**West of Scotland Archaeology Service****Joint Committee****Report by WoSAS Manager****Contact: Hugh McBrien Tel.: 0141 287 8332****Service Financial Programme 2026-2027****Purpose of Report:**

To advise Members of the projected income and operating costs of the Service in the next financial year.

Recommendations:

Members are asked:

- That this report be noted;
- That the Committee agree the proposed charges for the provision of information and advice to commercial customers as shown in Table 1 of this report.
- That the Committee agree the budget proposed for 2026/2027 as shown on the attached financial programme (Annex 2).

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Pending finalisation of a new Minute of Agreement between member councils regarding the longer-term structure and funding of the Joint Service, a series of one-year financial programmes for the Service have been submitted to the Joint Committee. Each year, in order to reduce unspent financial reserves, the Committee has approved a budget which predicted an operating deficit, which was to be met from existing financial reserves.
- 1.2 In recent years, lower than predicted expenditure on unspent operating contingencies and reduced salary payments to a staff member working to a temporarily reduced work pattern have resulted in annual operating surpluses when compared to the approved budgets. On each occasion, these surpluses have been carried forward into the Service's retained financial reserves.
- 1.3 In recognition of the continuing budgetary pressures on local authorities, Member Council financial contributions to the costs of providing the Service have been able to be frozen in absolute terms since 2011. This has been possible because rising salary costs have been offset by efficiency savings, changes to the operation of the Service, and fee-earning from external commercial sources under the terms of the Service's Access to Information and Charging Policy, the charges for which have remained unchanged since 2015.
- 1.4 The host authority's new Pay and Grading Structure is due to be implemented from April 2027 onward, which will establish base-level salary and on-costs for GCC staff including those of the existing Service. The host authority's consultations with the Trade Unions on the proposed Pay and Grading Structure will take place within the current calendar year, but the proposed salary levels for the current roles have yet to be made public.
- 1.5 Following the unexpected early retirement of one of the Service staff in July 2024 the recruitment process to find an appropriately experienced full-time replacement began. At the end of a lengthy process, the post was offered to a highly qualified local government archaeologist from a Council Joint Archaeology Service in northern England. The new staff member is employed on a full-time basis, which will bring actual salary expenditure closer to budgetary predictions than the lower than predicted salary cost outcomes recorded in recent years' accounts. The repeated budgetary underspend in previous years was largely a result of salary and on-cost savings made due to the continuation of a temporary reduced-hour work pattern requested by the now-retired staff member.

2. CURRENT FINANCIAL SITUATION

- 2.1 As noted in paragraph 1.5, above, the Service staff member who had been working to a reduced work pattern has retired and the post has been re-filled on its intended full-time basis. Financial projections set before the Joint Committee have always been set out to reflect full-time equivalent posts, but in recent years the lower staff costs of the reduced-hour work pattern of one former staff member have resulted in lower expenditure at each financial year-end. That regular, but un-budgeted reduction in the predicted expenditure set out in the Service's Financial Programme will now cease.
- 2.2 Recent nationally agreed pay settlements for local government employees have caused further strain on the Service's finances, as Member Authority contributions have been frozen for some time and are not index-linked. This continuing trend for rising core costs may be affected by new baseline salary levels still to be set in the host authority's new Pay and Grading Structure, but as this is due to be implemented from April 2027 onward, it will not affect the current Service situation, but the new pay and grading levels will require to be considered in finalising the new service provision model for this Service.
- 2.3 While fee-earning from external commercial sources quickly returned to pre-Covid levels, in the current year there has been a downturn in demand for advice and assistance from the commercial sector. Anecdotal information from discussions with commercial archaeological organisations suggests that pre-planning operations continue to be commissioned, but some fieldwork projects are being delayed or postponed.
- 2.4 The Joint Committee's last consideration of the level of charges made to commercial clients for the provision of information and advice in February 2021 kept them to the levels set in 2015, but recommended that these should be kept under review. A number of other authorities now charge for similar commercial provisions projections, and at higher levels than this Service. A review of the fluctuations in demand and their causes, the types of assistance and information provided, and of the officer time spent in the preparation and provision of the requested material suggests that an increase in charges is justified.
- 2.5 Informal discussions with commercial archaeological organisations and with other local authority archaeology officers across the country indicate that commercial clients and their agents appreciate the added value that is provided through the services provided by the Local Authority Archaeology services. The level of charges levied across the country continues to vary, but there is no appreciable difference in commercial usage across the different council areas. Consequently, a new scale of charges is proposed to take effect from 1st April 2026, which would bring this Service closer to the median

level of charges made across the country. The proposed sale of charges is set out for consideration below, in the same tabular format used on page 5 of the published West of Scotland Archaeology Service **Access to Information and Charging Policy** (see Annex 1 for comparison and further background).

Table 1

Service provided	Proposed Charge
Digital HER extract	£200 + VAT
Pre-appl. Advice to developer/agent	£140 + VAT/hour
Validation of developer's submitted:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk-based Assessment (DBA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All sizes 	£200 + VAT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watching Brief Method Statement (MS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All sizes 	£140 + VAT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.5ha or less 0.5ha – 10ha 10ha and above 	£140 + VAT £300 + VAT £700 + VAT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archaeological Mitigation Strategy (AMS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major & multi-phase applications 	£1000 + VAT

3. FUTURE FINANCIAL PROJECTION

- 3.1 As noted in paragraph 1.4, the host authority's new Pay and Grading Structure is due to be implemented from April 2027 onward, which will establish new base-level salary and on-costs for GCC staff including those of the existing Service. The impact of this restructuring of staff costs is currently unknown and unquantified but is likely to require urgent agreement on a revised funding model for the Service in future years.
- 3.2 Publication of the host authority's new Pay and Grading Structure will allow the overall resource requirements of the preferred service delivery option for this Service to be quantified and agreed. Given the intended date of introduction of the new pay scheme, and its likely impacts on the long-term sustainability of the Service, it would be advisable to initiate discussions on future financial contributions from the member councils for the revised Service so that any changes required can be introduced in tandem. Consequently, a budget for financial year 2026-27 is proposed for the Committee's consideration.
- 3.3 The currently available budgetary monitoring for the financial year to date indicates a slowdown in the earlier strong recovery in levels of fee-earned income to pre-Covid levels as referred to in paragraph 2.3 above. This, combined with the alterations to staff costs associated with the national pay settlement, along with the matters referred to in paragraphs 1.5 and 2.1 above, indicates that it is likely that there will be an operating deficit of approximately £950 at financial year end. The WoSAS pre-audit accounts for 2024-25 recorded retained reserves of £159,655 going into the current financial year.
- 3.4 On the above basis, the estimated retained financial reserves at the start of the 2026-27 year will be approximately £158,700. The proposed budget for the financial year 2026-27 set out in Annex 2 predicts a budget deficit of £47,648, to be met from the Service's retained financial reserves, which would be reduced to levels recommended in previous auditors' advice.
- 3.5 The proposed budget for financial year 2026-27, including the predicted deficit, is predicted to leave the Service's reserves at financial year end at an estimated £111,052 representing approximately 108% of the figure proposed as an appropriate financial reserve in the most recent Annual Review of the WoSAS Reserves Policy, although the review of that figure for the current financial year has yet to be undertaken.

4. POLICY AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Resource Implications:

<i>Financial:</i>	Implementation of the proposed budget will be subject to continuous monitoring and will be reported back to Committee.
<i>Legal:</i>	The forthcoming revision of the legal Minute of Agreement by the Legal Services of Member Councils, and the proposed changes arising from those revisions will be reported back to Committee.
<i>Personnel:</i>	None.
<i>Procurement:</i>	None.

Business Plan Objectives:

<i>Maintain and update the HER:</i>	Will continue to be met within the proposed budget.
<i>Provide DM advice to Planning Officers:</i>	Will continue to be met within the proposed budget.
<i>Provide forward planning advice to councils:</i>	Will continue to be met within the proposed budget.
<i>Facilitate sustainable development:</i>	Will continue to be met within the proposed budget.
<i>Represent the interests of councils in consultations:</i>	Will continue to be met within the proposed budget.
<i>Provide HER information to researchers and public:</i>	Will continue to be met within the proposed budget.

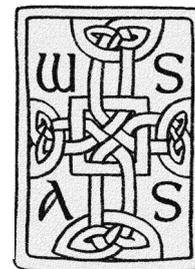
5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Members are asked:

- That this report be noted;
- That the Committee agree the proposed charges for the provision of information and advice to commercial customers as shown in Table 1 of this report.
- That the Committee agree the budget proposed for 2026/27 as shown on the attached financial programme (Annex 2).

HMcb
West of Scotland Archaeology Service
03 March 2026

WEST of SCOTLAND ARCHAEOLOGY SERVICE



West of Scotland Archaeology Service Access to Information and Charging Policy

This policy statement sets out the framework and guidelines for access to information held by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service and to information contained in the West of Scotland Historic Environment Record (HER). It also sets out the level and circumstances of charges which will be levied by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service for the provision of HER information and/or curatorial archaeological advice. The policy was reviewed and approved by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service Joint Committee on 25 February 2021.

Access to Information

The West of Scotland Archaeology Service Joint Committee is fully committed to transparency in its dealings with the public and fully embraces the aims of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004, the INSPIRE (Scotland) Regulations 2009, and the access provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. The Joint Committee will make every effort to meet its obligations under the respective legislation and will regularly review procedures to ensure that it is doing so.

Data Protection Act 2018

A right of access to inspect personal information held in a computerised system has existed since the Data Protection Act 1998 came into force. The Data Protection Act 2018 replaced the former Data Protection Act 1998 and gives additional rights to individuals about whom information is held and processed. The Act places obligations on those who record and use personal data to be open about that use and to follow sound and proper practices. The West of Scotland Archaeology Service does not seek to collect or hold data of a personal nature within its records.

Within the terms of the Act, we hold and process normal category personal data such as names, email addresses, postal addresses and/or telephone numbers in relation to enquiries made to the Service, or when new historic environment information is provided to the Service for inclusion in the Historic Environment Record.

We process any personal information provided in order to answer the questions asked, or in order to provide relevant contact details if the enquiry needs to be redirected.

If you have any queries or concerns about personal data which may be held by the Service, please contact the Manager of the Service on 0141 287 8332 or the Historic Environment Record Officer on 0141 287 8333.

Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002

The West of Scotland Archaeology Service Joint Committee supports the principle that the public has right of access to information held by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service. The Committee seeks to promote an open regime regarding access to information, subject to any exemptions contained within the legislation.

Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004

The Environmental Information Regulations (Scotland) 2004 gives the public the right to request environmental information. Following the Scottish Government guidance on what is covered by the Environmental Information Regulations (Scotland) 2004, issued to local authorities in 2005 (Paper 2005/21), the Joint Committee considers the West of Scotland Historic Environment Record to be a body of information covered by these Regulations. All enquiries for Historic Environment Record information will therefore be treated as falling under the Environmental Information Regulations (Scotland) 2004. Under these Regulations the Joint Committee may levy a reasonable charge for the provision of information, reflected in the fee charge policy set out below.

INSPIRE (Scotland) Regulations 2009

The purpose of the INSPIRE (Scotland) Regulations 2009 is to create a Europe-wide electronic network of spatial information which is accessible to the public. "Spatial information" is information which has a geographical reference. Following the Scottish Government guidance on the obligations created by INSPIRE (Scotland) Regulations 2009, issued to local authorities in March 2011 (A Guide to the INSPIRE (Scotland) Regulations 2009 SSI/2009/440), the Joint Committee considers the West of Scotland Historic Environment Record to include spatial information to which these Regulations apply. All relevant spatial datasets within the Historic Environment Record will conform to the requirements of the Regulations.

Access to Sites and Monuments Record Information

There is no general physical access to the West of Scotland Historic Environment Record for the public to conduct their own HER searches, as the building which houses the Record is unsuitable for such access. It may occasionally be possible by prior appointment to speak to one of the West of Scotland Archaeology Service team, or to view archaeological information in the Service's office. To contact the Service to make an appointment please write, telephone, or email, using the contact details at the end of this policy statement.

Enquiries to the Historic Environment Record by post, telephone, or email are welcomed. Historic Environment Record data is also published via a number of online search engines as follows:

<http://gis.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/mapsWosas/mapSMR.htm>

(WoSAS's own map enabled search)

<http://www.wosas.net/search.php>

(WoSAS's online database search)

<http://jura.rcahms.gov.uk/PASTMAP/start.jsp>

(Scottish Ministers' map enabled search)

The recommended source for online searches of the HER is the first of these, WoSAS's own map enabled search. The online HER data is provided for public search free of charge.

Copies of archived reports of archaeological fieldwork, which have been submitted to the HER, will be made available to the public on request, subject to the charges set out below. Users of such supplied report(s) are reminded that the report(s) remain the copyright of the author(s) and supply of a copy (or copies) of a report (or reports) by the HER does not entitle the user to infringe this copyright.

Charges for Time to Supply Information and/or Curatorial Advice

At the discretion of the Archaeology Service Manager archaeological information and/or curatorial archaeological advice will be supplied free of charge to students, genuine researchers, and members of the public within reasonable limits. The Service reserves the right to decline to process excessively complex or poorly structured enquiries. At the discretion of the Archaeology Service Manager, there may be a charge for unusual materials, or postage and packing for supply of information. Photocopies or offprints may be charged at the cost of 10p per sheet.

The Archaeology Service will impose a charge for the time expended to meet all commercial requests for information and/or curatorial advice. This is intended to reflect the cost of staff time in carrying out the task, related overheads such as the maintenance of the computer systems, compensation for time lost to other functions, and the cost to the Archaeology Service of providing the service. Charges may be waived at the discretion of the Archaeology Service Manager. Estimates of likely costs for individual commercial enquiries will be supplied on request, and before any costs have been incurred.

Provision of digital extracts from the Historic Environment Record to professional archaeological consultants acting for commercial clients will incur a charge of **£100** per hour, or part-hour spent in their preparation, where such extracts are requested to facilitate the preparation of a commercial desk based assessment or any other commercial assessment. Alternatively the consultant may access the required HER information entirely free of charge via the WoSAS online map enabled HER search at <http://gis.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/mapsWosas/mapSMR.htm>.

The charge for staff time spent in providing information, detailed curatorial advice, or any other assistance, in respect of commercial requests and enquiries will be **£100** per hour, or part of hour, from 1 April 2015 until further notice. In the event that a site visit is required on behalf of the enquirer, mileage and subsistence at local government rates will be charged in addition. At the discretion of the Archaeology Service Manager, there may be a charge for unusual materials, or postage and packing for supply of information. Photocopies or offprints may be charged at the cost of 10p per sheet.

The Archaeology Service can provide curatorial advice to commercial developers and their agents regarding the preparation of documentation which may be required to address archaeological issues arising from their proposals. The advice on the scope of work and the format and content of the required supporting information and project design documents is intended to provide advance validation of the documents to facilitate their speedy approval by the planning authority or any other relevant regulatory authority. In order to allow reasonable financial planning by commercial bodies, and to avoid time-related charges growing unpredictably, the charge incurred for the iterative process of assessing, commenting on, and agreeing project design documents will be based on the form of document to be considered and the size of the proposed development application area.

Developers and agents not wishing to take advantage of this assessment and advice service remain free to submit their preferred draft of the required documentation to the planning authority for approval. Comments on the suitability, or otherwise, of submitted documentation which has not been assessed and agreed in advance with the Archaeology Service will be provided to the planning authority at their request.

Service provided	Proposed Charge
Digital HER extract	£100 + VAT/hour
Pre-appl. Advice to developer/agent	£100 + VAT/hour
Validation of developer's submitted:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk-based Assessment (DBA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All sizes 	£100 + VAT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watching Brief Method Statement (MS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All sizes 	£100 + VAT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.5ha or less 0.5ha – 10ha 10ha and above 	£100 + VAT
	£200 + VAT
	£500 + VAT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archaeological Mitigation Strategy (AMS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major & multi-phase applications 	£500 + VAT

Payment is to be made on receipt of an invoice from Glasgow City Council on behalf of the Archaeology Service.

Guidelines for Access to Historic Environment Record Information

The West of Scotland Archaeology Service works to time performance requirements set by its Joint Committee. This requires 80% of responses to be made to enquirers within a 21 day calendar period. In practice many HER enquiries are handled within a much shorter time and typically responses are made within a week. If enquirers require a more urgent response, they should make this clear on making their enquiry.

Although every reasonable effort is made to verify information contained within the HER database, the database is compiled from a variety of often-unchecked sources. Unchecked information cannot be seen as definitive. Therefore, the West of Scotland Archaeology Service does not accept responsibility for the accuracy of any HER Information supplied by it. The user of HER Information accepts that, except in any matter where it is not possible in law to exclude or limit liability, the West of Scotland Archaeology Service accepts no liability whether for direct, indirect, consequential or incidental damages or losses arising from the use of HER Information.

Digital extracts of HER data will only be provided to professional archaeological organisations or bodies capable of handling unmediated archaeological data. Such extracts will have an expiry time of 6 months beyond which time they will no longer be valid.

The boundaries of Scheduled Monuments shown on any maps provided by the HER have been derived from digital data supplied by Historic Scotland and are intended to act as a guide only. For definitive information on Scheduled Monuments the enquirer should contact Historic Scotland.

The whole of the copyright and all other intellectual property rights throughout the world for the whole of the term of such copyright in the HER Information is held by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service. Dissemination to a third party of the HER Information without the written consent of the Archaeology Service shall be deemed a breach of that copyright. HER Information supplied to an enquirer shall not be retained after the specific use for which it was requested has finished. Where specific consent under the copyright provisions governing the HER has been obtained for dissemination of HER Information to third parties through publications, reports or theses, due acknowledgement of the use of HER Information will be given.

Users of HER data will be expected to inform the HER of new sites or information which comes to light as a result of their research. Copies of, or access to, the completed research should be made available to the HER within 6 months of completion.

The Historic Environment Record may be contacted as follows:

West of Scotland	Tel: 0141 287 8333
Archaeology Service	Email: enquiries@wosas.glasgow.gov.uk
231 George Street	Web: http://www.wosas.net
Glasgow	
G1 1RX	

The Archaeology Service of the Councils of Argyll & Bute, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, North Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian, and of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority.

**West Of Scotland Archaeology Service
Financial Programme for 2026-27**

Annex 2

Financial Year 2026-27

Expenditure	Estimate
Employee related costs	
Salary - Manager	64300
Salary - Archaeologist 1	52950
Salary - Archaeologist 2	52950
Employers NI & Superannuation	52700
Pens. Inc.	1450
Sub Total Salaries	224350
Systems Support	
ITD Support/Licences	
IT Purchase	
Sub Total Systems Support	3000
Supplies and Services	
Fees & subscriptions	
Provision of services - misc.	
Postage	
Printing & stationery	
Training	
Conference/catering	
Office Equipment	
Host Council Charge	
Audit fee	
Sub Total Supplies and Services	6250
Mileage & Subsistence	250
Property Costs	7555
Total Estimated Expenditure	241405

Income	Estimate
Councils	
Argyll & Bute	22971
East Ayrshire	12691
East Dunbartonshire	9995
East Renfrewshire	7619
Glasgow City	13647
North Ayrshire	12691
Renfrewshire	12691
South Ayrshire	12691
South Lanarkshire	17784
West Dunbartonshire	7619
West Lothian	12691
Sub Total Councils	143090
Other Income	
Interest	6000
Fees	28000
Park Authority	16667
Sub Total Other Income	50667
Total Income	193757
Surplus/deficit income over expenditure	-47648
Previous Year's Reserve (estimate)	158,700
Year End Reserve	111052