



**Local Heritage
Engagement
Network**

Toolkit

No. 8

**The POWER of
Archaeology:
Meeting your
MP and
inviting them
to your events
(England)**

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This document will:

- **Describe the CBA's Power of Archaeology campaign**
- **Give you advice on how to engage with MPs about what you do and invite them to your events**
- **Describe how you can ensure impact from your event, whether or not your MP can attend**
- **Tell you why the CBA is asking for you to keep us informed and how to do so**



The POWER of Archaeology

The Power of Archaeology campaign, facilitated by the Council for British Archaeology, aims to engage more politicians with archaeology. The campaign describes the benefits of engaging with archaeology, reveals the range and extent of public interest and involvement in archaeology, and shows MPs that archaeology is all around us – not an exception – whether above ground or buried, well known, newly discovered through planning processes or research, or as yet unknown.

We want all interested people to contact their MPs – in writing or in person – to tell them why their local archaeology and heritage matters to them. We also want them to be invited to attend events as part of the Festival of Archaeology so that they can experience the archaeology for themselves and witness the local enthusiasm that exists for it!

Through this *positive campaign* we hope that MPs will become more receptive to archaeological arguments relating to these issues and that through visiting exciting local archaeological sites, and meeting passionate local groups and individuals, MPs will be moved to recall archaeology during relevant policy discussions in Parliament and mention it in debates and possibly be more amenable to standing up for the interests of those constituents who care about archaeology and heritage in their work.

What impact do MPs have on archaeology?

MPs have a considerable influence over issues affecting heritage and archaeology. They can table written or oral questions to Ministers, they can place motions, or even bring private members bills to be debated. An informed MP can contribute to debates on legislation and policy issues in the House, and can ensure that particular issues are heard.

Some specific issues include:

- **Planning policy** which affects protections for archaeological material discovered during or affected by development processes, as well as creating guidance for conservation and management of our built and natural heritage.
- **Setting budgets** for local government, national departments & agencies – such as Historic England, and national museums, which indirectly affects local heritage services as well as such programmes as the Portable Antiquities Scheme, managed by the British Museum, as well as setting directions for operation for these bodies and others, like the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- **Heritage legislation** is also controlled by parliament, with such topics as the Treasure Act, and ratification of international instruments (such as the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict – which is due to be signed in the current Parliament).
- **National Infrastructure** such as HS2 and highways (e.g. the planned A303 tunnel at Stonehenge), which impact directly on built heritage and as yet undiscovered archaeological remains in the ground.

MPs have a responsibility to listen to their constituents' concerns about how these issues local heritage and archaeology.

Meeting with your MP and exposing them to the activity and passion of people who work with or are interested in archaeology is a great way to ensure that they will be receptive to issues when they are debating relevant issues.

The CBA will continue to lobby politicians on these issues, but we need your help to ensure that this vital level of base understanding of the importance of archaeology exists and that politicians are receptive to the issues which it faces.



Campaign key messages

This campaign is about highlighting the positive messages of archaeology. The best way to do this is simply by showing your MP how passionate you are about the past, what you personally care about, and how much those attending your events enjoy themselves.

You may wish to highlight how many members your group has, or how many visitors you receive each year, how many school children you have held sessions for, or any other appropriate metric you may have. Broadly speaking your MP should come away with the impression that:

- Archaeology is all around us – from mountain top to sea bed!
There are 1.4 million records of archaeological sites or recorded finds in the UK, an average of more than 10 per square kilometre.
- Of course, some of these sites are of huge national or international importance, but others are locally significant, giving context to the development of our towns and countryside. Not all archaeology can be, or should be, preserved, but understanding it properly and knowing its value is important to any process of managing change.
- Millions of people care: There are an estimated 200,000 active volunteers in archaeology who give more than 20 million volunteer hours per year. If they were paid a living wage that amounts to almost £175m contribution to society.
- 74% of people believe the government have a moral obligation to protect heritage sites in the UK.
- Heritage has tangible benefits for society, culture, and the economy, whether as a draw for tourists, an educational resource, or a backdrop to our daily lives.
- People love the opportunity to get stuck in with a mattock and trowel! Getting outside, doing something enjoyable (whether rain or shine) is good for the physical and mental well-being of people. Enabling archaeology like this reduces the strain on the NHS!

- *It's an educational resource!* Both children and adults can learn about what's under their feet and all around us.
- *It promotes local pride and a sense of place!*
- *It allows us to confront pressing current questions*, for example on immigration or climate change, which have affected societies for millennia.

For more details on the benefits of archaeology see our [Facts and Stats toolkit](#).

Key current concerns

As well as communicating what a great asset archaeology is, there are a number of key concerns affecting archaeology at the present time which MPs could helpfully take note of, and commit to stand up for on behalf of their constituents.

If you share these concerns, you may wish to question your MP on their views relating to the following key issues:

Planning deregulation:

The Government's planning reform agenda is currently threatening to undermine protections for archaeology in the planning system. The reforms are putting a strong emphasis on planning being a factor which restricts growth through bureaucratic processes of applying for permission, and are looking 'streamline' these processes.

The way that the *Housing and Planning Act* and other changes to permitted development rules are doing this, is by increasing the range of developments which do not need to apply for permission. Since archaeological work is usually carried out as a condition of permission, permitted development tends to remove opportunities to effectively investigate what archaeology may be present on a site.

The most potentially damaging plans are those in the Housing and Planning Act which seek to enable upwards of 90% of 'suitable' brownfield sites to have 'automatic planning permission in principle' given to them. These proposals will limit the opportunity to investigate the archaeological potential of sites before permission is granted, and therefore limit the amount of archaeological mitigation or excavation that can take place. It will also place the burden of paying for an archaeological assessment on local authorities, whereas it currently resides with the developer.

Furthermore, many of these changes are removing the opportunities for public comment on the process of development, or severely limiting it.

Essentially these reforms undermine the commitment to 'sustainable' development as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework and erode the purpose of the planning system.

Cuts to local authority budgets & effects on local services:

Government cuts to local authorities are having a marked negative impact on the quality of the services provided by local authorities. While the precise places in which the cuts fall is a local issue, the scale of the cuts means that heritage and archaeology services, along with museums, are often being targeted.

These services have no statutory protections, despite the fact that without them, there can be no protection for the 90+% of archaeological sites which are not nationally designated.

In various parts of the country services are beginning to collapse, or are being forced to close – while this is a breach of government policy under the National Planning Policy Framework, as historic environment services are not a *statutory requirement* local authorities are not compelled to provide them. In other places, comprehensive services are being replaced with consultancy arrangements which provide less protection, whereby local planning authorities decide when to seek archaeological advice on planning applications. The problem with this is that without a specialist understanding of archaeology and rigorous screening, planners are not be suitably equipped to know when a site has archaeological potential and cannot know when to consult.

Cuts to national institutions:

Government cuts are also affecting Historic England – the Government's lead advisor on the historic environment, and other institutions such as the British Museum, which manages the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS). PAS in particular is at particular risk if cut further in future years, as the national network of Finds Liaison Officers – who work with the public to maintain treasure laws and have been instrumental in the identification and liaison over key finds such as the Staffordshire Hoard and Silverdale Hoard – may be in danger of collapsing.

National infrastructure:

Government are responsible for directing national infrastructure spending. Many such projects have huge implications for archaeology. While the investigation of archaeology which gets undertaken as part of a major project such as Crossrail or HS2 can yield exciting results.

It is important that MPs understand these impacts in order to ensure appropriate protections – whether that is in appreciating the impact of a rail route on historic landscapes and setting, or avoiding places of high archaeological or historic importance, or the limiting of damage to archaeological landscapes and setting of ancient monuments.

The most prominent current case of this is the proposal to tunnel the A303 at Stonehenge to improve the preservation of the landscape. A strong understanding of archaeological issues is required to assess whether current proposals ensure the appropriate levels of protection for both the monument and the below ground archaeology.

Tangible asks:

When writing to you meeting with your MP, it is useful to have one or two tangible asks.

You may wish to consider asking:

- *Will they join the All-Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group (APPAG)?* All Party Groups are groups within parliament which meet to discuss specific issues on a whole range of issues from air ambulances to zoos. The Archaeology group meets bi-monthly to discuss major issues affecting archaeology, from high profile discoveries and threats to sites to policy issues. Increasing the number of MPs that attend would be highly beneficial for the profile of archaeology in Parliament.
- *Ask them to tell you, in their words, why they think archaeology matters?* Getting your MP to put in writing a value or commitment to archaeology and heritage, and gives you (and the CBA) a useful quote to use in the future!
- *Ask whether they will become an honorary member of your group or whether they would like to be kept up to date with new discoveries in the area* Any kind of lasting personal connection is valuable, asking directly makes it easy to open the door to this. You will know the best way to secure this for your particular group.



Engaging with your MP & inviting them to your events

Whether you are an event organiser or an interested individual this section will help you by providing advice on:

- **How to contact your MP**
- **What to say to them**
- **How to follow-up**

This process ought not to be challenging or difficult – it is the basis of a fruitful democratic exchange between you and your representative, and your MP should be pleased to offer their time. Be yourself, tell them why you care about archaeology and the benefits it brings, and let them know you want them to represent that interest in parliament!

Inviting your MP to your event

- Making the initial contact

You can find general advice on writing to your MP in our other toolkit on writing to your local representative [here](#). The following tips may help you in making your approach to invite your MP to your event.

You can make initial contact with your MP's office by phone or email. Whichever way you chose, your initial approach will likely be dealt with by an assistant: *Your MP's assistant is a great person to know: Make the effort to learn their name and be friendly and engaging! They manage the diary so making a good impression can be important.*

If you don't already know the name of your local MP or the local MP for your event, you can quickly and easily find them by entering your postcode, or that of the event, onto the Parliament website here:

<http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/>

What to say:

- Introduce yourself, your group and what you do in a few words.
- Explain that you are running an event: Describe what you'll be doing – will you be doing activities with children, adults or special groups? Will you be excavating and will people be getting hands on? Tell them what is exciting about what you're doing!
- Say that you would love your MP to see some of what is going on in terms of archaeology in their constituency!
- Give them the date, time, and location details.
- *Book them well in advance! An MP's diary tends to fill up quickly.*

PLEASE NOTE: Many MPs will not read letters or headed emails which are sent from addresses outside of their constituency. If you are sending a letter on behalf of a local group or regarding an event in one constituency, but you live in another, consider whether there is a local address which you can use.

It is important to stress that an MP will likely decline to attend an event outside their own constituency, even if it is being held by a group with a wider geographical focus.

- Preparation

MPs are used to meeting and greeting people. They are usually very easy to talk to, so you should not need to be nervous. They will likely want to speak to various people in the day, including visitors, participants, and volunteers. You may want to plan what you want to show them, but needn't be overly concerned with a precise itinerary. You may want to address questions such as; will someone be available to describe your group, your site, or your activity? Will you want someone to show them round or will they join a larger group? Will you ask them to take part?

- Make sure you have someone on hand who is ready to take some photos!
- Do you want to give them something to take away with them? For example, a short piece of information on your group or on wider archaeological issues, or a personalised letter/briefing. Get it touch with us if you would like advice on this or see our [briefing notes](#).

- **What to say when they are there**

- Say why it matters to you! Whether it is the number of children you reach, the knowledge you uncover, or simply the social benefits to participants or the community.
- Link your event to a wider love for archaeology – Who have you inspired? What has the local newspaper said? Why does it matter more widely?
- Does your activity depend upon particular support? – Do you speak with your local County Archaeologist? Finds Liaison Officer? Outreach Officer? Are you supported, funded? Do you have links to other local or national organisations?
- If you have issues, feel free to raise them: Local cuts to services, museum closures, infrastructure issues, fears relating to planning policy relaxations. However, don't worry if you don't. If all they take from the day is that Archaeology Matters, that's great.
- General advice: Be polite, clear and to the point!
- Get some good photos! Pose them with visitors, kids, or artefacts!

- **Messages for your MP to take away**

- Archaeology Matters to people and places
- Can *they* do more in Parliament to highlight this interest or learn about threats to it?
- Would they consider joining the All-Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group?

- **Following up**

It is vital that you write to your MP after the meeting to say 'thank you'. It is the positive relationships which arise after a meeting that are often the most important outcomes of meeting your MP.

Underline your messages: Recap what you said to them (or what you wanted to say and forgot) and why. You can also remind them of anything they said they would do!

Ask for action: If you have not already on the day, ask them in your follow-up whether they would be willing to undertake any particular actions. See our '[Key Messages](#)' section for tips on what actions to ask for.

Even if they have turned down your invite, write to them afterwards to say you were sorry that they could not come and that the event was success! There's always next year – and you've still managed to make a connection and can include any points you would have wished to make on day.

Tell the media! Did you get lots of nice photos? Use it to help get media coverage in local newspapers and on local radio. [See our toolkit document on getting in the media](#) for advice on creating press releases and other useful tips!

Tell us! We want to keep track of where groups have been in touch with MPs and how it went. You can fill in the form linked at the end of this document or just email us at info@archaeologyuk.org.

The Festival of Archaeology

One of the main focuses of the Power of Archaeology campaign is Festival of Archaeology events. Every year the Festival of Archaeology attracts thousands of people to events all across the country. It is the premier showcase of local, voluntary enthusiasm for archaeology in communities and through local and national institutions. These events are diverse in nature, but all are enjoyable, educational, and engaging.

- Mention the Festival, its size and reach: There are over 500 events held over a two weekend period in summer each year with an attendance of many thousands of people!
- Mention the CBA: You may have opportunity to highlight the work that the CBA does (as the organising body of the Festival, a member body for voluntary and amateur archaeologists, and one which represents the public interest in archaeology in Parliament).

It is important to note that inviting your MP to your event does not have to be about lobbying, it can just be about raising profile, getting some good PR, or giving your representative a bit of a 'jolly'!

If you do not think you would be able to invite your MP to attend, or give them the attention that they need, we may be able to arrange for someone to invite and/or meet and greet on your behalf. If this would be helpful, please get in touch with us at info@archaeologyuk.org.

If you are not involved in a Festival event, you can find out what is happening near you [here](#):

<http://www.archaeologyfestival.org.uk/whatson>

Even if you are not an event organiser, you may wish to write to your constituency MP to tell them about the Festival and to ask if they will be going to any events!



Feedback

We would like groups and event organisers to keep us informed where they have contact with their MP – whether you are writing as an individual, a group, or for a particular event – whether part of the Festival of Archaeology or any other event. We would like to keep a record of where MPs have been contacted to monitor the reach of the campaign and the responses received.

We also always appreciate being sent copies of letters that members of the public have sent to their representatives and responses they have received. Please feel free to do so if you wish.

With your help we hope to engage every single MP with the archaeology in their area and give us a strong base to conduct future campaigning!