Dear Professor Green,

Re: Closure of Archaeology at the University of Worcester

We are aware of the current proposals to close the department of archaeology at the University of Worcester. We are deeply concerned about this proposed closure. The Council for British Archaeology (CBA) is a charity committed to making archaeology accessible to anyone interested in exploring the stories of people and place. As the voice of archaeology in the UK we bring together community groups, commercial units, academics and heritage organisations to create and share opportunities to participate, discover and be inspired by archaeology.

Archaeologists trained at the University of Worcester have had a substantial impact on the heritage sector, particularly in the West Midlands. The University has produced a steady stream of high-quality graduates from a wide range of backgrounds who have found employment as archaeologists, museum professionals, and planning officers. The decision to close the Department threatens these achievements and will have a negative effect on the development of Worcester as a cultural centre.

The Department is highly regarded in the local community where its support of local research, institutions and community groups makes an outstanding contribution to the identity and pride of Worcester and the West Midlands. Local research makes a strong contribution to the local economy and the health and wellbeing of the people of Worcester. We are writing to express our concern about these proposals on behalf of the wider archaeology community in the UK and to seek assurances that any decision will be based on a sound business plan and the reputational risk to the University and the study of archaeology and heritage in the UK.
Commercial archaeology and heritage management in the UK depends on university degrees and the skill sets they teach. Degree qualified archaeologists help underpin the heritage industry, which through tourism and development generates £31 billion a year to our economy. An archaeology degree course provides grounding in the sciences, scrupulous training in fieldwork and a feeling for the debates embracing our history. This success and reputation for quality is a direct consequence of the fact that the UK has embraced the modern scientific approaches to archaeology and has led in innovative research and development of the discipline’s scientific and high-tech methodologies such as ancient DNA, photogrammetry, and advanced survey techniques.

Furthermore, archaeology graduates are crucial to the sustainability of the UK workforce in development-led archaeology. As a recognised construction skill, archaeology is a part of the supply chain for housing development and infrastructure and is essential to meet planning policy requirements to deliver sustainable development. As such, archaeology is a contributor to this key Government priority area. The development led archaeological sector is reliant upon university training, with over 90% of archaeologist being trained to graduate level. Developers through the planning process contribute in the region of £250m annually to archaeology and heritage that helps safeguard and unlock the history of our country and how it contributes to our wider economy and health and wellbeing.

The importance of trained skilled graduate archaeologists to the development and infrastructure sectors has been recognised by Government with archaeologists being added to the shortage occupation list. Reducing the ability of our university archaeology departments will further increase the strains on the development sector to source skilled graduates.

University of Worcester archaeologists make an outstanding contributing towards debates and themes in archaeology and heritage studies. Post-COVID, UK society and economy needs trained archaeologists and heritage professionals like those provided by this department to aid our recovery and support the health and wellbeing of our communities.

We fully appreciate the difficult financial environment in which you operate but would like to emphasis the reputational damage to the University and to Worcester by the loss of this dedicated and highly valued archaeology department.

We would welcome your assurance that any decision will be robustly tested against an open business plan and a clear understanding of the wider impact of this small but highly regarded department.
Yours Sincerely,

Neil Redfern BA (Hons) MPhil ACIfA FSA
Executive Director

cc
Professor, Sarah Greer, Deputy Vice Chancellor
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Professor Peter Saville, Head of the School of Science and the Environment
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As a dyslexic person, occasional English errors may pass me unnoticed.
Please accept my apology if any appear in this letter.

Please donate to support the CBA’s activities donate.archaeologyuk.org

Catch-up with the 2021 Festival of Archaeology and how you can get involved in 2022 here: Welcome | Festival of Archaeology (archaeologyuk.org)

Watch a video on our work in 2020 on our YouTube channel at: The CBA in 2020 - YouTube