

Spotlight on... the ClfA Standard and guidance for commissioning work or providing consultancy advice on archaeology and the historic environment

Available at <https://archaeologists.net/work/standards>

The overarching *ClfA Standard and guidance for the Stewardship of the historic environment* describes the stewardship responsibilities that **all** members of the Institute owe to the historic environment under the *Code of conduct*. The *Standard and guidance for commissioning work or providing consultancy advice on archaeology and the historic environment* expands that responsibility, providing more detailed guidance to advisors working in a consultancy environment and to archaeologists who commission work from others.



Site tour of excavations at Pocock's Field, Eastbourne for Bovis Homes. Credit: Archaeology South-East

It is complemented by the ClfA *Standard and guidance for archaeological advice by historic environment services*, which fulfils a similar role for advisors acting on behalf of regulatory bodies. The two documents have been closely aligned very deliberately in order to acknowledge that all parties are working together to manage change and to achieve the best outcomes for the historic environment.

The *Standard* replaced the *Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangement in field archaeology* in 2014. It provides guidance on

- the expertise and competence of advisors, including the duty to maintain high professional standards of conduct and integrity
- procedures for providing consultancy advice and procuring work, including dealing with real and perceived conflicts of interest
- the importance of adequate resourcing
- communication
- monitoring and managing quality

It also places specific requirements on advisors to ensure that the work they commission – or advise should be commissioned – has clearly defined research objectives, considers opportunities for engaging with local communities either directly or through the dissemination of results, and is focused on delivering public benefit.

Membership of ClfA places a professional obligation on individuals or Registered Organisations to comply with the *Code of conduct* and *Standards and guidance*, in addition to any other requirements placed upon them by legislation or policy or its interpretation by local planning authority, or other advisors or by their clients. Where the requirements of clients and/or advisors appear to involve a less rigorous approach, members and Registered Organisations are, nevertheless, expected to adhere to the *Standard*.

So what does the Standard say?

To comply with the *Standard*, specialist advice to commissioners of archaeological work **must**

- ensure that the commissioner sufficiently understands and complies with ethical, legal and policy requirements, and is aware of the likely resource requirements
- be clear, compliant, impartial, informed and robust, and should be proportionate to a thoroughly researched and clearly reasoned assessment of the known or potential significance of the heritage assets concerned
- be provided by an advisor who is suitably qualified, skilled and competent

ClfA Standards and guidance

- Define good practice, expanding and explaining general definitions in the *Code of conduct*
- Define a required *outcome*: the **standard**
- Advise on how the outcome may be reached: the **guidance**
- Are formulated *by the sector*, based on current understanding of good practice
- Are used when commissioning or designing archaeological work in order to define measurable *quality standards*
- Are not optional: compliance with the *Standard* is a *professional obligation* for ClfA members and Registered Organisations

The procurement of historic environment services to implement that advice **must**

- ensure that work is fit for purpose and is undertaken by appropriate experts in accordance with the ClfA *Code of conduct, Standards and guidance* and regulations

Ethical dilemmas and conflicts of interest

Professionals in all industries face ethical dilemmas and potential conflicts of interest daily; it's one of the reasons professional bodies exist, publish ethical codes and issue guidance on how to comply with them. Identifying potential conflicts does not imply there is anything amiss with the way the professional conducts themselves or their business, but having a clear and transparent process to deal with them as they arise demonstrates a commitment to professional behaviour and high standards.

The *Standard and guidance* says

1.1 More specifically, in the context of this *Standard and guidance*, a member may face ethical dilemmas concerned with reconciling the needs of their client with those of the historic environment. In these circumstances, a member must act in accordance with the ClfA *Code of conduct*.

3.2.1 Those advising the commissioners of archaeological services or procuring those services themselves must

- f. ensure that a clear and transparent process exists for dealing with real or perceived conflicts of interest. In particular, archaeologists whose professional responsibilities combine recommendations about investigation and/or management with its execution must clearly indicate the combination of these interests to all relevant parties and ensure formal protocols or codes of practice are put in place to prevent any conflicts of interest

Reconciling the professional obligation to conserve and enhance significance in the historic environment, the needs and wishes of a client and the requirement to run a successful business can lead to potential conflicts of interest and even ethical dilemmas. In such circumstances, ClfA members and Registered Organisations must act in accordance with the *Code of conduct* and this *Standard*. Documented compliance with the guidance will provide evidence of professional behaviour in the event of a complaint or allegation of misconduct.

