

5 July 2024 – Member briefing

## General election 2024: Priorities for archaeology

### Summary

This briefing for ClfA members provides a summary of the immediate opportunities related to archaeology for the new Government in Westminster. ClfA's principle advocacy objectives are to maintain or improve the protection and management of the historic environment, to maintain or advance, in the interests of the public and clients, the quality of archaeological practice, particularly where occasioned through planning or other processes managing change to the historic environment, and to ensure that work is done by competent professionals and to professional standards.

These goals will intertwine with many of the new government's agendas. Archaeology is an enabler of growth through its role facilitating the sustainable development of housing and infrastructure. It works synergistically with environmental management and needs to be embedded into land-use and marine management systems. Archaeology can also push its contribution to social benefit through its extensive platform for public engagement, and contribution to increasing wellbeing for participants and wider communities. All of this is underpinned by the need to have an ethically and technically competent workforce.

ClfA's top priorities for the Westminster Government are<sup>1</sup>:

1. Implement statutory Historic Environment Records to provide the basis for securing archaeology's effective contribution within a streamlined, efficient, and increasingly digital planning system.
2. Seek minor improvements to historic environment provisions in any National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) reform.
3. Protect planning advisory services to ensure archaeology contributes to sustainable development and placemaking.
4. Capitalise on opportunities for world-leading archaeological projects as part of infrastructure investment on projects like the new *Green Grid*.
5. Support archaeological skills through continued investment in apprenticeships and by not increasing pressure on vocational archaeology degree courses.
6. Promote vital synergies between environmental policy and the historic environment to inform Environmental Land Management (ELM) and other DEFRA work.
7. Deliver structural improvements in the management of underwater cultural heritage by Government.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: As most policies affecting heritage are devolved matters, this list relates to issues which mostly affect England

1. **Implement statutory Historic Environment Records (HERs):** HERs are the basis for good archaeological advice in planning. The Levelling-up Act puts HERs on a statutory footing, protecting them from being cut by Councils. The last Government did not bring in the necessary regulations to implement this provision before the election. Supporting guidance to clarify the provisions and funding for the development of HER services to enhance their functionality as the planning system evolves is also needed.
2. **Seek minor improvements to planning policy in any National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) reform:** There are several simple changes relating to archaeology to national planning policy which we will pursue in any revision the new Government makes to national policy and guidance. These include specifying the need for public engagement as part of offsetting impact on heritage assets, highlighting the potential for developer contributions to the cost of maintaining archaeological archive facilities, and delivering research synthesis. We will also address impacts of National Development Management Policies, if they are brought forward by the new Government and highlight the damaging legacy of the old Government's expansion of Permitted Development Rights.
3. **Protect planning advisory services to ensure archaeology contributes to sustainable development and placemaking:** Specialist historic environment advisory services are the crux of the resource which enables targeted benefits generated from archaeology through planning. These specialists, like other professionals within under-resourced planning departments, and services are being asked to do more with less and must be supported better to services which innovate as a path to streamlining, rather than cutting quality of service.
4. **Capitalise on opportunities for world-leading archaeological projects as part of infrastructure investment on projects like the new Green Grid:** ClfA supports the delivery of infrastructure investment across the UK. These projects often require major archaeological interventions as a result of projects' physical impacts on buried assets and landscapes. These projects can deliver cutting edge methodologies to maximise the value of investment and should be scoped into projects like the new 'Green Grid' as early as possible.
5. **Support archaeological skills through support of apprenticeships and not increasing pressure on vocational archaeology degree courses:** Delivering training/skills development to the workforce and attracting new career entrants leads to local employment opportunities, allows us to engage target groups in skills programmes, giving opportunities to young people, those not in education or employment, and people with diverse backgrounds. Archaeology's apprenticeship programmes and degree accreditation scheme support sustainable and varied entry routes into the profession. The sector needs continued Government support to help grow apprenticeship numbers. We also need an ameliorative environment for universities to continue providing high quality archaeological degrees. Finally, we support changes to the immigration system to better enable archaeological companies to employ skilled archaeologists from overseas, where their skills are a valuable addition to our sector.
6. **Promote synergies between environmental policy and the historic environment to inform DEFRA work:** The Environmental Land Management scheme is still without adequate coverage for historic features, and farmers are not being supported to manage heritage assets on their lands. DEFRA needs to work with the heritage sector to improve management of heritage.
7. **Deliver structural improvements in the management of underwater cultural heritage by Government:** Prior to the election, discussions which are underway to improve cross-government policy on maritime heritage assets, and ratify the UNESCO 2001.

## What will CIfA be doing?

CIfA has already been working with heritage sector colleagues to develop messages for the new Government, and will be writing to new Ministers, and contacting government officials to discuss specific asks and opportunities.

CIfA will also be working to support the All [Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group](#), which will need to be re-formed (as all APPGs do after an election). However, with key officers of the Group stepping down at the election, we will be seeking to find new members from among interested MPs of the new intake.

We will be running an informal lunchtime session on Thursday 18 July, 1pm to unpick the outcome of the General Election, CIfA's activities, and what might be coming up in the next few months. You can join us to discuss the priorities of the new government, as well as how we will be seeking to find new champions for archaeology among new intake of MPs. [You can register to attend here](#).

## What can CIfA members do?

### *Write to your MP:*

CIfA members can consider contacting their new MPs to ask them if they have considered the value and benefit of archaeology in their constituency. You may wish to talk about archaeological projects your organisation has worked on, or sites and places that are important to you, as well as issues such as those set out above. Please see our [Advocacy Toolkit page](#) for more information on writing to your MP.

### *Find out about your MP:*

CIfA is keen to hear of any constituency MPs who may have a connection to, or interest in, archaeology – or who simply wish to become a champion for heritage in their constituency. If CIfA members become aware of interest with their MP, we would welcome you getting [in touch with us](#).

### *Contact us with your thoughts:*

We welcome discussions within CIfA of what we can do to promote archaeology within our agreed advocacy objectives. If you have any questions or suggestions about CIfA advocacy, you can get in touch with CIfA's Policy and Advocacy Manager, Rob Lennox, [here](#).

### *Opportunities for politicians to visit archaeological sites:*

Registered Organisations of CIfA can consider whether they have sites or places where new Ministers, or other key MPs, can be invited to visit to get an idea about what archaeology is, how it works, and where it can add benefit. CIfA can help to organise and facilitate visits, and ROs would have the opportunity to promote themselves as well as their sites. If you think you may have an appropriate site, please get in touch with CIfA's Policy and Advocacy Manager, Rob Lennox, [here](#).