

## Joint CIfA / CBA / ALGAO:England statement on Government response to the ‘Stop destruction of British archaeology’ petition

This morning (8 June) the Government released a response to the above [petition](#), as they are required to do for all petitions which surpass 10,000 signatures. The petition, which currently has over 17,000 signatures – far more than the number of paid archaeologists in England and Wales – illustrated in clear terms that threats to archaeological protections will not be tolerated by the public – the vast majority of whom (95%) believe it is important that the historic environment is protected<sup>1</sup>.

We broadly welcome the Government’s response, which provides assurances that the Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill is not intended to reduce the cultural and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring. We also strongly welcome the invitation to work with the Government in the development of the Bill to ensure that these commitments are met;

“...the Government values the petition in highlighting the importance of archaeology and the historic environment as a material consideration in the planning process, and will continue to engage fully with the sector during the passage of the Bill and beyond.”

This assurance echoes previous statements made by George Osborne about the Government’s commitment to protecting the historic environment<sup>2</sup>. Despite this, as we stated last week in our [Joint Statement on recent planning reform announcements](#), we continue to question whether there is, in fact, a dislocation between the Government’s stated intent to protect the historic environment, and the reality of the effects of their recent planning reforms.

For example, the response indicates that the changes to pre-commencement conditions would effectively give applicants an opportunity to refuse particular conditions, thereby undermining the authority of local planning determinations and leading to an increase in the rate of appeals. These types of measure, which reduce the capability of local authorities to enforce protections, have the potential to harm both archaeology and the wider environment, and as such, run contra to the strong commitments to sustainable development set out in the NPPF.

We believe that it is absolutely possible to encourage growth, streamline the planning system and yet maintain the environmental, social, and cultural protections of the planning process. However, the Government’s current agenda is not adequately protecting sustainable planning, and we remain concerned about the future of archaeological protections.

It is important to note that there is legislative requirement for local planning authorities or developers to care of the majority of the historic environment, which we all know is much loved and appreciated by residents and visitors alike. We believe that a legislative imperative for local authorities to be aware of and

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<sup>1</sup> Heritage Counts 2016: Heritage and Society (<http://hc.historicengland.org.uk/content/pub/2016/heritage-and-society-2016.pdf>)

<sup>2</sup> Rt. Honourable George Osborne (2014) Reply to a letter from The Heritage Alliance (<http://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/tha-website/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/GO-to-KP-31-8-15.pdf>)

make provision for the management/care of the historic environment would go a long way to providing clarity for all parties and add substance to the government's claims to appreciate it.

We will be discussing these issues with sector colleagues and with the All Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group over the coming weeks. At the same time, we will continue to monitor emerging legislation and press Government to ensure there are no adverse changes proposed.



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### **A note on the signatory organisations:**

#### **The Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers: England (ALGAO: England)**

The Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers: England (ALGAO) is the national body representing local government archaeology services in England at County, District, Metropolitan, Unitary and National Park authority level. These provide advice to nearly all the District, Unitary and other local government bodies in the country.

ALGAO: England co-ordinates the views of its member authorities (currently 97 in total) and presents them to government and to other national organisations. It also supports the work of the Local Government Association (LGA) on archaeological matters. The range of interests of its members embraces all aspects of the historic environment, including archaeology, buildings and the historic landscape.

#### **The Council for British Archaeology (CBA)**

CBA is the national amenity society concerned with protection of the archaeological interest in heritage assets. CBA has a membership of 500 heritage organisations who, together with our thousands of individual members, represent national and local bodies encompassing state, local government, professional, academic, museum and voluntary sectors.

#### **The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (ClfA)**

ClfA is the leading professional body representing archaeologists working in the UK and overseas. ClfA promotes high professional standards and strong ethics in archaeological practice, to maximise the benefits that archaeologists bring to society, and provides a self-regulatory quality assurance framework for the sector and those it serves.

ClfA has over 3,200 members and nearly 80 registered practices across the United Kingdom. Its members work in all branches of the discipline: heritage management, planning advice, excavation, finds and environmental study, buildings recording, underwater and aerial archaeology, museums, conservation, survey, research and development, teaching and liaison with the community, industry and the commercial and financial sectors.