

# Long-term impacts from 21st-century archaeologies

Gayin MacGregor MClfA (2038), Chief Executive, Jane Miller, Learning Officer, Phil Richardson ACIfA (2644), Senior Project Manager, Archaeology Scotland

Community excavating at Camas Nan Gael, Ardnamurchan, as part of Real Wild West. Credit: Archaeology Scotland

**A**rchaeology as a form of cultural practice has changed radically over the centuries. This could be summarised as: emerging as a leisure pursuit of wealthy collectors in the 18th century, developing and consolidating as an academic discipline in the first half of the 20th century, moving on to the post-war response of civic society to development pressure with establishment of a range of Trusts and Societies, and then introduction by government of development-led archaeologies of the late 20th century. With different global challenges and greater pressures on people and communities, what should the practice of archaeology be in the 21st century?

What has changed significantly in recent years is the much clearer establishment of the Public Benefit agenda in the sector, for example with publication of ClfA's *Professional Practice Paper: Delivering Public Benefit* (2021) and ALGAO Scotland's *Delivery of Public Benefit and Social Value Guidance for Archaeology in the Planning Process* report (see page 24). It is now widely recognised that the practice of archaeology can articulate with a range of policy agendas and deliver

multiple outcomes for people and place. There are amazing examples of archaeology projects and programmes which drive public benefits, but the challenge is perhaps how we evolve and innovate our practices across the sector to mainstream and maximise public benefit proportionately.

Social Value is a useful short-hand used in some of the debate about the character of archaeological practices and how we can measure different outcomes. While this has been an important contribution, perhaps another approach is integrating the planning and evaluation of what our practices deliver with other long-term strategic frameworks, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This would allow us to more readily widen relevance to and integration with other strategic processes which deliver on the four pillars of sustainability, environmental, economic, cultural and social.

The work Archaeology Scotland delivers may offer some examples of how we provide value to each of these pillars.

*Adopt-a-Monument* is all about people and their heritage; it revolves around supporting and equipping people with the necessary expertise to take care of and tell others about heritage that is important to them. This community-led approach enables capacity



building in local communities and provides the care and conservation of archaeological sites across Scotland. The idea for Adopt-a-Monument was first developed in the 1990s and in some ways reflects the zeitgeist of the development of archaeology at the time, as discussed above. However, rather than reflecting the top-down strategic processes seen in other areas of the sector, Adopt-a-Monument was created in response to the number of archaeological societies who wanted to look after and take responsibility for cultural heritage sites in their area. The major phases of Adopt-a-Monument have been delivered against a backdrop of large-scale funding cuts within the heritage sector and the wider world. This, alongside Archaeology Scotland's Strategy, led to a much broader project that has established widening participation, skills development, capacity building, biodiversity gains and enabled communities to engage with their heritage on their own terms. Adopt-a-Monument has also been able to address the lack of capacity for local or national heritage organisations to help local communities proceed with their projects.

*Adopt+* was developed from the original Adopt-a-Monument model. The programme reflects local heritage needs alongside wider community needs on a landscape scale. Basically, how can community benefit be delivered by archaeology rather than archaeology being a public benefit of development? An example of this is our *Real Wild West* project (RWW). RWW was developed with the local community in Ardnamurchan and aimed to address two explicit needs: economic development and community isolation. This was all tied to the local Community Development Plan and the project came up with a series of goals to address these needs. Principally, could the care and conservation of archaeology provide an offer to tourists and visitors to

*Conservation work party  
on Ice House at  
Fascadale,  
Ardnamurchan, as part of  
Real Wild West. Credit:  
Archaeology Scotland*



*Participant on the Big  
Dig at Newbattle  
Abbey College,  
Midlothian. Credit:  
Archaeology  
Scotland*

stay just one more day in Ardnamurchan and secondly, could engagement in their own past help bring people together? In practice, by looking at a series of overlapping issues such as responsible tourism, active travel, community-led development, community wealth building, climate adaptations, skills development, and access (beds and parking), RWW was able to deliver strong outcomes from a wellbeing economy perspective. In one sense, standard outputs such as a heritage trail, community capacity building and heritage management programmes are some of the ways we can look at wider community development and interesting approaches to problem-solving real-life issues.

Our *New Audience* project has a central focus on widening participation in archaeology amongst marginalised and displaced communities. The project has sought to use our shared cultural heritage to bring people together, empower communities and provide positive, inclusive and welcoming experiences to New Scots (asylum seekers and refugees). We have shown that archaeology can provide activities and projects that uniquely blend together language learning, place making and cross-cultural learning, building social connections and positive physical and mental wellbeing outcomes. The project began in the shadow of the final Covid lockdown in early 2021. Delivery and development were impacted by the unique conditions Covid had created for society and in particular for Third



*Exploring Prehistoric  
Rock Art, Logan  
Primary School's  
Attainment through  
Archaeology project  
as part of Coalfields  
Communities  
Landscape  
Partnership. Credit:  
Archaeology  
Scotland*

Sector Organisations who support marginalised and vulnerable groups. The project has delivered a wide range of activities, ranging from short taster sessions that raise awareness of archaeology and heritage to larger multiweek programmes that enable learners and participants to understand archaeology, improve their English language skills through supporting ESOL classes, and develop digital visualisation skills using mapping and Microsoft PowerBI software. All of these support the personal growth and skills development of

the participants, as well as an understanding of the place in which they now live. This strengthens the sector by widening participation and creating opportunities for us to learn from participants.

Sustainable Development Education strands including health and wellbeing, climate action and social justice are woven through our Learning Programme as evidenced in one of our key initiatives, *Attainment through Archaeology* (AtA). AtA has been designed to tackle inequality in education and the poverty-related attainment gap through the delivery of small-group, place-based archaeological learning projects that empower young people through the development of new technical skills and key transferable meta skills, while using curriculum learning in a real-world context. Achievement is recognised through Heritage Hero Awards, our inclusive wider achievement awards scheme, which often marks participants' first formal recognition of success.

A defining feature of all our learning projects, and those recognised through the Heritage Hero Awards, is the active involvement of participants at every stage, from initial planning to the creation of final outputs. We have found that this participatory approach ensures a sense of ownership and helps build confidence.

*Jedburgh Grammar School pupils taking part in an Attainment through Archaeology workshop at the Bedrule Castle excavation in the Scottish Borders. Credit: Archaeology Scotland*



We are committed to delivering meaningful lifelong learning opportunities, with a focus on reaching those who might not traditionally engage with archaeology. And going forward we are keen to develop and deliver more place-based intergenerational projects that bring communities together, like our *2024 Big Dig*, a fantastic way to encourage and support community cohesion.

There is a truism that archaeology is good at helping people think in the long term, and as such embedding longer-term measurable goals around these four pillars could be helpful. For example, Scotland has benefited from ten years of an Archaeology Strategy which intersects with *Our Past Our Future*, *The Strategy for Scotland's Historic Environment* and National Performance Framework (NPF4). This nested system allows for longer-term goal setting and partnerships to emerge, and in other parts of the UK Archaeology Strategies could be critical to setting long-term goals around what public benefit strives to deliver in the future.



*Secondary school pupils participating in a geophysics activity at the Shetland Science Fair. Credit: Archaeology Scotland*

### Acknowledgements and further information

Archaeology Scotland is grateful for support for our learning projects from Historic Environment Scotland, AOC Archaeology, The Gannochy Trust, Coalfield Communities Landscape Partnership as supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, The University of Edinburgh Community Fund, Scottish Power Foundation, Swire Foundation and many other funders and supporters. New Audiences has been supported by Historic Environment Scotland, and the DigiTay Third Sector Challenge fund. Adopt-a-Monument is part-funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Historic Environment Scotland. The Real Wild West Adopt+ programme is funded by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund and Historic Environment Scotland.

Please consider supporting the work Archaeology Scotland delivers by becoming a member today.



**Gavin MacGregor**

Gavin is Chief Executive of Archaeology Scotland. He has experience of working in the university, developer led and third sector parts of the archaeological sector in Scotland. He is passionate about the power of widening participation in archaeology.



**Jane Miller**

Jane is Learning Officer at Archaeology Scotland. She has a background in archaeology and over 30 years' experience in education, with much of that time being spent in heritage education and dedicated to archaeological learning. Jane is a firm believer that archaeology is an important tool for learning for all, connecting people, place and the past to better understand ourselves, each other and the world around us.



**Phil Richardson**

Phil is Senior Project Manager at Archaeology Scotland. He manages the Archaeology Programme, which includes Adopt-a-Monument, the AaM+ Programmes, the New Audience Project and partnership projects such as the Leven River Park Programme. Phil has a wide-ranging experience of working in Scottish cultural heritage and community archaeology and is a big advocate for community-led archaeology.