

EDITORIAL

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The historic environment, like the natural environment, is a shared, irreplaceable resource. It is managed – and researched, cared for and conserved – on behalf of, and for the benefit of, society. Through their commitment to comply with CifA's ethical *Code of conduct*, professional archaeologists have accepted a duty to work in the public interest. The concepts of public interest, public benefit and value are closely entwined (and often used interchangeably). Over the next twelve months, we will be taking a closer look at what they mean for archaeologists, for the public and communities we serve and for the private and public funders of our work. Working alongside our Voluntary and Community Group, through a series of events and publications, our aim is to share research, resources and good practice from across the sector and to communicate the message that archaeology matters to funders, decision makers and clients.

Archaeologists deliver public benefit in many ways. Some are direct and tangible: we can see how participation in the process of discovery or engagement with archaeological collections touches peoples' lives. Others are indirect or intangible and more difficult to measure as a result: the sense of place created by rooting a new development in its historical context, the enjoyment of a piece of public art inspired by archaeological discovery or the use of increased understanding about the past to inform current responses to the climate crisis.

At the beginning of our 'Year of Public Benefit', this edition of *The Archaeologist* takes a look at some of the more tangible ways archaeologists deliver public benefit.

Sadie Watson and Kathleen Faccia discuss the need for a better understanding of what public benefit might look like from the perspective of communities affected

by development in two articles drawn from their UKRI-funded research project *Measuring, maximising and transforming public benefit from the UK Government Investment in Archaeology*, led by Sadie and hosted by MOLA. Brendon Wilkins of DigVentures picks up and develops this theme, emphasising the need for a structured approach to the delivery of public benefit and evaluation of impact. Gail Boyle, Senior Curator of Archaeology and World Cultures at Bristol Museums and Leigh Chalmers, Heritage Inclusion Development Specialist at Wessex Archaeology, consider the engagement potential of archaeological collections. Gail highlights the role of the museum archaeologist in identifying and breaking down the barriers to engagement with archaeological collections through a constant evaluation of their public offering. Leigh emphasises the mental wellbeing benefits arising from the Historic England-funded *Lost and Found* project, which has created opportunities for members of the public to engage digitally with the archaeological material and the specialists who study and care for it, and to create their own stories.

Stephen McLeod and Sarah Ricketts of Icenii Projects describe a new approach to public engagement at their flagship project on the site of the Covent Garden Workhouse. This has empowered the whole project team to devise new ways of communicating the project's results and has engaged the media to tell the story of the site and the archaeologists investigating it. Alison James and colleagues from MSDS Marine illustrate the importance of engaging a range of communities in protecting heritage at risk, in this case the designated wreck of the *Rooswijk*, and describe the first site open day held on the sea-bed! And finally, Philip Wise of Colchester Archaeological Trust discusses the potential of partnership working between community heritage



Volunteers on site at Aller, Somerset. Credit: Somerset County Council

Credit: MOLA and the Bloomberg site



organisations and local authorities to engage local politicians and develop a new approach to the management of local heritage sites in response to changing funding landscapes.

Continuing with the public benefit theme, 2021 will also see the publication of the revised Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA)

Archaeology and Development Guide, which ClfA has been pleased to contribute to, a new-look ClfA client guide and a new public benefit professional practice paper produced in partnership with HS2, all with the same message: *archaeology adds value to society and to industry and, if it doesn't, it's not being undertaken to professional standards*. Demonstrating that archaeology matters has never been more

important, whether in the context of proposed planning reform, an increasingly urgent conversation about who defines, values and experiences heritage, or the contribution that understanding the past makes to our present experience and quality of life. Your work delivers benefit, and we are looking forward to promoting and celebrating more of it over the coming year.