



Councillor Jim Harker OBE
Leader of Northamptonshire County Council

18 February 2014

Dear Councillor Harker,

Northamptonshire County Council Archives and Heritage Service: Proposed Budget Cuts

The Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) has learned with concern of proposals further to cut the budget of Northamptonshire County Council Archives and Heritage Service ('the Service') by £75,000, as disclosed in the report presented to Cabinet on 10 December 2013 (20131210_Item06_AppendixC_ServiceGrowthAndSavings).

IfA is the professional body for archaeologists and related professions concerned with the study and care of the historic environment. It promotes best practice in archaeology and provides a self-regulatory quality assurance framework for the sector and those it serves. IfA has over 3,000 members and more than 70 registered practices across the United Kingdom and abroad. 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.

IfA recognises the difficult financial circumstances faced by local authorities. However, undermining the continuing work of a valuable service is not an acceptable way of addressing these difficulties.

Implementation of the proposed, significant cuts must bring into serious doubt the Service's (and hence the County Council's) ability

- effectively to engage with the communities which it serves
- to play its part in the planning process in Northamptonshire through the provision of a Historic Environment Record (HER) and the expertise necessary to maintain it
- to continue to host the Northamptonshire Portable Antiquities Scheme
- and ultimately to safeguard the historic environment of Northamptonshire for its residents.

With the anticipated staffing reductions in the Service it is hard to see how the Council will in any meaningful way be able to make good its pledge to '*continue to celebrate Northamptonshire's rich cultural heritage*' and '*to strive to connect [its residents] with the county's rich cultural heritage and unique identity*' (County Plan for 2014-2019) or meet its obligations under the National Planning Policy Framework in the absence of a fully maintained and supported HER.

We do hope that you are able to reconsider this proposal. Failing that, would you please provide details of how Northamptonshire County Council proposes to fulfil its obligations with regard to the historic environment in the light of such a substantially reduced budget for the Archives and Heritage Service?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



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Chief Executive, Institute for Archaeologists

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