

# Listen To Me! Lobbying for archaeology

Kenneth Aitchison

**Abstract** – How can archaeologists exert political influence? This paper reviews and compares approaches involving advocacy, including the preferred models of both the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) and the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) and lobbying. Lobbying is a technical, specific professional approach, and the paper introduces the routes to formal lobbying of the European Commission.

**Key words** – archaeology; lobbying; advocacy; election benchmarks; EAA; SAA; European Commission

**Titel** – Hör mich an! Über Lobbyarbeit für die Archäologie

**Zusammenfassung** – Wie können Archäologen politischen Einfluss ausüben? In diesem Artikel werden verschiedene Ansätze eine Interessenvertretung für die Archäologie untersucht und miteinander verglichen, u.a. die bevorzugten Modelle der European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) und der Society for American Archaeology (SAA), sowie der des Lobbying. Lobbying (oder auch: Lobbyarbeit) ist ein technischer, spezifisch professioneller Ansatz zur Einflussnahme auf Politik und Politiker. Der Aufsatz stellt die Wege zur formellen Lobbyarbeit bei der Europäischen Kommission vor.

**Schlüsselwörter** – Archäologie; Lobbyarbeit; Interessenvertretung; Wahlprüfsteine; EAA; SAA; Europäische Kommission

## Introduction

The thing that is most important to all European politicians is being re-elected. Politicians might listen to archaeologists when archaeologists have concerns, but what they need is something that they can 'sell' to the voters that might re-elect them, not something that cannot be balanced against all of society's other concerns. And this is often forgotten by archaeologists, who might fall into the trap of focussing on the technicalities of past human lives when talking to politicians and the public, rather than the ongoing needs of those in the present and future.

If archaeologists prioritise the past over the present, then archaeology is lost in an introspective, self-satisfying maze. The alternative is to reach out to explore ways to make a difference to political decisions that affect archaeological practice and archaeological heritage.

## Theses and experiences of a professional lobbyist

This paper explores routes that archaeologists can use to make difference to political decisions, thinking about different methodological approaches which can be used to try to get politicians' attention – from open 'letters' in the world of social media, to public campaigns, to direct, technical and face-to-face lobbying – and recognising that

the value or effectiveness of these approaches are socially contingent.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach; approaches have to be considered by *target* (which decision-makers are involved), by *context* (culturally – an approach that might seem suitable in one European country might not be in another), and by the *group* that wants to change minds (professional associations have expert knowledge, mass membership organisations have human resources, developers' associations have financial resources). Here it is important to remember that on the one hand there are no 'mass' membership organisations in archaeology, and on the other hand there are no political decisions that cannot be overturned with the expenditure of sufficient money (as presented in DOUGLASS, ALVIRE & ALTSCHUL, 2015).

## Advocacy

Conceptually, there are two clear ways to try to influence policy – through lobbying or through advocacy.

All efforts to change minds are either active – aiming to guide policy to ensure crises or conflicts don't arise – or reactive – trying to stop something that is already happening. Reaction is almost always too late to change anything. Reactive behaviour might be attention-seeking, but that does not

mean it always actually grabs attention – and it is almost always futile – the concept of ‘lying down in front of the bulldozers’, Arthur Dent’s fictional cliché of futile reaction by resistance to development (ADAMS, 1978, 8-12), is an illusory gesture that can be lazily co-opted by grandstanding politicians (HORNBY, 2015).

In terms of active behaviour, when considering the differences between the approaches of advocacy and lobbying, it can be useful to look at the words in their French translation: Lobbying = *le pression*; Advocacy = *plaidoyer*. Pressure and Pleading. Forcing action or asking for action.

Advocacy can be organised at grass-roots level, and is more convincing if it is so (authenticity matters – but, see above, this is often easier to mobilise in reaction to an unpopular decision). Lobbying is more technical, and requires expertise. Lobbying is a technical process, considered below, and together with this, two different approaches to advocacy are considered here – advocacy by accountability, and advocacy by persuasion.

Two separate archaeological membership organisations have embraced two different advocacy models. The first is *Advocacy by Accountability* – this is the European Association of Archaeologists’ preferred model, as adapted from a model used by DGUF and discussed in the *EU Elections Benchmarks* meetings at the EAA Annual Meetings in Maastricht in 2017 and Barcelona in 2018 (HÜGLIN ET AL., 2017; HÜGLIN ET AL., 2018). It involves reviewing published policies and manifestos, identifying the policies that would have a positive effect on archaeological remains and practice, and using these to benchmark politician’s performance – tracking and measuring their subsequent delivery (or not) of specific policies.

This is a lovely idea, politicians should be held accountable to what they have said they will do – but it is culturally specific, and things change. In a quote attributed to Harold Macmillan, when asked what changes the courses of governments – “*Events, dear boy, events*” (WIKIQUOTE, 2018). When bigger, more significant or more immediate matters grab the politicians’ attention, they are unlikely to prioritise their promises on archaeology as it is, to them, a relatively insignificant matter with few votes attached.

Politicians don’t have the time or staff to ensure that they will deliver on every assurance or reassurance they have given to constituents or other attention-seekers. Imagine if every minor interest group presented them with regular shopping lists. The achievement of the advocacy by accountability model will be in bringing archaeology to politicians’ attention, not in securing policy commitments.

The alternative approach is *Advocacy by Persuasion*. The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) has a *Government Affairs Committee* of members, which tracks legislative changes (and forthcoming potential changes) in the United States. This Committee is supported by a paid member of staff, the *Manager, Government Affairs*.

At SAA’s Annual Meeting in April 2018, which was held in Washington D.C., the SAA set up a mechanism to support the Society’s individual members – as voters – to speak to their elected representatives. The Society encouraged members to schedule visits to the Capitol to meet senators and representatives (and their staff) while they were in Washington for the conference, and supported this with pre-visit briefing meetings, guides to good talking points and a pre-recorded seminar on how to make these meetings as effective as possible (SAA, no date).

This training prepared archaeologists with knowledge about how to advocate for archaeology and historic preservation, by preparing the archaeologists with specific information to give the politicians about matters that have happened in their State, and to brief and remind them on specific forthcoming bills and legislation.

Most importantly, the training was about how to convince by conducting a ‘charm offensive’ – delegates were encouraged to find out about and then talk about good things that the politicians have done and to congratulate them on that – by pandering to their egos, they can be persuaded; trying to overwhelm or bully politicians is much less likely to be successful.

So there are different advocacy approaches to engaging with politicians that archaeological associations can take. And these can be delivered by organised groups of individual members, ideally supported by staff of the organisation.

## Lobbying

By contrast, lobbying needs a different kind of engagement. Lobbying is not a well understood phrase. It is often vaguely and loosely understood as an easy buzzword which, to some people, represents a somewhat illegal, or at least immoral activity that yields advantages for those who can afford it, at the cost of those who do not have money to spend on influencing politics.

This is a fallacy. What it actually does is translate business language into political language, and political language into business language, thereby intermediating between these two sys-

tems. It is a professional activity, undertaken by experts in the field.

But in terms of lobbying the European Union – and that can mean the Council of the European Union, the European Commission or the European Parliament – it is a very precisely defined concept, with only very specific individuals, working for very specific organisations, using predefined methodologies to present influential cases in defined ways to very specific recipients and only at very specific times in decision-making cycles. And if the right routes aren't followed, no matter how well-meaning intentions might be, they simply have no chance of influencing policy or legislation.

The lobbyists are intermediaries between their clients and the representatives of the European Union. It might be asked why such intermediaries are needed at all, and why policymakers cannot rely on their own experts?

Where the work gets done in the European Union (EU) is in the European Commission, where responsibility lies for responsible for the proposal of legislation, the implementation of decisions, the upholding of the EU treaties and for managing the day-to-day business of the EU (EU, 2018a).

Although around 32,000 people are employed by the European Commission (EU, 2018b) – about the same as by a large city council – put very simply, European Commission staff are overworked and often appreciate having someone else prepare materials for them. Expert knowledge from operative professionals is needed, and these need to be provided to the European Commission staff. Additionally, information about stakeholder support is vital to allow the proposal to steer safely through the EU's legislative process.

This is managed through the operation of the *Transparency Register* (EU, no date), a resource that is intended to allow EU citizens to see who is lobbying the European Union. Effectively, it is also a gateway – without signing the Register, no individual or organisation can formally lobby (seek to influence) the decision-making processes of the European Union – no access to Parliament, no meetings with parliamentarians or staff members at the European Commission.

The implementation of EU law is left to European Commission representatives in the form of “*delegated acts*”. This gives officials some discretion in modifying directives to suit the legal or technical requirements of member countries, and this is where legislative tweaking is done – what has been called the “*widgets-making*” side of the process (PANICHI & ARIES, 2015).

Delegated acts are opaque: there is no public register and no centralized website to see who does what. Which means that lobbyists need to find out which pieces of legislation will require the establishment of delegated acts; then, after identifying the right official to contact (a web search is usually enough), it is possible to have a real impact on the process. But only registered lobbyists – signatories of the *Transparency Register* – can do this. It is the only way to introduce ideas that will ultimately be put before the European Parliament, and from there transposed into EU national laws

## Conclusions

Thinking politically, in an era of anti-European populism, emphasising European solidarity and togetherness is likely to be counterproductive. Politicking has to take place with local or national arguments.

For archaeological lobbying to be successful, different roles can be played by different actors (whether these are individuals or organisations). To achieve this, the professional roles in archaeology that politicians think are important have to be considered, recognizing differences between the ways that professional archaeology has been structured by the wider cultural norms across Europe and why this then affects the potential for different groups to influence political decision making – and how valuable or effective these groups' interventions might be. Approaches have to vary from country to country, and the methods and arguments are not the same at the European level as they are at national, regional or local levels.

Individuals like to be persuaded, they don't like being held to account. And the only way the European Commission can be externally guided is through formal lobbying.

## References

- Adams, D. (1979). *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*. London: Arthur Barker Ltd.
- Douglass, J. G., Alvire, C. & Altschul, J. (2005). Working Together: the politics of archaeology: diverse concerns and interests at the West Bluffs Project, Los Angeles, California. *SAA Archaeological Record* 5/2 March 2005, 11-16.

EU (European Union). (2018a). European Commission. [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-commission\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-commission_en) [16.12.2018].

EU. (2018b). EU Administration – staff, languages and location. [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/figures/administration\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/figures/administration_en) [16.12.2018].

EU. (No date). Transparency Register. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/service-standards-and-principles/transparency/transparency-register\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/service-standards-and-principles/transparency/transparency-register_en) [16.12.2018].

Hornby, P. (2015). Boris will lie down before the bulldozers, ITV News 8 May 2015, <https://www.itv.com/news/meridian/update/2015-05-08/boris-will-lie-down-before-the-bulldozers/> [16.12.2018].

Hüglin, S., Karl, R., Lodewijckx, M. & Gransard-Desmond, J.-O. (2017). European Elections 2019 – Benchmarks for Archaeology and Heritage Protection [https://www.academia.edu/33615632/EAA\\_Maastricht\\_EU\\_Election\\_Benchmarks\\_2019](https://www.academia.edu/33615632/EAA_Maastricht_EU_Election_Benchmarks_2019) [16.12.2018].

Hüglin, S., Almansa-Sanchez, J., Cordemans, K., Karl, R., Mödler, M., Črešnar, M., Kairiss, A. & Siegmund, F. (2018). Benchmarks for Archaeology and Heritage Protection 2019 – 2024. EAA website. [https://www.e-a-a.org/EAA/Navigation\\_News/Benchmarks.aspx](https://www.e-a-a.org/EAA/Navigation_News/Benchmarks.aspx) [20.12.2018].

Panichi, J. & Aries Q. (2015). Beat the Berlaymont: five easy ways to skirt the EU lobbying rules, politico. eu 27th April 2015 <https://www.politico.eu/article/know-your-eu-lobbying-loopholes/> [16.12.2018].

SAA Society for American Archaeology. (No date). Charging the Hill: a Guide to Survival <http://saa.org/%20AbouttheSociety/EducationandOutreach/tabid/128/Default.aspx> [16.12.2018].

Wikiquote. (2018). [https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Harold\\_Macmillan#Disputed](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Harold_Macmillan#Disputed) [16.12.2018].

*About the Author*

Kenneth Aitchison is a consultant and Executive Director of Landward Research Ltd, a consultancy that specialises in projects relating to the workforces in professional archaeology and cultural heritage. He is member of the Society for American Archaeology's International Government Affairs committee, Chair of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' International Practice Special Interest Group and a signatory of the Transparency Register.

*Dr Kenneth Aitchison*  
*Landward Research Ltd*  
*kenneth.aitchison@landward.eu*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6594-1408>