

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists: Strategic Plan 2010-2020:

A review

Andrea Bradley

When the Institute drafted its last Strategic Plan it was the beginning of 2010: the UK was at the lowest point of a global recession and in the middle of a pandemic (H1N1); the U.S. had a newly elected democratic first black president; and London had a wild haired television personality ex-MP as its recently elected mayor. A different world or disconcertingly familiar? The period since 2010 has also seen things change and stay the same in the profile of our professional body.

The Plan was optimistic for the growth of the Institute after the recession and the potential for an all-encompassing profession, its skills and integrity assured, focussed on delivering benefit to society¹. Reading back the Plan also seems, perhaps justifiably in the times, cautious about some aspects of the future - about new expectations for communications (social media was nearly new then), the appetite of the post-recession profession for innovation, the strength of the profession and even the identity of the Institute itself. In 2021 as we begin the new Strategic Plan period the most obvious change from the outside² is the shift from caution and a tendency to self-justification to a strength of brand, a belief that the profession can withstand most things, and confidence as an organisation to face forward and promote change.

These observations come both from comparing the new Plan for 2030 with the old Plan, and from conversations with key CIfA staff members at the end of the 2020 Plan period, in which we considered the changes that have taken place over 10 years. This review signposts the most significant progress of the Institute in relation to the Plan; areas where things have not moved forward according to 2010 objectives; and circumstances and external factors that we were not on the radar in 2010 which have changed the Institute nonetheless.

Making progress

The idea of Charter (O1)³ was contained within the Plan as a possibility – an idea to be explored. With membership approval there was the potential to create a Chartered Profession in which Chartered Archaeologists would have equal status to their colleagues in, say, surveying, landscape architecture or planning. Chartership of the organisation as a first step was achieved in 2014. The Charter was given based on a new organisational structure for the Institute along the lines of a model recommended by the Professional

¹ CIfA, February 2010, Strategic Plan p.5 'Where we want to be in 2020'.

² Andrea Bradley (MCIfA) supported the drafting of the Strategic Plan in 2010 as a consultant. Andrea worked as a member and for a short period as an employee of the Institute before 2010 and as a consultant after that. She is a former Hon Treasurer and Board member 2015-2018. Since 2018 Andrea has been less active in the organisation. She has written this review at the request of the CIfA management team.

³ Reference to the Strategic Plan Objectives, listed at the end of this review.

Associations Research Network (PARN) (O6). Following the PARN model, IfA Council was replaced by a Board of Directors with an Advisory Council as a sounding board. On the new CIfA Board there was the opportunity to recruit lay directors, which has led to a very useful working partnership of CIfA members with professionals from other institutes and professions at Board level. As in any new organisation, the relationship between the different parts of the new Institute has taken time to establish, and the functions of each are still to reach their full potential separately and together.

So, a different name and a different organisation, but the objectives of making membership an essential demonstration of fitness to practice (O4) and significantly the 'parity of respect' and 'improved status' members wanted (O1) from Charter remain to be achieved, something that chartering the profession itself might bring in time.

The Plan set out to review and publicise the Code of Conduct, in particular the Institute's ethical commitments to society and the environment (O1). In essence we still use the same Code we've had since 1982 with piecemeal changes resulting from a number of reviews. On the whole it provides a sound ethical basis for practice, even if key concerns have changed - from publishing the results of fieldwork in the 1980s and 90s to social value and creating accessible archives in the 21st century. A full-scale review might consider being more explicit about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The Code is our code of ethics – but that is not perhaps how it is seen among some of the membership, maybe because it hasn't been promoted using those specific words. However, in the period CIfA has made good progress publishing guidance linking the Code to ethical practices, offered training, setting up www.archaeologicaethics.org, rewriting parts of the professional conduct regulations and setting out the rules for assessing ethical awareness.

In the realm of internal communications, the Plan objectives were that the Institute have a clear brand and be more strategic in its messaging (O6). The focus of communication was meant to inspire excellence and to promote innovation and research (O1, O2), reflecting the Institute's overall purpose to deliver benefit to society. In the early Plan period there was investment in a Communications Strategy, and in the first part of the period messaging and branding were successfully adapted to tie in with delivery of the new Chartered Institute. However, stretched resources and the need to be reactive meant that Strategy was never reviewed or completely delivered. Much of that reactivity was to the increasing demands of digital technology and social media - from having no social media presence 10 years ago CIfA now has over 12,800 Twitter followers, an active Facebook and LinkedIn presence as well as a YouTube channel. But these need constant management to keep on brand and up to date. Other technological advances include the new membership database which allows targeted mailing and membership management, and the launching online of The Archaeologist and Jobs Bulletin (both consistently highly valued in the members' survey). Unsolicited feedback has been received by staff on these improved communications from across the sector. Events focussed on research and innovation (including the virtual Innovation Festival this year)

have been well received, and events during 2020/21 have attracted a new generation of students and more junior members drawn by the online platform.

It is hard to know whether these improved internal communications increase understanding of CIfA's purpose, inspire excellence or promote better practice, as intended. Certainly in terms of promoting professional development and professional ethics, the 2020 member survey shows that CIfA's impact is considered to have about doubled since 2018.

The Plan objectives included developing a stronger influence over policy initiatives affecting the historic environment (O5). Until this period advocacy by CIfA was largely ad hoc and not mandated by members, but in accordance with the Plan the script and focus of policy work is now informed by the Advisory Council and approved by the Board, with leeway still to be responsive as issues arise. Key targets have been protecting Local Authority services and advocating for statutory HERs (achieved in Wales). CIfA supports national heritage agencies across the UK in much of this effort working through historic environment fora and lobbying bodies, but also has a strong network itself, taking occasional calls direct from government departments. Around 90% of members believe that CIfA's work in this area is important, and the numbers of enquiries and requests for information about specific topics such as the impact of Brexit and new visa requirements on recruitment indicate that CIfA is a trusted source of information and expertise on these issues, a status which has been achieved through advocacy work.

While certainly 50% of the CIfA 'reform wish list' was not achieved (a strategic target) there were significant wins in the period, including over the inclusion of non-designated heritage in the 2012 NPPF.

The Plan also aimed to strengthen and improve the membership accreditation and organisation registration process (O4). Since 2010, the introduction of specialist competence matrices has broadened the membership committee's ability to welcome a range of specialists and archaeologists working outside the commercial contract world including academia, graphics, project management and community archaeology. The RO registration and audit process is also more streamlined and consistent, targeting key issues like quality assurance, ethical business practice, skills auditing, archive strategy and compliance with Standards and guidance. Feedback on these processes is positive.

The professional conduct process is also much more robust (O4) - now facilitated by legal advisors, the process is rigorous and legally supported from acceptance of a case through to reporting with clear guidance online for complainants and a more efficient combined system for assessment and determining sanctions. Enquiries over professional conduct are received weekly. Yet membership surveys show that less than one third of members are confident in the process. The reasoning for this is not clear, and perhaps results from poor experience of the process in the past. There is perhaps also still some lack of transparency over the way that panel members are chosen and guidance for panels themselves is lacking. CIfA does not publish the cases in great detail to protect the

individuals involved, but this also likely increases suspicion in both membership camps - those who say the process needs more teeth and those who are critical of expulsions or recommendations.

A success of the period has been in CIfA's advocacy and support for training and professional development (O2). The objectives of the Plan included marketing of the NVQ and use of the National Occupational Standards, while rolling out the principles of workplace learning to the sector. While the NVQ itself has not been widely taken up, around 100 registrations demonstrate the need for something structured to offer in certain parts of the sector – particularly in specialist organisations and the smaller, more agile field units. Developing and assessing the NVQ also gave CIfA experience to work at the forefront of Apprenticeships development, in which it has played a key part alongside Historic England and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. Six Historic Environment Apprenticeship routes are ready to go from September 2021 and are on the radar of large and medium sized organisations, particularly levy payers. Lack of Registered Organisation support for this process has been notable, however, with organisations developing their own programmes in the meantime – in itself a step forward for much of a sector for whom in 2010 training was a low priority, and one in which CIfA's work on workplace learning (the bursary schemes, guidance, support and accreditation) has surely played a large part.

A remarkable feature of the Institute is the motivation and commitment of its staff (O6). There is an extremely high retention rate, credit to the management team, but potentially putting the agility and skills diversity of the organisation at risk. Yet the team are not lacking in skills, with high levels of training and backgrounds in professions outside of archaeology. New roles in this period include the Member Engagement Coordinator and Event Manager, a post dedicated to Standards, and two posts dedicated to Professional Development.

Getting stuck

In other areas things have been slow or are perceived to have been slow to change.

In 2010, the aim was to promote excellence in professional practice, through improved Standards and encouragement towards a research ethos and academic rigour (O2). Even now, while the Standards are widely acknowledged in written reports and specifications it is not clear whether they are really understood or used. There is an underlying uncertainty, it seems, over whether the Standards should and do reflect a benchmark of the highest quality or the level below which we must not sink. They are not much used (it is understood) in University teaching or for academic excavations – why should this be if they reflect good practice? If they do not, then are we holding practice back by setting such a low bar? A Standards Advisory panel has been set up and is yet to report. Revisions to Standards in the period have not been publicised in any way that has gained traction, and feedback (for example from our academic colleagues), particularly in the quality of data and the nature of analysis produced in the commercial sector is not often

sought (although in response to the Roman Rural Settlement Project Standards have been amended Objectives focussed on knowledge exchange and innovation (O1, O2) have been delivered in the work of some of the new Specialist Groups as well as through events organised centrally. The impact of these is variable, and often dependent on the individuals involved. What is the contribution of conference to these aims? The Plan aimed to treble the attendance of non-archaeologists at Conference to encourage cross sector working, knowledge exchange and better research (O3), which has not happened.

The target of the Plan in 2010 was to reach a membership of 4500, and thereby to increase the proportion of practising archaeologists who are members of the Institute. At just under 4,000 at present this is not a large enough proportion of those practising in the UK to make membership an essential demonstration of fitness to practise (O4), at least in the sense of it preventing non-members from winning contracts. In 2012-13 around 40% of those practising in the UK were members, and the proportion is about 48% today, a marked increase. What is still holding people back? Perceptions persist that accreditation is not needed in small scale commercial work, nor at junior levels, although it is now a requirement of many infrastructure and other large projects. The CSCS scheme has, however, helped to make professional accreditation attractive as an alternative to other more complex assurance processes.

For members' continuing professional development, CPD management was to change (O2) from an input (hours spent) to an output (achievement of goals)-based scheme. CPD remains an input-based scheme, with members required to log 50 hrs of CPD over 2 years. Around half of members do this.

The aim was to reach 100 Registered Organisations (currently 80). Any lack of interest, or overt distrust of the scheme among some types of organisations may be because the impact and purpose of it is not clear to all. The scheme remains the domain of the larger commercial fieldwork organisations primarily, although the requirement of many Scottish Authorities as well as some major government projects in England to be Registered in order to tender for major contracts has meant that the scheme has grown more recently, extending to some consultancies and smaller specialist organisations.

Partnership and collaboration, across the sector and beyond, were identified in 2010 as important routes to delivering the Institute's objectives (O3), along with its own members and committees. Among the membership about 5% contribute actively to the organisation – a low number perhaps reflecting the sense that persists among many that the Institute is run by someone else. The aim was to form partnerships with other professional bodies (at least 2). A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with IHBC in 2016, and the Institute works with the CBA on policy. Beyond the UK formal memoranda have been signed with IAI (The Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland) and Register of Professional Archaeologists (in the USA). Aside from this, within the UK sector and with academia (other than in accrediting degree courses), progress has been slow. In terms of cross working and cross promotion with other sectors, the Institute's

relationships are not yet strong, despite joint seminars with RTPI and occasional input to RICS journals. Plans are in place to work more closely with CIOB and ICE.

Removing barriers

In three areas that have emerged as important for the Institute the 2010 Plan did not set objectives. These areas each involve the need to challenge long-established boundaries and find ways to lead change – both within the profession and beyond it.

When the Plan talked about ‘broadening our membership (O3)’ – this was not an objective to improve diversity, rather the increase of members from other sectors and industry. The Institute’s profile has not diversified since 2010, though it may represent a broader range of specialisms and is overall a younger organisation. Ethnically it is not diverse (a situation reflected in the sector more widely), and all parts of society are not reflected in its membership or overtly in its priorities or culture. Even though the Board and past Councils have a history of female Chairs, and women are represented well in membership, the 2017 Conference will be remembered for the Twitter storm over the all-male representation sent by professional bodies to the session on ethics. The Equality and Diversity Group have been instrumental in raising these issues within CIfA and to the wider sector.

In international work, the institute remains ‘cautious, respectful and collaborative’⁴ in its dealings with groups wishing to join the profession as headed by CIfA. Many UK members are still uncertain of the importance of this strand of work, resource heavy as it is to ensure legal, linguistic and diplomatic concerns are addressed. It was not in our thinking in 2010 to expand outside the UK, other than by recruiting individuals - but some countries’ archaeological communities have actively sought the organisation’s support to raise the status of archaeologists and to improve standards beyond UK boundaries, where surely archaeology and archaeologists are just as deserving. CIfA has members in 39 countries, an International Practice Special Interest Group, and Groups in Australia and Germany, as well as partnerships with EAA and the RPA (USA), DGUF and IAI.

Finally, Covid 19 has changed the way we work as a profession and within the professional organisation itself. Unbinding ourselves from our offices and increasing flexibility in the way we work, embracing the improved technologies which the pandemic has generated, is an opportunity to attract a more diverse workforce and to think creatively about communications, training and workplace behaviours as well as the way we manage and invest our resources.

The Strategic Plan for 2030 takes up these new challenges, as well as some of the old ones, with new confidence and clarity.

⁴ Peter Hinton pers.comm.

	1982	2009	2020
Code of Conduct	yes	little change since 1982	little change since 2009
standards and guidance	0	10	14, some revised
Accreditation and registration processes	assertion	rigorous application process	specialised, more consistent application process
professional qualification	no	NVQ first awarded	c.100 NVQs
CPD	obligatory	mandatory, input based	mandatory, input based
diverse routes to entry	no	yes (NVQ)	yes (NVQ, Apprenticeships)
professional conduct process (disciplinary)	no	yes, no external oversight	yes, delivered by legal advisors
members	240	2850	3931
registered organisations	0	62	80
specialist networks	0	10 SIGs	16 SIGS and 5 Area Groups
geographical spread	national	international network	international Groups
diverse and inclusive	not measured	not measured	not measured
governance and organisation	Exec Committee, Council	Exec Committee, Council	Board of Directors, Advisory Council
active membership	not measured	not measured	218 across BOD, AC and groups, c. 5.5% of membership
Internal communications and promotion	not strategic	not strategic	strategic, output focussed
membership essential to practise	no	no	no
staff (FTE)	0	12	15
charter	no	no	chartered body 2014
turnover	£8,621	£1,136,192	£757, 000
professional influence (partnerships and collaboration)	some	significant	slow to improve
political influence	none	significant but ad hoc	focussed, mandated, key player

Strategic Plan Objectives 2010.

- O1 increase understanding of the role of archaeologists in society and improve our status**
 - S1.1 discuss the role of archaeologists in society
 - S1.2 explore the desirability and possibility of chartership
 - S1.3 promote exemplary practice and publicise innovation
 - S1.4 form partnerships with other professional bodies
 - S1.5 achieve parity of respect and reward with comparable professions

- O2 inspire excellence in professional practice**
 - S2.1 define and promote standards and ethics
 - S2.2 encourage intellectual rigour and a research ethos
 - S2.3 advocate training and professional development

- O3 strengthen the relationships between archaeologists across the historic environment and other sectors**
 - S3.1 stimulate knowledge exchange
 - S3.2 broaden our membership to include archaeologists from all parts of the sector
 - S3.3 develop partnerships across historic environment and cognate sectors

- O4 make IfA membership and registration essential demonstrations of fitness to practise**
 - S4.1 strengthen our membership validation and registration processes
 - S4.2 promote the importance of membership and registration
 - S4.3 increase the proportion of archaeologists who are IfA members
 - S4.4 promote the credibility of our disciplinary and complaints procedures

- O5 develop a stronger influence on historic environment policy**
 - S5.1 establish the historic environment agenda more securely within general environmental and other policy
 - S5.2 contribute to a wide range of policy initiatives affecting the historic environment

- O6 give archaeologists a credible, effective and efficient professional institute**
 - S6.1 clarify our image and purpose
 - S6.2 develop and implement a communications strategy
 - S6.3 improve our organisational structure
 - S6.4 enhance our administrative systems
 - S6.5 develop our staff
 - S6.6 generate and manage our resources