

# Economic benefit of archaeology:

# the A14

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The A14 was a huge infrastructure project to upgrade and extend a 21-mile stretch of the A14 roadway between the towns of Cambridge and Huntingdon. The archaeological works on the project were awarded to two archaeological contractors – Headland Archaeology and MOLA, who worked through a joint venture instrument MHI (MOLA Headland Infrastructure).

*Circular 'henge' monument thought to have been used as a ceremonial space. Credit: Highways England courtesy of MOLA Headland Infrastructure*

Over a period of three years more than 800 hectares of archaeology were excavated in 80 separate interventions. It was the largest archaeological investigation funded by Highways England, both in terms of money spent and the numbers of archaeologists working on the project – 250 individuals at the peak phase of fieldwork.

These archaeological professionals were based in the area for two years, making up one of the largest archaeological teams ever assembled in Britain, with up to two thirds of the workforce being foreign nationals who had either been in the UK working for some time, or who had been recruited specifically to work on the A14.





*A14  
archaeology  
open day.  
Credit: A14C2H  
courtesy of  
MOLA  
Headland  
Infrastructure*

Whilst this project may be of a scale rarely seen in UK archaeology, the fact that many of the teams needed to work away from their home bases means that we are often providing accommodation and facilities for staff within communities who will be glad of the business we bring. The impact of such large teams moving across the UK and beyond is rarely considered in terms of the various economic benefits that this can bring to the local area. When we use local hotels and other types of accommodation we are contributing to local businesses and supporting local employment, likewise if we rent project-specific offices and other facilities (welfare for example). The accommodation alone can be a significant expense on projects of any size and duration, bringing many thousands of pounds into the area. When we use local shops and restaurants for shopping and eating we are contributing to other areas of the local economy. Even short-term spending at medium levels can enable investment, which in turn contributes to the resilience of local businesses in the future.

This investment can be considered very much within the remit of public benefit. Widely accepted definitions

of public benefit will encompass spending strategies, a deliberately positive impact on the local economy and long-term benefits for employment. Honourable investment in locally run businesses targeted towards small or medium enterprises will be of particular value.

Ideally archaeological organisations working in local communities in this way would plan their spending to ensure it is invested responsibly, with the aim of supporting small or medium businesses, regional employers and the local supply chain. This might require more effort in researching local businesses but can contribute to the positive impact of your corporate spending in an economically sustainable way.

The A14 has been used as a case study for the Considerate Constructors Scheme (<https://www.ccscheme.org.uk/a-road-of-discoveries/>), which archaeologists working in the development-led sector will be familiar with. This scheme also encourages the use of local suppliers and sub-contractors, with an overt acknowledgement that investing in local economies is one way to provide a significant benefit to the public.