

Archaeology:

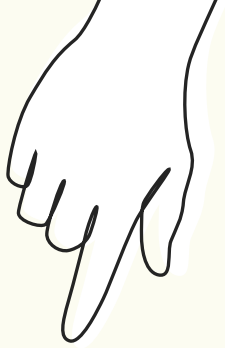
Enhancing knowledge and understanding
Shaping places and communities





Image © Wessex Archaeology

Why we need archaeology



Archaeology is a unique place-based discipline dedicated to helping people understand and shape the places and communities in which they live, work and play. Archaeological processes are creative, scientifically rigorous, and economically important for all corners of the UK.

Our landscapes, whether urban or rural, coastal, marine or upland, have all been shaped by past human activity over thousands of years. Archaeology gives us the tools and processes to understand them, learn from them and to enjoy and reimagine them.

Archaeology is an activity enjoyed by individuals, families and communities, and a subject that inspires millions via TV documentaries, film, and in the news. Its benefits are many and it is important that we ensure its future so that it can continue to thrive.

Objects recovered through archaeological endeavours usually become part of museum and archive collections, forming key components for further study and analysis. Museums and galleries are vibrant threads in the fabric of society, strengthening our culture, encouraging a thriving tourist industry, and enriching lives by contributing to our collective wellbeing, education, and sense of identity.

Archaeology is a statutory consideration and is embedded in policy frameworks such as planning, agriculture, forestry, and marine management.

Archaeology is an active social tool that helps us to understand our world and inspires connection between people, places and the past.

It helps shape our sense of identity and belonging, and how we might reimagine our futures. It does this in creative ways, integrating methods drawn from diverse disciplines, informing choices about change and driving growth, while delivering wellbeing outcomes.



Archaeology unleashes creativity.

It encourages us to look closely at the world, and to think differently and creatively about contemporary issues. It spans across science and the humanities, with a dynamic and responsive relationship with the creative sector.

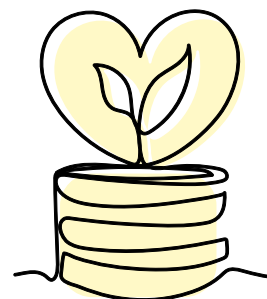
Archaeology informs change.

Our planning system and land management processes enable us to understand how thousands of years of change have shaped our present-day landscapes. Supplemented by community and academic investigations, the application of archaeological research informs and inspires our connection to places, our sense of identity and belonging, and helps us to make decisions about how we might manage change to create sustainable futures.



Archaeology drives innovation.

Advances in research and practice have led to a revolution in our understanding of the past. Archaeology unlocks this research, and its uniquely cross-disciplinary nature reveals the complexity of human history using a combination of rigorous scientific analysis with people-focused enquiry.

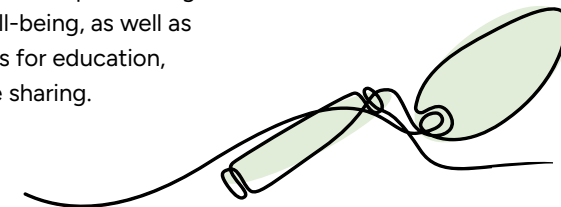


Archaeology sustains growth.

Ideally placed to respond to governments' plans for growth, it simultaneously creates knowledge and stories that illuminate the past while also creating myriad opportunities for employment, innovation, and participation. This in turn requires a skilled workforce, investment in research and development, and a commitment to collaborative working across the sector.

Archaeology improves wellbeing.

It brings people together in a range of environments, encouraging community making and social connectivity. Programmes of social prescribing and archaeology support well-being, as well as offering further opportunities for education, employment, and knowledge sharing.





Archaeology unleashes creativity



Archaeology encourages us to think about the possibilities of our understanding of past environments, cultures and societies, which can help us to realise a diverse, sustainable and equitable present and future.

Through storytelling, design, film, art making and digital media, archaeology has the capacity to inspire. It can activate curiosity and the exploration of memory and oral histories, with the historic environment providing the spark. From archaeological illustrations to heritage monument-themed bouncy castles, archaeology is cross-curricula and interdisciplinary.

Did you know...?

Archaeologists don't just excavate!

Whilst developer-led archaeology is the biggest employer of archaeologists in the UK, archaeologists and their work are diverse, taking place in a broad range of settings and environments.

Some archaeologists might recover artefacts from the seabed, whilst others might be developing factually accurate video games.

What unites them all is their interest in the material past, how that interacts with the present and future and their keenness to share this information with everyone, telling engaging stories about the past.

*Ring of Brodgar, Orkney.
© Tom O'Brien for Dig It!*

Archaeology informs change



We have robust policy frameworks in all four home nations of the UK and, as an integral part of these, archaeology shapes places for the benefit of people and our planet.

The knowledge gain provided by archaeology informs construction, development and planning, responses to climate change and loss, landscape management, and nature recovery. It provides opportunities to use our heritage as a positive resource in the design of new places and to support heritage-led regeneration.

Our physical historic environment is the product of the depth and richness of our **shared human past**, which contributes to shaping our diverse places, providing social and cultural value to all communities.

Did you know...?

Developments are not 'delayed by archaeology'!

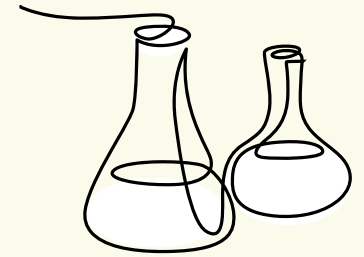
Quite the opposite in fact. Timely archaeological advice as part of construction is designed to minimise disruption while ensuring positive outcomes and safeguarding heritage. Where archaeological implications arise (in less than 5% of cases), they are resolved through collaboration at the design stage. Fewer than 0.01% of applications are refused due to archaeological concerns. In addition, the UK has the oldest housing stock in Europe, which often contributes to the sense of place and cherished landscapes. 93% of Listed Building consent decisions are granted, with any required archaeological research into the buildings enabling them to continue being useful and enjoyed as part of our daily lives.

*HS2 Terminal,
Birmingham.*





Archaeology drives innovation



Archaeology is a key to unlocking knowledge, informing subjects such as genetics, biomedicine, habitat change, species extinction and restoration, urbanisation, migration, and population studies.

Archaeology provides raw data, analysis and resources for these critical topics and is a gateway to scientific progress. It supports technological industries such as gaming, design, and digital media, providing the human link to these endeavours.

As a way to access the past with integrity, archaeology is unique: stories are researched and interpreted by archaeologists, curators, conservators and custodians in museums, scientists in labs, academic researchers, and by community participants at grassroots level. Curation and conservation of collections in museums and archives ensures the information stored in these objects will be available for the future and a time when we can unlock information we don't yet have the key to, as new scientific analysis techniques are developed.

Did you know...?

The cross-disciplinary nature of archaeology offers incredible opportunities for research and formal and informal learning for all ages.

It offers a route into many professions beyond archaeology itself. Archaeologists contribute expertise on everything from Palaeolithic flint tools to 1940s concrete bunkers, and from the introduction of chickens to the UK to the impact of tobacco on the health of the population. Increasingly archaeology is itself being studied as a provider of wellbeing, and its methods are used by creatives when thinking how their own work is situated within the wider world.

A conservator works on a Roman eagle sculpture. © MOLA

Archaeology sustains growth



Archaeology employs thousands of people directly, making it a bigger UK industry than marine fishing.

It forms a crucial part of the heritage sector, contributing billions annually to the economy as part of tourism, construction and many allied areas. For every £1 spent by local authorities on archaeological advisers, £15 is returned to the wider economy. Archaeology provides content and new understandings for our local and national museums, adding value with every new discovery. Every new artefact curated by a museum grows and improves opportunities for the education of visitors of all ages, engagement with schools, and the wellbeing resource that museums provide. A skilled workforce makes up these professional sectors. Our UK university archaeology departments are world-leading. The lifelong learning opportunities provided by archaeology are well known, with heritage volunteering proven to be of great value for people seeking to make a long-term contribution to society. We need to ensure archaeology is available to study prior to university and through alternative learning routes such as colleges, and maintain our excellent vocational and technical qualifications.

Did you know...?

Archaeologists are rarely as 'surprised by discoveries' as you might think.

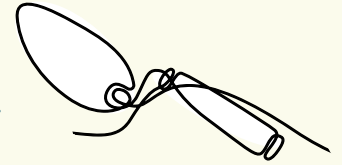
Instead, findings will be expected due to rigorous pre-development work before a spade breaks the ground, and archaeologists will be found scrutinising results to provide meaningful and accessible ways to increase understanding of the human past, in all its messy, often muddy, complexity.

Excavating a mosaic fragment, London. © MOLA





Archaeology improves wellbeing



Engaging with archaeology improves wellbeing and boosts social connectivity.

Doing archaeology gets people active, working together, strengthening community networks through shared social and cultural experiences. Activities like community excavations, museum object handling sessions, walks, mudlarking, and art making, combine the well-known health benefits of exercising and interacting with the natural world, with problem solving and creativity, all while connecting with the past. Recognised by the National Academy for Social Prescribing, archaeology wellbeing programmes can help reduce pressures on the NHS.

There are opportunities to engage with our past through open days on excavations, talks on discoveries and various outputs from research. Additionally, such experiences with archaeology can equip people with a range of soft and hard skills, encouraging routes into education and employment. Archaeology has been used to tackle issues of social injustice and inequality, for example around gender, race and ethnicity, disability and housing inequalities.

Did you know...?

There are numerous studies that support the wellbeing qualities of archaeology.

From engaging with community archaeology to museums and interacting with the historic environment all conclude that participants end the study with an increased level of wellbeing and happiness, in comparison to before their interactions with archaeology. Archaeology is fun and good for you!

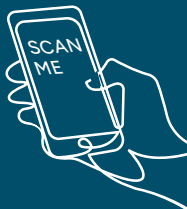
A Big Dig participant, Newbattle Abbey College. © Archaeology Scotland

The Archaeology Forum is a collaboration between independent bodies concerned with the archaeological investigation, management and interpretation of the historic environment.

The Forum provides an opportunity to discuss matters of common concern, with the intention of clarifying understanding, establishing shared positions and promoting clear and consistent messages from archaeological practitioners and other stakeholders.

Widening participation in, and enjoyment of, the historic environment is central to our common mission. We provide the secretariat to the All Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group in Westminster.

For more information, visit www.archaeologyuk.org/the-archaeology-forum



Archaeology Forum members include:

