

THE ARCHAEOLOGY FORUM

a grouping of independent bodies concerned with archaeology

Statement on TAF strategy and advocacy priorities

The Archaeology Forum (TAF) is a grouping of independent bodies concerned with the archaeological investigation, management and interpretation of the UK's historic environment – whether buried, built or submerged, in situ or in museum collections and archives.

The Forum provides an opportunity to discuss matters of common concern, with the intention of establishing shared positions and promoting clear and consistent messages from archaeological practitioners and other stakeholders.

Together, TAF ensures a joined-up approach to presenting advocacy messages to governments by drawing together the main archaeological interest groups in England, Wales and Scotland, with wider representation of the historic environment in the form of the Heritage Alliance, and observation from Cadw, Historic England, and Historic Environment Scotland. The Forum also provides the secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group (APPAG) in Westminster.

The Forum aims to (1) secure and improve the existing regulation and protection of archaeology and the wider historic environment; (2) ensure that new policies include appropriate understandings of the historic environment, with special attention paid to ensuring that the unique nature of archaeology is appropriately represented; (3) put the historic environment at the heart of the planning system and sustainable development; and (4) promote and celebrate the perception that archaeology and the historic environment are public goods and creators of social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits.

TAF ADVOCACY PRIORITY 2016-2017

The Forum's current advocacy priority is to support the systems of archaeological protections in all UK nations, chiefly through the provision of local authority historic environment services and the operation of the wider planning system. In order to achieve this, the Forum aims to:

- Ensure appropriate levels of archaeological expertise are available to local authorities
- Promote proportionality and reliability in the weighting of planning decisions
- Resist the erosion or downgrading of processes (e.g. by ensuring proper screening of development applications and high quality consultant relationships)
- Protect the function and existence of HER services (with statutory protection as the best way to achieve this) and maintain their quality
- Ensure that the historic environment is embedded in decision making processes and is respected
- Stress the interconnectedness of systems which rely upon advice to local authorities to function
- Promote universal access to HERs (online HERs, public access, etc.)
- Support local authorities to develop new methods of service delivery as required
- Ensure that wider planning policies do not impede or degrade protections (e.g. ensuring permitted development rules respect archaeological processes)
- Encourage and support the national heritage agencies and HLF in developing ways to assist in these aims.

TAF is also committed to working with and supporting other organisations and groups to contribute to advocacy on wider archaeology and historic environment, and works with members on these broader issues with a view to ensuring effective archaeological regulation and practice in the UK.