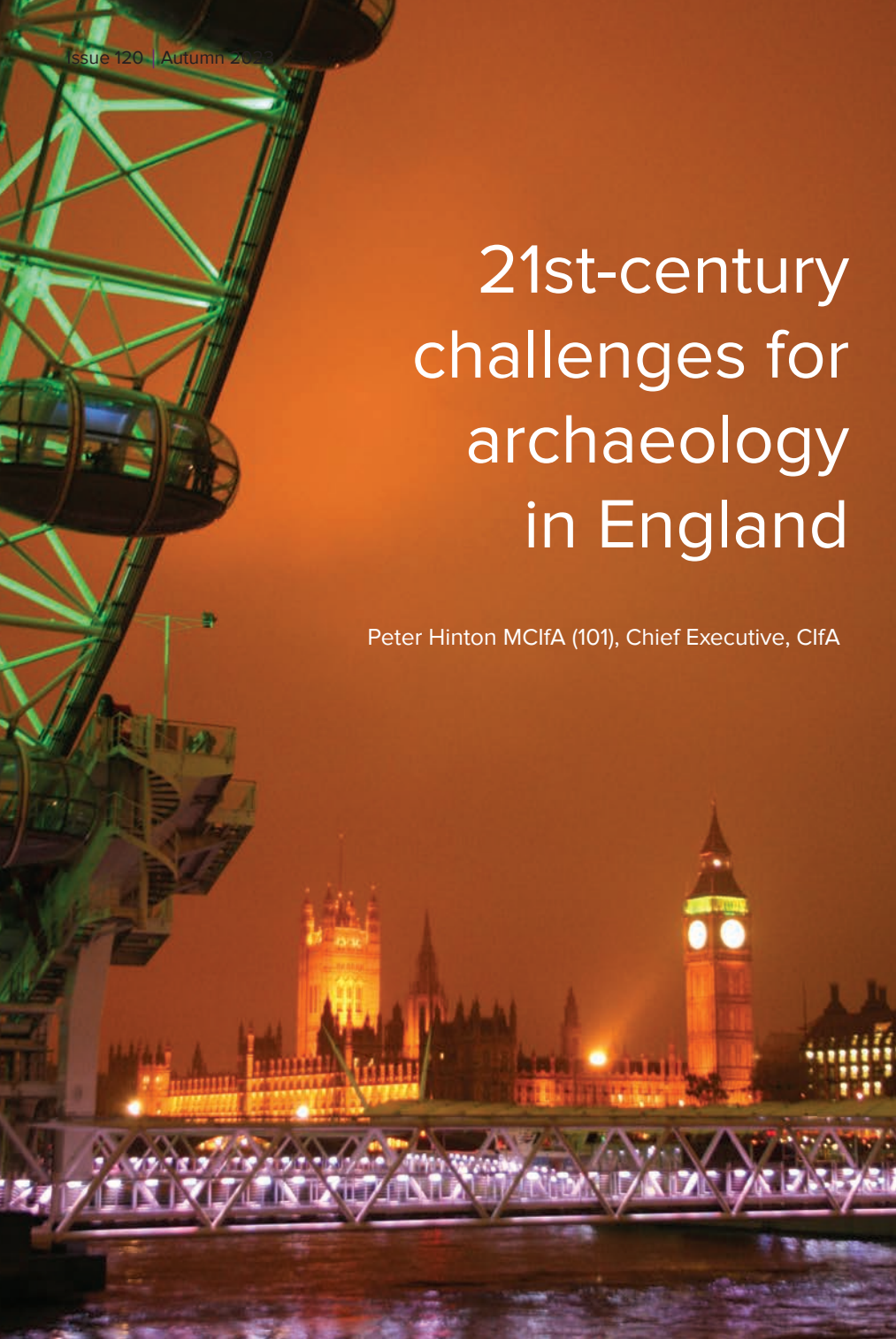


21st-century challenges for archaeology in England

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Westminster, London. Credit: Peter Hinton

The 25th anniversary of planning-led archaeology in England stimulated celebrations of the successes of development-led archaeology and concerns about the fragility of the policy framework that underpinned it. Discussions built on ClfA's work to promote a more ambitious archaeology for England (notably through its contribution to the Southport report, which sought to exploit the opportunities created by the improved planning provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework) and coincided with the creation of Historic England and re-examination of its archaeological remit as the UK government's advisor on heritage in England.

Historic England invited ClfA to facilitate a sectoral conversation, led by Jan Wills. Six workshops in 2017 looked at the challenges facing synthetic research, archives, publication, professional standards, designation and the planning system, and the division of responsibilities between local authority archaeological advice services and Historic England. Interim findings were aired at the 2018 ClfA conference, and a final report was published by ClfA (www.archaeologists.net/profession/projects).

The report identified

- the need for stronger focus on public benefit
- the challenges and opportunities of digital advances
- the advantages of wider and more ambitious use of professional standards
- the importance of the planning system and local authority archaeology services in delivering the current model, and the vulnerability of both
- the need to maintain effective advocacy for archaeology
- a desire for strong leadership in the complex structure of our sector

Sifting and amalgamating these issues and the report's recommendations, Historic England and ClfA agreed to co-lead a framework of strategic initiatives, the 21st-Century Challenges for Archaeology Programme ('21CAP'). Current and future highlights include

1 *Finding consensus on improvements for legislation and policy, and their implementation, and better prediction of opportunities to achieve this*

Now

- continuing to utilise the ClfA case studies report for Historic England, illustrating strengths and weaknesses of the current system
- identifying the heritage sector's wishlist for reforms (Historic England lead), and agreeing archaeology's advocacy priorities and the opportunities to advance them (ClfA lead)

- working with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and others to ensure a sound policy base for 'National Importance' (as set out on the National Planning Policy Framework)

Later

- developing guidance on 'National Importance' to support planning decisions (lead to be confirmed)

2 Ensuring decision-makers in national and local governments value local authority archaeological services, and helping those services improve their capabilities, fight degradation and capitalise on externally generated change

Now

- reviewing the range of local authority service models (Association of Local Government Archaeology Officers (ALGAO) lead), testing users' perspectives on that analysis, and anticipating funding and organisational challenges so that services can turn future crises into opportunities (ClfA lead)

Later

- improving skills sharing and development in local authority archaeology (ALGAO lead)

3 Securing a clearer shared understanding of roles and responsibilities in guiding the archaeological process

Now

- reviewing the structure of ClfA Standards and guidance (ClfA lead)
- developing standard measurements of costs for archaeological projects (Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers lead)

Later

- identifying the range of standards, guidance and advice documents the sector needs (ClfA lead)
- identifying the guidance and data-standardisation required to enable inter-site thematic and regional research (University Archaeology UK lead)



Public Engagement at Historic Dockyard Chatham. Credit: Wessex Archaeology

4 Exploring more effective ways of co-creating and sharing knowledge by combining the results of many small investigations in larger regional or thematic research programmes, and engaging a wider range of audiences

Now

- scoping better structures for enabling synthetic research of landscapes and themes (British Academy and Society of Antiquaries of London leads)
- making the most of 'backlog' pre-PPG16 resources (Historic England lead)
- re-examining how diverse audiences consume and would like to consume archaeological data and understanding (Council for British Archaeology lead)

5 Securing a sustainable future for archaeological archives

Now

- a programme of strategic action via the linked Future of Archaeological Archives Programme (<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/support-and-collaboration/future-for-archaeological-archives-programme/#8dd3e8e1>)

The workshops, report and programme were not intended as a comprehensive strategy for archaeology, unlike its companion initiatives in Scotland, Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland, where work is complementary (notably in Northern Ireland on guidance). The focus began by questioning whether the English planning system was a safe vehicle for development-led archaeology, and in the absence of enthusiasm for alternatives, led to recommendations for safeguards and improvements to the present system – calls for radical change being surprisingly muted. Key imperatives, such as delivering more and more varied public benefit, meeting our climate change responsibilities and enhancing skills, do not have their own work packages but run through the programme like lettering in a stick of rock.

The partners in the programme (logos shown here) are making good progress, creating outputs that will improve how we conduct development-led archaeology. Encouragingly, they are achieving a higher level of organisational collaboration than English archaeology has previously seen.



Programme partners