

THE ARCHAEOLOGY FORUM

a grouping of independent bodies concerned with archaeology

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Keith Bache,
DEFRA,
Area 2A
Ergon House
LONDON SW1P 3JR.

28 April 2008

Dear Mr. Bache

RESPONSE TO DEFRA CONSULTATION ON FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR THE AGGREGATES LEVY SUSTAINABILITY FUND APRIL 2008 –MARCH 2011

The Archaeology Forum (TAF) is a grouping of the key, non-governmental organisations concerned with archaeology in the UK. Its members include the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers UK, the Council for British Archaeology, the Institute of Conservation, the Institute of Field Archaeologists, the Institute of Historic Building Conservation, the National Trust, the National Trust for Scotland, Rescue, the Society of Antiquaries of London, the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers, and the Society of Museum Archaeologists UK.

TAF is pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to DEFRA's consultation on the future priorities for the Fund which has supported significant achievements for historic environment research and conservation over the last funding period. It has made a substantial contribution to ensuring that historic environment considerations are integrated strategically in sustainable development for the aggregate industry and in advancing key areas of new research in marine and terrestrial environments.

Overall TAF agrees that DEFRA's high level objectives for the Fund are sound and relevant and that the five overarching themes identified are well-focused and support the objectives (sections 5. – 9.). Our organisations are extremely concerned, however, to see the disproportionate reduction in the overall funding for historic environment elements in the proposed themes.

Compared with funding in the period since 2004/05, we believe the reductions will be:
Theme 1 Quarries **reduced by £1.41m** from £2.41m to £1m.,
Theme 2 Marine **reduced by £0.23m** from £0.73m to £0.5m,
Theme 5 Communities **funding cut altogether** from £0.81m
in previous period.

We strongly support the need to maintain the level of funding in all three areas and believe that the cut to the community-based theme will be particularly detrimental.

In response to Question 8 of the consultation, therefore, we strongly advocate a reallocation of funds in the Quarry and Marine Themes to support a higher level of continuing research. This would carry forward the remarkable leading-edge research in these areas which is making a major contribution to long-term strategic planning for sustainable aggregates supply. We also urge that a high priority should be given to allocating funding for the historic environment conservation element of the Community Theme in order to develop active involvement of local communities in schemes that benefit their historic environment and local heritage.

This is an issue on which the historic environment community feels extremely strongly. The benefits of previous years' funding have been unambiguous and are highly valued. To make this disproportionate level of cuts will not only severely reduce the reach of the Fund but will also devalue the outcomes of research programmes which, as the benchmark reports demonstrate, have just begun to deliver their real potential.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this consultation.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Hinton, Convener

The Archaeology Forum's members are:

*The Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers UK
The Council for British Archaeology
The Institute of Conservation
The Institute of Field Archaeologists
The Institute of Historic Building Conservation
The National Trust*

*The National Trust for Scotland
Rescue: the British Archaeological Trust
The Society of Antiquaries of London
The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland
The Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers
The Society of Museum Archaeologists*