



Association for  
Environmental  
Archaeology

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## **Review of the Department of Archaeology, University of Sheffield**

Dear Professor Lamberts

I am writing to you as the chair of the Association for Environmental Archaeology (AEA) to express the Association's unreserved and wholehearted support for investment in Sheffield's Department of Archaeology, building on its current international standing in environmental archaeology and heritage science, and ensuring it remains a world leader, central to maintaining the UK's soft power in heritage and culture (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/culture-white-paper>).

The Department of Archaeology at Sheffield has been pivotal to the development of environmental archaeology, a discipline that seeks to understand how people lived in the past and their interaction with the world around them, and in doing so contributes to a better relationship with our planet today and in the future. Environmental archaeology encompasses relatively new areas of study, such as the environmental humanities and environmental history, as well as more established areas, such as climate science, palaeoecology and human osteology. Sheffield's central role in environmental

archaeology was only recently demonstrated when the AEA held its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference at the university at the end of 2019, with papers covering a wide range of subjects, from atmospheric lead pollution to urban food supply and the sustainability of traditional land management. World-wide, we are facing dramatic climatic change, with considerable challenges ahead to meet net zero targets and achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>). Consolidation and investment in research that can address these challenges is paramount, and archaeology at Sheffield is a key player in this research.

Underpinning the department's research pedigree and prestige is an impressive heritage science infrastructure, including the biocultural collections it curates and the scientific equipment it manages and can access. Sheffield is already part of a developing dispersed heritage science infrastructure by virtue of the networks that currently exist and the assets it holds. It has the potential to play a substantive role in the development of the European Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science (E-RIHS) and RIHS-UK (<http://e-rihs.ac.uk/>). To walk away from these opportunities would be detrimental not only to the department but to the university as a whole.

At the same time there is a critical skills shortage within the archaeological sector. The department's track record for teaching and training archaeologists, in particular archaeological specialists is extremely highly respected, with online resources, short courses and post-graduate programmes serving to both build capacity for the future and sustain and up-skill the current workforce. Our twitter poll, conducted over the last few days, had over 200 responses. It showed that over 50% of our followers active in environmental archaeology either have a direct connection with the department or work with a Sheffield alumni. This record speaks for itself. Without Sheffield's provision of professional and knowledgeable practitioners, who are essential to the success of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), heritage will be put at risk, and opportunities to open to the world and build back better will be lost (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/build-back-better-our-plan-for-growth>).

The AEA urges you to adopt option A: to support and invest in the department, to ensure the future of archaeological science not only at Sheffield but in the UK and beyond.

Yours sincerely

Gill Campbell, Chair of the AEA, on behalf of the managing committee

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