



Festival of Archaeology Impact Study 2020-23

Produced for:

Council for
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By:

Resources
FOR CHANGE







EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Executive Summary















1.1 Findings

















		2020	2021	2022	2023	2020-2023 Total
Engagement 	Engagements ¹	585,631	51,547	294,039	99,926	1,031,143
	Reach ²	24,058,116	70,803,603	65,875,676 (July only) 85,400,868 (March – July)	61,294,463 (Festival only) 90,024,366 (June – August)	270,286,953 (Including build up to Festival)
Events 	Live	141	505 (activities) 1,229 (sessions)	439 (activities) 794 (sessions)	457 (activities) 611(sessions)	1,542
	Non-Live/ Resources	174	213	202	7³	596
	Total	315	709	641	464	2,138
	Organisers	180	219	233	191	823





¹ Those interacting directly with a Festival activity as a signed up participant or present observer

² Those seeing some form of Festival presence online but not interacting directly

³ Resources were not promoted during the 2023 Festival due to issues with the website

<p>Who takes part?</p> 	<p>Organisers</p>	 <p>Each year, around half are committed Festival supporters from heritage sphere with a third representing a more diverse range of first timers which keep the offer fresh and relevant</p>	 <p>Each year, the Festival is refreshed by a churn of around a third, with a core bedrock of organisers making up around half having committed for multiple years.</p>	 <p>East Midlands, South East, South West and around London represent delivery 'hot spots'</p> <p>Northern Ireland, Scotland, South Midlands tend to be 'cold spots'</p>	 <p>Volunteer numbers and contribution have increased annually since 2020, highlighting both post-pandemic revival in volunteering and the critical role played by voluntary effort in enabling the Festival</p>	 <p>Activities have largely reverted to pre-pandemic modes of delivery with guided walks, family friendly and hands on events the most common activities replacing digital alternatives</p>
	<p>Participants</p>	<p>Considerable progress in realising more equitable female representation.</p> <p>Those reporting a disability participating at levels higher than national profile</p>	<p>Predominantly from England and Wales, with organiser driven hot and cold spots</p>	<p>Considerable progress in ensuring youth representation in the Festival</p>	<p>Considerable progress in ethnic participation which better reflects the national picture</p>	<p>Tend to have higher education qualifications though some representation from those with vocational qualifications</p>
	       					

<p>What do they think?</p> 	Organisers	<p>3 out of 4 happy with public response each year, citing good attendance and audience satisfaction.</p> 	<p>9 out of 10 happy with CBA materials and support</p> 	<p>Almost a third experienced issues, though these tended to be related to external factors.</p> 	<p>Each year, virtually all organisers say they would deliver a Festival activity again</p> 		
	Participants	<p>High levels of enjoyment each year – at least 8 in 10 people each year</p> 	<p>High levels of learning each year – at least 8 in 10 people each year</p> 	<p>Skills development to a lesser extent than enjoyment and learning, consistent across all Festivals</p> 	<p>Access issues tended to be related to booking of events, with incidents of issues catering for disabilities falling this year</p> 	<p>At least 19 out of 20 people would attend again. Almost half attend two or more events each year.</p> 	
		<p>At least 8 in 10 people feel welcomed and included each year</p> 	<p>At least 8 in 10 people feel respected by staff and volunteers each year</p> 	<p>Only around 1 in 10 are CBA members. Far more likely to be member of national or local group or society</p> 	<p>Year on year improvements in under 25s feeling arch' is inspirational and exciting</p> 	<p>Year on year improvements on under 25s feeling arch' reflects people like them</p> 	<p>7 in 10 young people feel part of development, a slight annual trend of improvement since 2020</p> 

<p>Response to theme?</p> 	<p>Organisers</p>	<p>A significant minority, if not majority, respond positively to the annual theme each year</p> 	<p>Every year, most organisers feel the theme helps their event planning.</p> 
	<p>Participants</p>	<p>A trend towards increased participant awareness of the theme each year, evidencing improvements in marketing and comms in that time.</p> 	

1.2 Conclusions

The Impact Study offers the following conclusions in relation to annual Festival delivery since 2020:

1. **National relevance:** The Festival has directly engaged with over 1 million people over the 4 years (2020-2023) and reached an additional 270 million more through social media. This affords the Festival a national relevance in the heritage engagement landscape within the UK and will be of interest to heritage organisations and funders.
2. **Resilience of the model:** The considerable success around engagement and reach was achieved against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic – the biggest upheaval in society in living memory, demonstrating the adaptability and resilience of the Festival delivery model.
3. **Diverse activities targeted where potential for lasting impact exists:** The diverse range of activities offered with an ample range of family friendly and youth engagement events during formative stages of life is creating opportunities for personal, albeit lasting impact.
4. **Geographic variation in offer a by-product of the bottom up Festival model:** The voluntary participation of organisers is reliant on their capacity and capability which are beyond the CBA's

control and therefore geographic variation in Festival coverage is to be expected.

5. **Inclusivity and relevance:** The Festival has made considerable progress over 4 years in ensuring that the participant profile in relation to gender and ethnicity better reflects the national picture, with evidence that it is particularly inclusive for those reporting some form of disability or of a younger age.
6. **Considerable level of organiser support:** The Festival has been enabled by 823 organisers who have delivered 1,542 activities and 596 online resources since 2020 – a considerable achievement that demonstrates the buy-in that exists from organisers.
7. **Bedrock of committed organisers:** The Festival is enabled by a committed core group of organisers in the traditional heritage sphere, representing at least half of organisers each year, with many having been enablers for more than 5 years. These organisers are the bedrock of the Festival and should be celebrated as such.
8. **Healthy annual turnover of organisers:** The Festival is refreshed by organiser turnover of around a third of the organisers each year, which come from a diverse range of organisations, groups, projects and individuals. These organisers are vital fresh blood for the Festival, keeping it relevant.

9. **Local organisers = local impact:** Locally based organisers are often prisms for local impact, enabling more authentic and relevant engagement that helps ensure that the Festival as a whole can reach a more diverse range of people.
10. **Organisers respond well to the themes:** The use of an annual theme to support advocacy goals is consistently effective in marshalling organisers, with a majority embracing it each year as a helpful framework rather than an imposition.
11. **Increasing public awareness of theme over time:** There has been a trend towards greater participant awareness of the annual theme over 4 years, evidencing improvements in marketing and comms in that time and representing a solid foundation to deepen engagement in line with advocacy goals.
12. **Link between Festival and CBA less obvious and an area for future improvement:** Whilst the Festival raises awareness of archaeology broadly, it is less clear that the national profile of the CBA is being raised annually, though the high proportion of non-members participating represent a significant opportunity to achieve this.
13. **CBA staff close resource gap through goodwill and risk burnout:** Staff resource needed to service the Festival has exceeded the resources allocated every year since 2020 with evidence of delivery intensity increasing annually too. The commitment of key CBA staff to the success of the Festival is what closes the

resource gap, with greater delivery intensity representing an unsustainable burnout risk without increased resource or least clearer definition of what the CBA contribution to the Festival is. This is not necessarily about who pays for this time, but rather the impact this has on staff and other workstreams.

14. **Enjoyment and learning main participant outcomes, not skill development:** Participants typically report enjoyment as the main positive outcome, followed by learning. Skills are developed to a much smaller extent relative to enjoyment and learning – a pattern consistent across all four Festivals in this study.
15. **A warm welcome:** The overwhelming majority of participants feel that Festival activities make them feel welcomed and included – this has been consistent since data was first collected in 2021.
16. **Consistent focus on young people paying off:** The consistent effort engaging young people through the Festival is seeing results with annual improvements in perceptions and agency evident in the data, with 2023 the most successful so far.
17. **Festival appeals to advocates and first timers alike:** Participants include a core group of committed Festival supporters representing around two fifths who are likely to be archaeology advocates, with the majority of over half of the total attending just one event each year. Interviews point towards the interactions between advocate and first timers at the Festival as a source of vibrancy.

18. **Festival a gateway to archaeology for some with considerable personal impact:** The evaluation process has unearthed powerful testimony showing where deep and personal impact is being made, highlighting how the Festival can help ‘unlock’ a latent interest in archaeology. It is an accessible gateway.
19. **Organisers value CBA support highly:** Those organisers looking to the CBA for support and guidance are very happy with the CBA’s response, with the responsiveness of the staff team often singled out as an appreciated aspect of that support.
20. **Organiser problems tend to be outside of CBA control:** When organisers experience issues or lower levels of satisfaction, these tend to relate to external factors beyond the CBA’s control such as poor weather or no shows.
21. **National marketing footprint valued by organisers:** Site-based organisers value the national Festival marketing and promotion which supports local engagement efforts.
22. **Volunteer input increasingly crucial:** Organisers have been leveraging increasing numbers and hours of volunteer effort annually since 2020, highlighting both an ongoing post pandemic revival in volunteering and the critical role that volunteering plays in making the Festival a success each year.
23. **There are existential risks to the CBA membership model:** The health and vitality of the Festival relies heavily on the energy and knowledge of the member organisations, some of whom are

vibrant and outward looking, others of which are more inward looking. Both rely on the ‘traditional’ membership model and governance structures of voluntary organisations, but in general the membership is ageing and younger people have less time, and perhaps less desire, to engage with their interests in this way. In common with other voluntary groups and charities, the challenge the CBA faces is to find a way of extending its reach whilst also sustaining the depth and quality of the work which people contribute to the archaeology sector. The risk is that, at least in some areas, local organisations will shrink and miss opportunities to involve a wider range of people from different backgrounds who can bring fresh ideas and energy.

24. **CBA staff have a good awareness of what requires improvement:** The website promised much as a tool to help manage relationships with the organisers but it has fallen short of expectations. Similarly, the marketing approach and capacity has not yet delivered the range and depth of hoped for engagement. Both problems relate largely to external partners.

1.3 Recommendations

The Impact Study offers the following recommendations based on the annual Festival delivery experience since 2020:

1. **Geographic targeting through CBA:** CBA may wish to target flagship CBA-led events such as the launch and/or close in areas less represented in previous Festivals to help shine a spotlight on archaeology there.

2. **Target audiences:** The CBA should continue to develop targeted activities for typically underrepresented groups in its own delivery, and advocate for the same through Festival organisers.
3. **Tracking awareness of CBA at the Festival:** The CBA should continue tracking awareness of the CBA ('were you aware of the CBA's role in making the Festival happen?') which was started in 2023 to see impact of evolving marketing and comms over time. This will help establish the extent to which the Festival is raising the profile of the CBA annually.
4. **Clear case for increased resource:** If possible, negotiate an increased staff resource baseline with funders. In parallel, develop and implement a fundraising strategy to resource the difference between the existing funders contribution and what is needed.
5. **Geographic targeting through organiser support:** The CBA should continue to focus support for organisers in geographic 'cold spots' to help build future capacity and confidence to realise more equitable geographic spread in future.
6. **Move to resolve the underperformance of the website and marketing:** Some change may be possible in 2024, but given the timescales a move to a stronger and more effective set of communications and marketing tools should be planned for implementation in 2025.
7. **'Restless Development':** The CBA should engage its members in a conversation about future structures and models, building on the strengths of the approach which the Festival relies upon heavily, but keeping an eye on current trends for how people engage with their heritage and content in general. We want all parts of the country to be archaeology 'hot spots', not just those lucky enough to have excellent local organisations.