Annex 2. Local Authority Archaeology Services - expected roles and functions

Until new legislation introduced in Wales in 2016 and England in 2023, it had been left to Executive Agencies, Non-Departmental Public Bodies and professional bodies in the UK to set the parameters of local authority historic environment services and define their primary working tool, the HER.

There is common agreement that to meet its currently expected responsibilities for the historic environment, a Council should have access to an integrated HER and historic environment service which is able to:

1) Maintain a mediated Historic Environment Record (HER) for the council area, providing free online access and appropriate GIS downloads to Council
2) Maintain, cross-reference and host the supporting archive for the HER
3) Maintain a concordance between the HER and Scotland's national records
4) Undertake iterative validation of archaeological reports relevant to Council area as part of UK-wide OASIS reporting protocol
5) Provide regular HER data updates to the Improvement Service on behalf of Council in order to meet Council's legal requirements under INSPIRE (Scotland) 2009 Regulations
6) Monitor Weekly Planning Lists to identify potential issues
7) Provide Pre-Application Advice to planners and developers
8) Undertake site visits as required
9) Comment on planning applications which raise potential issues
10) Manage the post-determination process for archaeological mitigation (i.e. agreeing draft documents, providing advice to contractors, assessing reports against research frameworks, deciding secondary mitigation and post-excavation requirements etc.)
11) Represent Council at Public Local Inquiries as required
12) Attend Major Planning Application meetings as required
13) Advise on Local Development Plan policy and site allocations
14) Attend/contribute to planning design charrettes and similar events as required
15) Comment/advise on marine and maritime works as required (out to 12nm limit)
16) Provide advice on Scheduled Monument procedures and dealing with Historic Battlefields, Gardens and Designed Landscapes, and other designated sites
17) Provide advice and support to Police Scotland for human remains discoveries
18) Comment/advise on all Scottish agri-environment schemes
19) Comment/advise on all woodland creation schemes
20) Comment/advise on all forest plans and forestry felling schemes
21) Comment/advise on public utility works
22) Provide information and advice to Council architects, solicitors, and property service

23) Provide advice and support to other Council departments as and when required

24) Support and provide advice to local museums, libraries, schools and community groups

25) Provide information and advice to public, including metal-detectorists, on archaeological finds and Treasure Trove

26) Support and advise researchers/academics working within council area

27) Support and continue to develop appropriate Archaeological Research Frameworks for the council area

28) Support funding bids for archaeological works within council area

29) Facilitate historic environment partnership working with national agencies including, but not limited to, Historic Environment Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland, Ministry of Defence, Marine Scotland and National Park Authorities

30) Represent Council's interests on/in ALGAO:UK, ALGAO:Scotland, SMR Forum Scotland, BEFS HEWG and any other appropriate national steering group/board

31) Represent Council in consultations and working with Historic Environment Scotland in developing national policies and guidelines for the historic environment

32) Advise and provide comment on statutory and non-statutory planning publications, including supplementary guidance, masterplans, design briefs and conservation area appraisals

These roles and functions can be grouped together thematically, with some roles and functions contributing to more than one theme:

Theme 1 – HER (update and maintenance) data provision & management: roles 1-5, 8, 10

Theme 2 – Planning (Development Management): roles 1-3, 6-12, 15, 16, 27, 32

Theme 3 – Planning (Forward Planning): roles 1-3, 7, 12-16, 27, 29-32

Theme 4 – Corporate Provision of Information to Public: roles 1-3, 14, 15, 24-28

Theme 5 – Council as Consultee (heritage advice to other bodies): roles 1-3, 16-23, 29-32

Theme 6 – Policy Liaison (heritage): roles 13, 26, 27, 30, 32

These themes can be strongly mapped against the Objectives of the WoSAS Business Plan, which are:

Objective 1: to maintain and update the WoSAS HER (Theme 1)

Objective 2: to provide Development Management advice to planning officers (Theme 2)

Objective 3: to provide Forward Planning advice to member councils (Theme 3)

Objective 4: to further facilitate sustainable development (Themes 1-3 & 5)

Objective 5: to represent the interests of member councils in consultations with national heritage agencies and professional organisations (Theme 6)

Objective 6: to provide historic environment information to researchers and to the general public (Theme 4)