Fax: 01904 671384

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Email: info@archaeologyUK.org
www.archaeologyUK.org

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