

Strategic overview from the Chair of Trustees, Mr Ken Smith

In line with our revised approach to the Financial Statement, there is a lot of information about the last year's work of the CBA in the more-detailed Trustees Report section of the that Statement and you will be hearing more from our Executive Director in his report, in due course. This is, necessarily therefore, a more-selective overview.

My focus in both November 2019 and February 2021 was on political uncertainty, impacts on heritage and archaeology, and impacts on the CBA. They continue to remain relevant, some perhaps more than others.

Political uncertainty

In my previous reports, I referenced the archaeological works on the A14 near Cambridge where 250 archaeologists were working, and in one location 75% were originally from outside the UK, from some 30 different countries. While archaeology is now included on the Occupation Shortage List, there remains the need for us to be able to grow our own workforce to meet the needs of 21st century developer-funded archaeological investigations. The continuing shortage of home-grown trained personnel, and university departments still facing a direct reduction in government support even though archaeology has been moved by government into the list of STEM subjects (with better support than would otherwise have been provided) we must continue to make the case that the UK needs both to support its university sector to train future generations of field archaeologists and be able to attract the appropriate talent for the tasks ahead. The growing list of universities that are closing their archaeology departments, despite acknowledged national and international reputations, underlines the need for and the importance of this task. It remains a truism that it takes time to develop and maintain interest, understanding, knowledge and expertise in archaeology, to get people through the relevant training courses, and for them to gain the appropriate experiences.

As I noted last year, Brexit – and issues generated by the Covid pandemic – continue to create tensions that have implications for the future of the United Kingdom. These continue to be manifested in increased calls for Scottish independence, similar rumblings in Wales and magnified issues over the future position of Northern Ireland with regard to the UK and to the Republic. As ever, CBA has been working supportively with our partners Archaeology Scotland, CBA Wales and the Northern Ireland Archaeology Forum within the devolved structures in Scotland, Wales and NI, as well as with our partners in England.

When last we met, I noted the withdrawal of the then new government's proposals for significant reform of the planning process. While the intention has not gone away, there have been no fresh over-arching proposals brought forward to date but incremental change such as the changes in permitted development rights. One of the most recent has been the making permanent of the right to erect - without planning permission - so-called 'moveable structures' within the curtilage of pubs, cafes, restaurants or historic visitor attractions, with an inevitable impact on the character of our historic settlements, structures and landscapes and on peoples' use and enjoyment of them.

In previous years, under the heading of **Impacts on heritage and archaeology**, I have touched on proposed planning reform, HS2, Stonehenge, the Shortage Occupation List and on the plight of universities. I have mentioned some of these already – planning, university funding and the shortages of skilled labour across a wide range of subjects within the profession; meanwhile, neither HS2 nor Stonehenge has gone away as I am sure you are well aware.

But the big impact this last year, as in the previous year, remains the Covid pandemic and its associated constraints and **Impacts on the CBA** which in many ways is hard to separate from impacts on heritage and archaeology and, particularly, from impacts on the many communities of place and interest that the CBA looks to serve.

While I have already noted that there is a wealth of information in the Trustees report section of the accounts, some salient points warrant highlighting.

In common with many organisations, CBA has been in and out of lockdown over the last year, with all the issues that accompany such impositions. Staff have worked very hard in often difficult conditions – because of home-working and associated issues such as shielding, home tutoring, inadequate IT provision or connectivity, or any combination of all those things and more. Nevertheless, staff have continued to create outputs from the CBA, for the benefit of our heritage and for our communities of place and interest.

As a result, in even these difficult times, as we have come to rely on and provide resources through digital media, we have seen an increase in both our overall membership and our numbers of subscribers, the product, we believe, of both people on furlough and the attractiveness of the provision we have been able to make. To both sets of supporters, we offer a huge thank you for the underpinning financial, moral and psychological support that you provide, to enable us to provide for you.

As I noted last year, almost counter-intuitively, the CBA has been able to improve its financial position and its outputs in support of individuals and communities as a result of being able to avail itself of provision made by others. These sources have included the Welsh Assembly, the NLHF and Historic England through, for example, the Cultural Recovery Fund. This support has enabled us to push ahead with sourcing a new CRM (the better to manage our members' and subscribers' data) and to up-date the website significantly; both of these have now gone live. While the pace of change has been quicker than was anticipated pre-pandemic, some might still view it as slower than is needed. But it must be acknowledged that these two, albeit significant, initiatives but are part of the larger Organisational Review that the CBA is implementing as part of its Strategy for Change; and all within the constraints and other issues that distance-working, forced by the home-working response to the pandemic, has brought with it. As part of this overall process, we have revised our Diversity and Inclusion policies; it is something we would have done anyway, as part of our overall governance review, but the national debate brought about by the Black Lives Matter movement provided a heightened focus, importance and, if one were needed, *raison d'être* for that work. It must be acknowledged also that all this work has been achieved while CBA has also been fulfilling its commitments (as part of the hard-won financial support it has received) to develop and implement

enabling projects for our members including our YAC groups, and for the wider communities of place and interest, while also working towards recasting our relationship with, and in partnership with, our regional groups.

I have a huge thank you to deliver to our staff – and I hope you will join me in that as well - who have achieved so much in such continuing difficult circumstances. It would be invidious to single out individuals because this has been the product of teamwork, of people knowing and delivering against their responsibilities; as I have noted on other occasions, the machine doesn't function without every part functioning efficiently and appropriately.

Having said that it would be invidious to single out individuals, I have to offer words of thanks to Helen Wilkinson, our Director of Business Transformation, who has completed her contract with us and, after 2 years, has moved on to pastures new. Helen has performed heroically, in difficult circumstances, in a job whose focus changed soon after her arrival, principally because of the pandemic and the constraints and opportunities that resulted. She has applied her skills, experience and expertise to the huge benefit of the CBA and played a key role in enabling her colleagues to function as well as they have. We are indebted – thank you Helen.

As one door shuts, another opens. We welcome Andy Haynes to the role of Head of Operations and look forward to a positive and equally effective working relationship. So no pressure, Andy!

I would like to thank my fellow trustees for their support, advice and wise counsel over the last year. I would particularly like to thank the retiring Trustees – Marjoleine Butler, Sue Dormer, Lis Dyson, and Tim Hedley-Jones – for their input and support over the years of their tenure, without which we wouldn't be where we are now – and I mean that in a positive way!

I would like also to welcome Fiona Gale back for a second term and also to welcome our new trustees – Kirsty McCarrison, Sefryn Penrose, Philip Pollard and John Schofield – to the CBA's Board of Trustees.

It would be remiss of me, and discourteous, not to acknowledge that, true to our commitment at our AGM last year, we have a new President. I would like to take this opportunity formally, as Chair of Trustees, to welcome Raksha Dave to that position. We all look forward to working with her to further the aims and objectives of the CBA during her period of tenure. Raksha attended our Trustees meeting in York in October 2020 – the first face-to-face trustee meeting since before March 2019 – and is already engaging further with the work of the CBA.

Lastly, but by no means least, I would like to thank you, our members, for your continued support in what, for many, are increasingly difficult circumstances. As I have said before, you are, and you represent, our communities of place and interest and are, in many ways, the guardians of those places, in many and disparate ways. I hope that as CBA develops its infrastructure and its offers over time, you will see increasing benefits flow to you, to your interests and to your communities.

I thank you for your attendance today and look forward to seeing - literally, I hope – as many of you as possible in 12 months' time.

29 January 2022