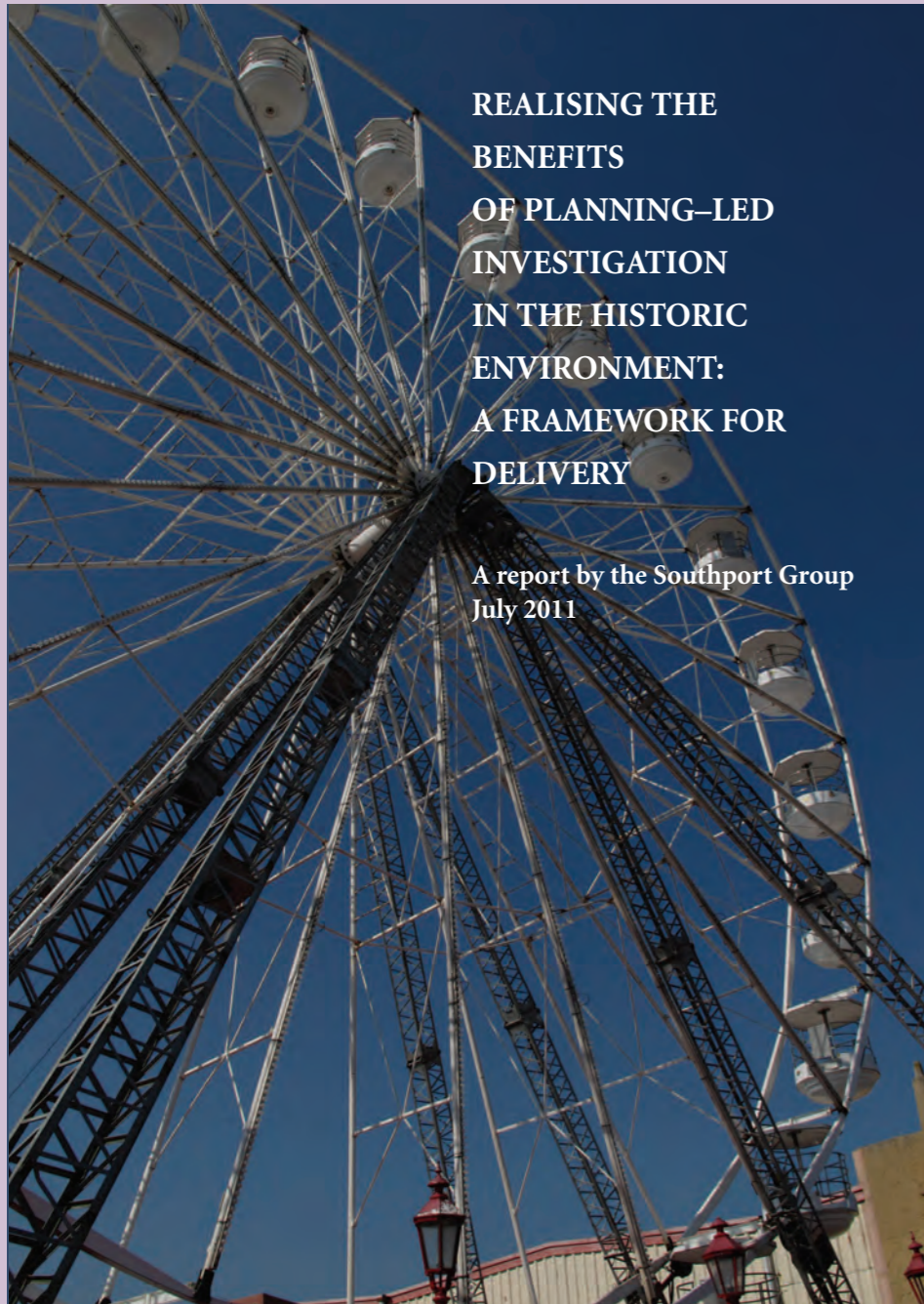


Spotlight on... ClfA guidance on written schemes of investigation

REALISING THE BENEFITS OF PLANNING-LED INVESTIGATION IN THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT: A FRAMEWORK FOR DELIVERY

A report by the Southport Group
July 2011



Southport Report released in July 2011

The 2011 Southport Report, Realising the benefits of planning-led investigation in the historic environment: a framework for delivery made recommendations that ClfA (then IfA) revise its Standards and guidance to advise that written schemes of investigation (WSIs) should include explicit statements on public benefit, dissemination and community participation, research and the expertise of the project team and on archive creation, care and deposition. It also recommended that guidance on the scope of WSIs be revised to create a more standardised bidding document and promote the weighting of quality criteria in the procurement process.

ClfA responded to the recommendations and, in 2014, revised guidance was produced following discussions with key sector stakeholders including FAME and ALGAO. The guidance was incorporated into the ClfA Standards and guidance for field evaluation, for excavation and for watching briefs and has been in operation for nearly three years.

The recommendations of the Southport Report and subsequent revision of ClfA guidance recognised the instrumental role of the WSI in determining the standard and quality of any archaeological investigation.

So what does the guidance say?

The revised paragraphs on Briefs, specifications and WSIs¹ recognised that different terminology might be used in different circumstances but referred to a document which

set out the proposed scheme of investigation in sufficient detail to satisfy the planning archaeologist or monitor that it is an appropriate response to the brief and that works will be appropriate and proportionate to the known/potential remains and the level of impact. It should also contain sufficient detail to provide a benchmark against which the results of the work may be measured and must be agreed by all relevant parties before work can commence.

The guidance goes on to advise that a WSI should

- be prepared and implemented by suitably accredited and competent persons, using specialist advice where necessary
- specify how the project team meets ClfA standards. It should set out how individual and corporate competences will be maintained and enhanced through training and CPD built into the project where appropriate
- set out the research objectives of the project. It should include where appropriate and possible explicit reference to existing research frameworks, and draw upon advice from appropriate specialists from within the proposed project team to ensure that the investigation will appropriately address national, regional and local objectives
- be suited to the project under consideration; any methods advocated should reflect the nature of archaeological remains likely to be found and should not become inflexible irrespective of site conditions or context. Standard templates should therefore be used with care

- identify relevant data standards for record organisation and content that will be used in information recording systems employed by the project
- set out how public benefits may be achieved by means of engagement, participation and/or dissemination of the results both during and after the project, as appropriate to the scale, nature and circumstances of the work. Health and safety issues, public liability and commercial confidentiality, while important considerations, should not be used as a barrier to public engagement without clear justification for doing so
- set out where and how it is proposed that the answers to the project's research questions will be disseminated to both professionals and to the general public, during and after implementation. In addition to conventional publication, innovative forms of public engagement should be considered
- make suitable provision for archive deposition, and include an appropriate retention and disposal policy for digital, photographic and paper archival materials, as well as artefacts and ecofacts
- make clear that the proposed project team has access to appropriate specialists to assess the archive's significance

A series of workshops were held in England in 2016 to help members to understand and comply with the new guidance, and examination of WSIs has been a focus of the Registered Organisations inspection process in 2017. Supported by Historic England and ALGAO, they were designed to link the new guidance directly with the emphasis on public benefit articulated in planning policy and guidance. Further workshops are planned in Scotland and Wales in 2018.

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



To ensure best practice and disseminate information an Oxford Archaeology Project Officer on the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road Scheme discusses methodological approaches and the latest discoveries with a group of visiting prehistoric/flint specialists from other professional organisations. Credit: Oxford Archaeology

¹ See, for example, section 3.2 in the Standard and guidance for excavation