

CHARTERED INSTITUTE FOR ARCHAEOLOGISTS

BUILDINGS ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP (BAG)

Committee Meeting

11.00am, Thursday 30 January 2025

Council for British Archaeology, De Grey House, St Leonard's Pl, York YO1 5HE

Minutes

Circulation

Jeremy Lake (Chair) JL, Amelia Allen AA, Amir Bassir AB, Catherine Bell CB, Cathy Coutts CC, Franki Webb FW, John Mabbitt JM, Lorna Goring LG, Patrizia Pierazzo PP, Seth Price SP

1. Apologies for absence

Alison Dickens

2. Minutes of previous meeting

Passed.

3. Matters arising (if not covered below)

CB mentioned that it would be useful to review chapter 16 of NPPF: see AOB

4. Our priorities for 2025: everyone to identify a single key priority.

This item and item 6 were discussed together, key conclusions set out below.

- There is a strong demand (evident also in the recent landscape SIG) and a wide-open market for having CPD-accredited lunchtime chats and evening lectures as an easy, informal and accessible way of finding out about key issues and themes.
- That a programme of lectures would tease out themes and issues that BAG members felt would be most useful to focus upon but some talks could simply be informative, fun and not onerous to prepare if using the results of projects that can be shared.
- Excite our members! On-line talks popular & will help us see what the issues for members are.
- Significance including setting a key issue to discuss - include how articulate values and how setting contributes to it, highlight that most change to setting is not harmful (JM); importance of considering minor 'additions' such as outshots that can be integral (CB)

Other issues emerging to the fore were:

- FW: navigating planning process when there is a surprise. How do we deal with a sluggish planning system where technical issues can be understood and acted upon so that they are compliant with conservation principles?
- JM: what is enough evidence in terms of understanding as a basis for identifying significance.

- SP: importance of affirming that evidential value is what can be found through investigation or otherwise predicted based on what we know, do not know, know we do not know etc
- FW: archaeologist talks about evidential value in a very different way; as physical and intrinsic to the structure than historic (illustrative) value
- AA: significance is a big issue, and the opportunities presented by a conference are really valuable. A national conference would be good.
- CB: issues with Chapter 16 with an onus on the conservation officer rather than the applicant or agent, unlike in Wales
- SP: key issue is inexperience and inconsistency. A lack of skills and knowledge and more movement away from public sector to private consultancy
- JM: what is a heritage asset? PINS decisions flag the importance of clarity on defining the threshold. Identifying non-des heritage assets is a real challenge

5. **BAG 3-year plan**

JL grateful for comments and final version circulated with these minutes.

Action: All

6. **Key issues and topics for tea breaks and evening lectures**

Topic on 11 February, 12.30 pm – 50 already booked! Agreed we would cover Historic Significance with an opener on guidance & policy by JM and a case study (Bletchley Park to illustrate range of building types) to explore issue and stimulate feedback.

Other sessions planned for 8 April and 9 June to cover Archaeological and Architectural Interest and including relationship to Conservation Principles.

Other topics for lunch breaks and evening lectures

- PP: Victory restored to 1805 and everything since has replicated this. Evidence of 1805-1922 is gone. JM: ask questions such as when does significance stop? Should its significance be reviewed? Is it like a Heritage Partnership Agreement but Victory not an LB?
- JL: Flatford – Icons of Englishness
- PP: Spitalfields houses as icons of early Georgian architecture – the ‘New Georgians’ eg Dennis Severs’ house
- FW: conflicts of heritage significance with communal value. Examples of landscape or building being restored but amenities for local people being taken away
- JM and SP: tension and synergies between Conservation Principals and NPPF

7. **Roles and responsibilities on the committee**

Actions:

- JL to assist/ and clarify Treasurer role for PP
- AA volunteered to assist newsletter development
- FW to assist in posting LinkedIn messages

8. **BAG contribution to New Group Format**

BAG to assist in reviewing recommendations for Groups, their governance, structure, and volunteering roles.

Actions:

- JL with SP to lead on BAG response

9. BAG contribution to new-format Standard and Guidance (S & G) for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures

All discussed and agreed that the document needed thinning and revising so that the requirements are proportionate to needs and complexity or simplicity of the project and issue.

JL has made basic margin notes including:

- the guidance is poorly worded and off-putting
- it comes across a 'one-size-fits-all' approach which is not at all proportionate to relative significance, scope and need for a record
- it needs to be shorter and it should be cross-referred to existing guidance such as Historic England and Cadw's guidance and ALGAO Scotland's guidance on recording historic buildings

JM has made earlier comments:

- iron out some of the inconsistencies. For example whether it is Archaeological Buildings investigation and Recording (ABIR – text) or archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures (title)
- conversation to be had about how far we see archaeological buildings as methodological or conceptual. When does a building become a ruin that should be 'surveyed' or an archaeological site that should be 'excavated'?

Actions: all await request from Jen Parker-Wooding who is leading on this and then make it a focus for discussion at next committee meeting.

10. AOB and date of next meeting

Long discussion with notes taken by CB on Chapter 16 of NPP. Notes to be reviewed at next meeting.

Action: CB to draft notes.