

# THE ARCHAEOLOGY FORUM

*a grouping of independent bodies concerned with archaeology*

## TAF statement on the Culture White Paper

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 historic environment; (2) ensure that new policies include appropriate understandings of the historic environment; (3) put the historic environment at the heart of the planning system and sustainable development; and (4) promote and celebrate the perception that archaeology contributes public goods in the form of social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits.

### Archaeology and the Culture White Paper

TAF strongly supports the initiative to publish a White Paper on the broad and important topic of culture.

Archaeology forms a significant element of our culture, providing evidence of past human activity and informing how we understand the present and plan for the future – shaping our identity by revealing information about the origins of our towns and cities, the design of our buildings, our landscapes, and our cultural practices. Archaeology also gives us an opportunity to reflect on issues which face society today: Immigration, multiculturalism, war, poverty, social deprivation and exclusion, and even climate change – all are topics which can be examined through the lens of archaeology.

TAF member bodies will be contributing in detail on the various aspects of archaeology's relevance to the scope of the White Paper via various avenues, including under the auspices of the Historic Environment Forum. These contributions will help to inform a vibrant and wide-ranging evidence base from which the White Paper will be able to develop a strong vision for archaeology's contribution to culture within all the four themes: Place-making, financial resilience of cultural organisations, people and cultural diplomacy.

However, TAF members share a core commitment to tackling the most pressing challenges facing the sector, namely securing the provision of archaeological protections within the planning system. The Forum would thus like to highlight the following priority issues:

- The need to ensure adequate provision of proportionate and reliable archaeological advice to local authorities, as part of the planning process: These services are vital to the protection of the physical remains of the past and thus to the ambition to shape sustainable **places** and vibrant healthy communities.
- The pressure of current financial demands which are leading to a critical loss in capacity and an erosion the viability and **resilience** of these historic environment services.
- And, the desirability of pursuing ever greater public access to Historic Environment Records and the development of strategies to achieve benefit for **people** from these services.

TAF members will continue to advocate for a resilient, sustainable and effective planning system that delivers local objectives whilst protecting local uniqueness, as almost unanimously demonstrated in the evidence to the report of local authority archaeology services commissioned by Ed Vaizey MP from John Howell MP and Lord Redesdale.