

Society of Museum Archaeologists

(Established 1975)

The Policy Team,
English Heritage,
1 Waterhouse Square,
138-142 Holborn,
London EC1N 2ST,

23 October 2009

Dear sir/madam

PPS Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide

I am writing on behalf of the Society of Museum Archaeologists (SMA) regarding the consultation on the PPS Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide produced by English Heritage.

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 those sections specifically dealing with museums since this is the area within which we have the most expertise. At a general level there is no recognition in this document 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.

Turning to **paragraph 63** we note that the wording here falls considerably short of current best practice. There is absolutely no encouragement here to developers to offer excavation archives to a museum or similar repository despite the fact that the public interest is best served by an archive being publically accessible. This paragraph 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.

In **paragraph 65** there must be a clear instruction to the Local Planning Authority to encourage a developer to meet his obligations to the local and wider community by ensuring that the legal ownership of an excavation archive is transferred to a museum or similar repository.

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

Yours faithfully

Caroline McDonald
Secretary, Society of Museum Archaeologists

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