Dear Minister,

Thank you for the opportunity to share and discuss our current thinking in the wake of the changes of the past month and what they mean for the historic environment and archaeology. We would like to set out the following headline points that the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), Council for British Archaeology (CBA), and Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO) consider to be the most pressing issues facing the sector at the current time;

1. The urgent need to formulate and agree how government will seek to maintain the level of protection and investment in the environment which is currently delivered through EU policies
2. The need to ensure that any post-Brexit arrangement for the movement of labour does not disadvantage UK archaeologists who work abroad and makes it as easy as possible for foreign nationals to come to the UK to work in archaeology to fill identified skills/capacity gaps
3. The need to ensure that our higher education institutions have access to funding and research networks at a European level and are not disadvantaged in the marketplace for attracting non-UK talent into research roles and that our commercial sector is suitably prepared for a changing business environment
4. The need to continue to protect the historic environment through the planning and other regulatory systems in the face of likely calls for greater deregulation arising from uncertainty and perceived threats to the construction and development sectors.

**Environmental investment and protection**

It is critical that Government and the sector work with haste to agree that levels of investment in and protection for the environment are not eroded in the wake of the Brexit vote. Of particular concern for archaeology will be the loss of agri-environment schemes which provide subsidy to farmers and landowners who engage in conservation of heritage (as well as nature) on their holdings. These schemes have vastly improved attitudes towards heritage and wildlife in agricultural communities and have provided necessary financial incentives to ensure that the viability of the industry does not come at the cost of the destruction of irreplaceable cultural and natural assets.

DCMS ministers must make common cause with DCLG and DEFRA colleagues to ensure that an acceptable replacement for the schemes currently delivered under the Common Agricultural Policy is sought with haste, as many current recipients have the potential to be immediately impacted.

Another area of concern is for Environmental Impact Assessment regulation (EIAs), a key mechanism for managing and protecting the historic environment which needs to be protected in any future change to European-derived legislation for planning.
Free movement of labour

The issue of the free movement of labour is likely to be a core issue in the negotiations about the UK’s exit from the EU. Archaeology has always been a global sector; a significant number of UK archaeologists work abroad and will be likely to find it harder to do so once the UK leaves the EU. Perhaps more concerning is the reliance in the UK jobs market on EU labour to support capacity in the archaeology sector to meet the demand generated by the current upwards trends in infrastructure projects and development.

As a sector, we therefore have strong reasons to support the free movement of labour and would like to discuss the various potential ways in which the benefits of labour movement could be achieved, through (a) an exit settlement which retains free movement of labour within the EU, or (b) a points based system – or similar – which permits professionally accredited skilled and archaeologists from the UK to work in the EU and vice versa.

Reassurance for the higher education and commercial sectors

Another broad issue is the impact on the successful and established norms for operation in both higher education, and the commercial archaeology sector. For universities, for whom funding and research networks have been closely integrated at a European level for many years, it will be important to enable positive schemes to avoid academic isolationism if the UK is to continue to be a top destination for academic talent. For the commercial sector, there must be a desire to promote an appropriate environment for businesses to operate within, as well as a desire to protect and promote the historic environment.

UK planning policy and austerity context

The present state of uncertainty also reinforces the need for a planning system which delivers fair and proportionate protections for the historic environment. This requires that deregulation maintains sustainability in terms of social and environmental, as well as economic benefits of planning, and that legislation and policy reform does not unintentionally damage layers of protection through over-exuberant deregulation. It is possible that it is now the time to seek a new and innovative approach to legislation to create new safeguards, establish greater resilience in service delivery of Historic Environment Records and advice, and promote more effective decision-making and public benefit.

We would very much welcome the chance to discuss these ideas in person, and draw out some of the potential opportunities which undoubtedly exist. We would therefore be grateful for an invitation to attend your round-table meeting.

Yours sincerely,

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A note on the signatory organisations:


The Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers: England (ALGAO) is the national body representing local government archaeology services in England at County, District, Metropolitan, Unitary and National Park authority level. These provide advice to nearly all the District, Unitary and other local government bodies in the country.

ALGAO: England co-ordinates the views of its member authorities (currently 97 in total) and presents them to government and to other national organisations. It also supports the work of the Local Government Association (LGA) on archaeological matters. The range of interests of its members embraces all aspects of the historic environment, including archaeology, buildings and the historic landscape.

The Council for British Archaeology (CBA)

The Council for British Archaeology (CBA) is the national charity which champions the public and voluntary interest in archaeology. As a national amenity society, we are concerned with the 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, practitioner, academic, museum and voluntary sectors.

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA)

CIfA is the leading professional body representing archaeologists working in the UK and overseas. CIfA promotes high professional standards and strong ethics in archaeological practice, to maximise the benefits that archaeologists bring to society, and provides a self-regulatory quality assurance framework for the sector and those it serves.

CIfA has over 3,200 members and nearly 80 registered practices across the United Kingdom. Its members work in all branches of the discipline: heritage management, planning advice, excavation, finds and environmental study, buildings recording, underwater and aerial archaeology, museums, conservation, survey, research and development, teaching and liaison with the community, industry and the commercial and financial sectors.