

PRACTICAL AND MORAL SUPPORT FOR EU ARCHAEOLOGISTS WORKING IN THE UK

Jessica Bryan and Sadie Watson explore what the sector can do to support EU colleagues working in the UK at this time of political uncertainty and the support they should expect from Prospect and employers.



Archaeological recording on A14C2H. Credit: Highways England, courtesy of MOLA Headland Infrastructure

The boom in archaeological work linked to infrastructure and housing in the UK has resulted in a growth in employment of almost 100 per cent in development-led archaeology (ClfA et al 2019), with major projects requiring large numbers of field staff, often at short notice.

The need to resource large projects could not have been met by the existing UK workforce and as a result there have been significant numbers of archaeologists migrating to the UK to take up work opportunities. Across the country the number of EU nationals employed in the sector currently stands at approximately 13 per cent (Landward Research 2019), rising significantly on particular projects including major infrastructure works for which MOLA Headland Infrastructure actively recruited across Europe. This is a substantial change from the late 1990s, when only 2–3 per cent of professional archaeologists in the UK originated from outside the country (ClfA et al 2019).

HOW CAN YOUR UNION HELP?

The uncertainty introduced by Brexit and the future for our EU colleagues is the top campaigning priority for Prospect Union, which now has over 800 members in its Archaeologists branch. Prospect campaigns for a better deal for all EU workers based on the value of their experience and expertise. To help and advise members, Prospect produced Guidance for EU workers on applying for settled status, which outlines existing rights and legislation, provides information on the various possible outcomes to the Brexit process and leads members through the settled status application.



A copper-alloy penannular brooch found near Brampton for the A14C2H.
Credit: Highways England, courtesy of MOLA Headland Infrastructure

The document also guides readers through the various levels of status – settled, pre-settled, permanent residency or indefinite leave to remain – as well as making clear some confusing aspects of Brexit; for example, although Irish nationals are theoretically excluded from these requirements it may still be worth applying for settled status, as the updated laws to protect the UK–Ireland Common Travel Agreements are still yet to become law.

The Heritage section of Prospect (in which the Archaeologists branch sits) cites movement of EU workers as one of its 'key industry areas of concern'. The Prospect Brexit website (<http://brexit.prospect.org.uk/#heritage>) outlines the main concerns within heritage, including free movement of staff, loss of grants and the negative effect on collaboration. The website also provides a contact for members to raise their own concerns to Prospect.

Crucial to the professional and personal development of our EU colleagues is the protection of their status in the UK, that they know they are valued, and that we continue to learn from one another, whatever the result of Brexit might be.



Roman chicken-shaped brooch. Credit: Highways England, courtesy of MOLA Headland Infrastructure

WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS DO?

Prospect is working closely with employers within archaeology to ensure support for our EU members. In January 2019 Prospect and MOLA agreed that MOLA would pay the £65 application fee for settled status for MOLA and MOLA Headland employees, only to hear that the fee had been cancelled that very afternoon! Nevertheless, there is much that employers can do to help staff further; at MOLA this includes the provision of an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) as part of their employees' healthcare package. The EAP provider can support and advise on a range of issues, including applications for settled status in the UK. The service is free to use, confidential and independent from MOLA, so staff can discuss concerns away from work.

The boom and bust nature of the British archaeological market inevitably means that there will be downturns in the future and a mobile workforce is better able to take

advantage of the varying employment levels across Europe. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most of the young migrant archaeologists working in the UK will eventually return to their native countries or find work elsewhere; they are following the work rather than moving permanently (Caruso et al 2018, 153) and the UK market currently offers higher levels of pay and less precarious employment contracts than are available in many other countries.

Finally, and importantly, MOLA has been consistent in its messages of support to its EU employees, with a recent communication to staff stressing that MOLA is committed to supporting EU colleagues and acknowledging that international staff are a contributory factor in the organisation's success. Crucial to the professional and personal development of our EU colleagues is the protection of their status in the UK, that they know they are valued, and that we continue to learn from one another, whatever the result of Brexit might be.



Jessica Bryan. Credit: MOLA



Sadie Watson. Credit: MOLA

Jessica Bryan and Sadie Watson, MClfA (5532)

Jessica is a Project Officer at MOLA and the Branch Secretary for the Archaeologists branch of Prospect Union.

Sadie is also a Project Officer at MOLA and the Equality & Diversity Rep for the Archaeologists Branch of Prospect.

ClfA's work to support EU archaeologists

We strongly support Prospect's work to offer practical guidance to individuals and encourage employers to take positive steps to manage uncertainty and assist EU archaeologists working in the UK. In support of this role for trade unions, ClfA has taken a strategic lead on advocating to government to ensure that EU colleagues who are accredited as archaeologists will continue to be able and welcome to work in the UK, as well as making the same arguments for UK archaeologists to be able to continue to work in the EU. ClfA has also stressed the need to protect the current EU employees who are critical to the sustainability of the current workforce in UK archaeology. For more detailed information on our policy position and work with Prospect and the Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers, see our recent briefing, available on the ClfA website <https://www.archaeologists.net/briefings>

We will be running a session with our Deutschland Group at the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) conference in Bern this September. This will promote collaboration between EU, non-EU and ex-EU archaeologists to explore how, practically and emotionally, we can continue to use UK archaeologists' firm identification with and affection for the rest of Europe, for the benefit of all of us.

References

- Caruso, F, Cecchetti, A, Latini, T, 2018 Glocal Archaeology in the UK: An Oral History Project, in L J Fine and J E Thompson (eds) *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 33.1, 147–167
- ClfA, FAME, CBA, 2019 Response to the Migrant Advisory Committee on the UK Shortage Occupation List
- Landward Research Ltd, 2019, *State of the Archaeological Market 2018*, London
- Prospect/BecTU, 2019 Guidance for EU workers on applying for Settled Status, <https://library.prospect.org.uk/id/2019/00129/2019-01-30>