

Society of Museum Archaeologists

(Established 1975)

Mr Phil Weatherby
Planning Systems Improvement Division
Communities and Local Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

23 October 2009

Dear Mr Weatherby

Consultation on Planning Policy Statement 15: Planning for the Historic Environment

I am writing on behalf of the Society of Museum Archaeologists (SMA) to respond to the consultation on Planning Policy Statement 15: Planning for the Historic Environment being conducted by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The SMA currently has a membership of around 270, comprising individuals and institutions throughout the United Kingdom, and is the leading body representing archaeologists working in museums. The Society exists to promote museum involvement in all aspects of archaeology and emphasise the unique contribution of museums to the essential unity of the archaeological profession; to promote greater public understanding of the archaeological past, and a fuller public appreciation of the importance of archaeology; to campaign for the acceptance of museums as guardians of a vital part of the nation's heritage and as the appropriate location for the storage and interpretation of all archaeological material; and to develop a coherent philosophy of the role of archaeologists in museums.

We propose to limit our remarks to that section specifically dealing with museums since this is the area within which we have the most expertise. The SMA is particularly concerned about Policy HE13: Policy principles guiding the recording of information relating to heritage assets. At a general level there is no recognition in this policy of how the historic environment is managed for **the benefit of the public**. Fundamentally this public benefit is achieved through publication of the results of an archaeological project and through the archive generated by that project being made available to the public through a museum or similar repository. More specifically we regard the sentence in paragraph HE13.3, 'They [the developers] should also offer the archive generated to a local museum or other public depository' as being totally inadequate. This sentence must support in a robust manner the existing situation, which has developed since the introduction of PPG16, in which developers transfer as a matter of routine archaeological archives to museums.

The SMA is aware that the Archaeological Archives Forum has also submitted a response to this consultation. We commend to the Department for Communities and Local Government the views of the AAF as these represent the collective option of a range of practitioners who have direct experience of this subject.

Yours sincerely

Caroline McDonald
Secretary, Society of Museum Archaeologists

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