

REALISING ECONOMIC AND PUBLIC BENEFITS THROUGH ARCHAEOLOGY

In the UK and elsewhere the emphasis of planning policy is on sustainable development that benefits economy, society and the environment and requires, among other things, the protection and enhancement of the historic environment. For projects in the developing world, banks and development agencies increasingly require cultural assets to be looked after and to be incorporated into new development.

There is growing evidence that proper understanding and enlisting of historic environment resources carries benefits across all three areas of sustainability – economy, society and environment. It is the responsibility of archaeologists to help you understand how to realise this potential.

Archaeology and environmental benefit

An archaeologist can help you understand the significance and value of the historic environment and the benefits it can offer alongside the natural environment. Environmental benefit can be secured through retaining and enhancing the historic landscape and protecting our most valued monuments and traditional villages, towns and cities. The appearance of a new development can sometimes be improved by the conservation and reuse of buildings and spaces. This can make a place more desirable to live in and can also have valuable knock-on benefits for other aspects of the environment, such as energy efficiency.

Enhancement of the historic environment often takes place hand in hand with ecological and landscape conservation, providing more green space and biodiversity, both desirable for sustainable development.



ARCHAEOLOGY AND ECONOMIC BENEFIT

Economic benefit derives from the regeneration of historic places, often leading to revitalisation of surrounding communities and neighbourhoods. Reinforcing historic character, reusing historic fabric, and maintaining locally distinctive patterns of development can play a significant role in the recovery of declining towns and cities. Archaeology can contribute substantially to place-making – enhancing the image of a place, making it somewhere people want to live and so increasing the potential income it can realise. The World Bank positively encourages development that looks to preserve cultural heritage – it sees that understanding and enhancement of cultural significance or ‘cultural capital’, has a positive effect on the value of its projects and assets. Historic buildings and places can also provide

the opportunity for types of commercial activity that might not otherwise be possible, providing additional economic activity and new employment opportunities for local people.

The historic environment plays an important role in tourism, providing focal points and venues for visitors, creating jobs, and supporting business on the local and national scale, stimulating small and medium-sized enterprises, developing new markets, and encouraging inward investment.

An archaeologist can tell you what it is about your city or community that makes it historically interesting and distinct, its contemporary cultural importance and where the potential lies for development and enhancement of the historic fabric.



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ARCHAEOLOGY AND PUBLIC BENEFIT

Social benefits can be closely linked to the historic environment, in particular benefits for individuals through learning and development and the ability to acquire new skills (such as volunteering). Community strength and cultural identity can be enhanced through contact with the historic environment through community heritage projects. These projects can engage diverse groups of people, from refugee groups to the homeless, young offenders and injured service personnel, offering new skills, confidence, the opportunity to become an active citizen and to connect with a shared human past. There is also evidence that engaging with the historic environment can make a significant contribution to community wellbeing and promote social and human capital, leading to improvement in health, wealth, and education. A professional archaeologist can tell you how to approach the investigation of the historic environment with the widest public benefit. Examples of projects showcasing a range of ways in which public benefit can be delivered are on our website at <https://bit.ly/3v9pttq>.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND SOCIAL VALUE

Many larger companies monitor themselves against self-imposed criteria for responsible business performance, adherence to legal and ethical standards and their contribution to society and social development.

Engaging with professional archaeologists offers the opportunity for such organisations to demonstrate

- the value they place on ethics and integrity – professional archaeologists are bound by a code of conduct
- their respect for the environment – professional archaeologists know what is best for the historic environment
- responsible business conduct – many professional archaeological organisations are local and small businesses
- a contribution to training and capacity building – professional archaeologists have a strong training ethos and commitment to workplace learning