

Executive Summary

In late 2020, the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) successfully applied for funding from the Welsh Cultural Recovery Fund, to conduct research into the current status of the Young Archaeologists' Club (YAC) in Wales, and to develop strategy for both supporting current groups and developing new ones. The impact of the Covid-19 epidemic, as well as pre-existing issues and challenges, were to be explored to understand how the CBA could prioritise its resources.

In January 2021, the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust began research on behalf of the CBA to explore these themes and draft strategy and guidance in response to findings.

The first phase of this research was to consult with the 7 existing YAC groups and discover how they had been impacted by Covid-19, what issues and concerns they had going forward, and to get a snapshot of their current membership, leadership, and volunteer cohort. This was initially done through a SurveyMonkey survey, and expanded to include telephone and Zoom consultations, when YAC Leaders reached out to say they felt they had more detail to offer and wished to express their concerns in more detail.

This initial phase found concerning news for the YAC in Wales:

- One group had gone entirely dormant with no confirmed reopening
- No branches ran in-person sessions in 2020 and most had no plans to do so in 2021
- There were universal concerns over volunteer capacity and recruitment
- Venues and hosting organisations were a significant challenge, with the majority of groups either uncertain if they could return to their previous locations or facing loss due to closures and relocations.

In parallel to this initial phase, other Welsh organisations working with young people in a similar model to the YAC were consulted as to their Covid-19 response and their current status and concerns for the future, to see if there was any best practice that could be mirrored by the CBA.

Following this initial phase, CPAT made four core recommendations to the CBA:

- To create an online, Wales-wide YAC group
- To create the post of a dedicated Wales YAC Liaison Officer
- To develop a Leader-only online portal for support, resources, and a forum
- To develop a network of supporters and contacts to enable Leaders to have a pool of experts to draw upon when designing and delivering sessions

The secondary phase then consulted on these ideas with current YAC Leaders in Wales via Zoom discussions and email conversations. There was significant and strong support for all of these options, with the recognition that each would have a financial and operational implication on the CBA.

Following this consultation, a pilot session of the online Wales-wide YAC was held, inviting members and Leaders of existing groups. This successful trial led to the development of a further 6 months of online Wales-wide YAC sessions run by CPAT, with the expectation that it will subsequently be handed over to new YAC Leaders and run as a permanent YAC group.

Overall, the research found that the YAC in Wales is full of passionate, dedicated Leaders and enthusiastic members, but struggles with the inherent issues around volunteer recruitment, the rurality and population sparseness of much of Wales, the capacity of current Leaders, and the impact of Covid-19 on host organisations and volunteer numbers. The recommendations of this research aim to deliver a strategy to tackle these issues and make the YAC in Wales a thriving and resilient organisation.