

PUBLIC BENEFIT IN DEVELOPER-LED ARCHAEOLOGY: BEYOND THE HOARDING

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Development-led archaeology takes place as a result of both privately and publicly funded projects, and as such, operates within relevant government legislation. For publicly funded work, this includes the Public Services (Social Values) Act 2012 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/3/enacted>), which mandates that social value is generated through the production of economic, environmental, and/or social wellbeing. Facets of social value are integral to the Considerate Constructor’s Scheme and are highlighted in various Best Practice case studies (<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/>). Further, many developers now operate with social value frameworks in place and with dedicated teams to deliver these benefits.

But what is archaeologically based public benefit? And, who determines what this is?

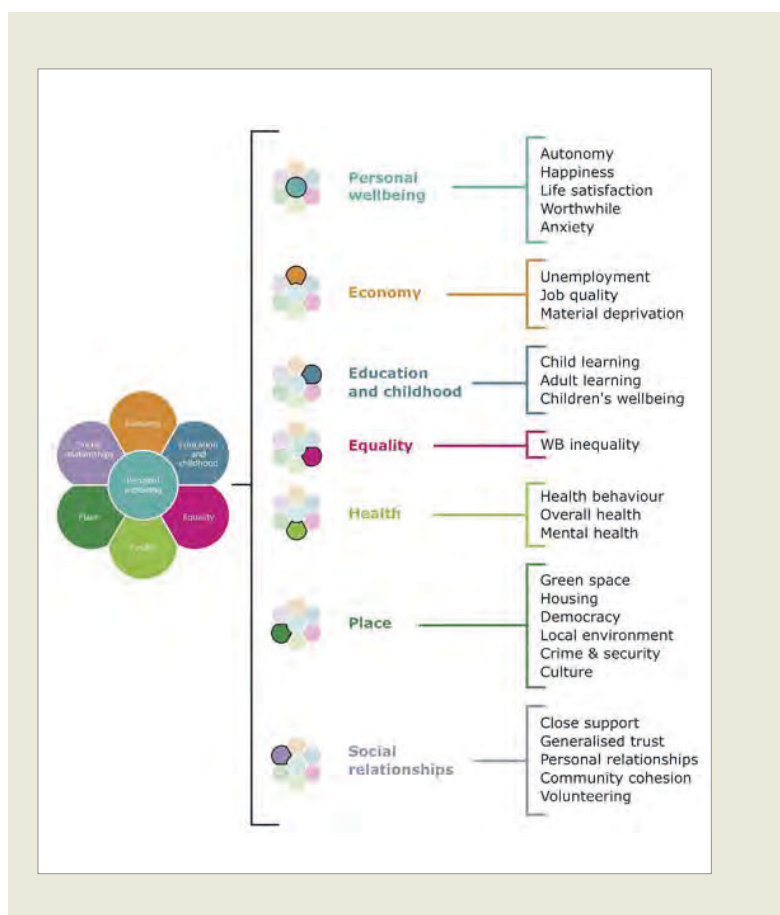
In the UK, developer-led archaeology often considers knowledge creation as one of the bedrocks of its public benefit (or social value) output (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2020). Although knowledge production is important, the public impact of this is debatable: how much do publics *actually* benefit from a site report or a monograph? And how often does a local community, impacted by development, benefit from this type of output? We would argue that the answer is rarely, at best. Grey literature, monographs, and published articles are inaccessible for a number of reasons (eg cost, accessibility, technical language, etc), and often communities are unaware that archaeologists have been working nearby.

As part of a UKRI-funded research project (grant no. MR/S034838/1), we are working towards a better understanding of what

public benefit might look like for the communities we work among, as well as how to integrate and deliver this more effectively. We have produced a survey, which is currently being published in multiple languages, that will form the basis of our understanding of what members of the public think of our field, as well as what they want to gain from our work. It incorporates personal and community wellbeing indicators (Brown et al 2017) deemed relevant by a range of organisations operating on various scales, from local to national levels. It also integrates questions about how members of the public wish to engage with our work, ranging from intentional non-participation to (elements associated with) co-production. Of course, we acknowledge that there are limitations to engagement that accompany site work specifically, which can also be influenced by the size and scale of a project, but, we also believe there is a range of opportunities, from pre- to post-excavation analysis, where locally affected communities can engage,

contribute, and derive/produce benefits from the work. Arnstein (1969) first modelled levels of community participation in her article ‘A Ladder of Citizen Participation’; more recently, González (2019) produced a toolkit modelling levels of community engagement. We intend to use the latter as a way to conceptualise the engagement levels that members of the public express desire in our work, to compare this with the opportunities that developer-led archaeology currently provides, and to assess what our potential might be.

In addition to surveying members of the public, we will also be asking heritage professionals and the development sector what they think is practical and what possible benefits our industry can generate. Particularly in relation to developers, if we can contribute to their social value targets, this has the potential to open up various engagement and funding opportunities for our sector, thereby facilitating our ability to maximise our public impact.



Personal and community wellbeing indicators identified by Brown et al (2017, 8, Fig 2). Credit: Image available for use under the Creative Commons Licence

Q30 What are the **top three benefits** you would want **your community** to gain from the archaeological work or process?

Use **1** for your preferred choice, **2** for your next choice, and **3** for your third choice. You can rank all 12 if you like, with 12 being your least preferred choice:

- Skills training opportunities
- Employment opportunities
- Opportunities for being active
- Gaining historical knowledge of the community
- New activities for community members to try
- The chance to socialise with others
- Feeling more connected to the past
- Feeling more connected to where they live
- Feeling more connected to one another
- Contributing to the community's education
- Contributing to the community's future
- Other (please describe)
- I'm not interested in my community benefiting from the archaeological work

An example of a survey question, asking members of the public what benefits they would like for their community based on archaeological works in the local area. Choices reference some of the wellbeing indicators highlighted by Brown et al (2017)

Q22 Before the work on the construction site starts, archaeologists research the history of your area, think of questions that the archaeology can help answer, and think of the ways their work can address various interests or issues that members of the public might have.

Would you be interested in: (please choose all that apply)

- Being involved in researching the area
- Thinking of questions about your local area's character (for example: How has your local area changed over time? Was your local area known for a particular profession? How has your experience living in your local area been influenced by people's past activities?)
- Thinking of questions about the people who lived in your local area (for example: Where did past settlers in my area come from, and why did they move here? What can we find out about the daily lives these people lived?)
- Thinking of current interests or issues that are important to your area (for example: creating a sense of connection to the people who lived there before you, or to the place where you live; addressing social justice issues, etc.)
- Other (please describe)
- I would not be interested in doing these things

An example of a survey question asking members of the public about ways they might like to engage with developer-led archaeology in their local area. This question focuses on pre-excavation (non-)participation

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Ultimately, developer-led archaeology sits at an inflection point in communities. We are part of an agent of change that impacts some communities for the better, while it tears at the social fabric of others. We would argue that, as we profit from this system, we should be morally and ethically obliged to provide opportunities for

affected communities to benefit from our work, or at least use our work to help mitigate the negative impacts of development. In this vein, we should offer our platform as a means to generate outcomes that are useful and meaningful to affected communities, as expressed by the communities themselves.



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Kate is a field archaeologist and a Research Associate for the UKRI-funded research project *Measuring, Maximising and Transforming Public Benefit from UK Government Investment in Archaeology*, hosted by MOLA. She trained as an osteoarchaeologist, primarily focusing on northern complex Mesolithic foragers, and currently excavates anything that comes her way in the UK. She is interested in the potential impact our work can make beyond the construction site hoarding.

References

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