



INSTITUTE OF HISTORIC BUILDING CONSERVATION

Peter Hinton
Chief Executive
Institute of Field Archaeologists
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25 September 2007

Dear Mr Hinton

THE FUTURE OF THE IFA

We have opted to develop this response through the IHBC's internal consultation process, our consultations panel, which allowed us to consult a majority of our members and gather their views through a vehicle which allows for a suitably in-depth analysis of the issues. This should be considered as our formal response to the proposals regarding the IFA's future development. As such it is distinct from our letter to your council members posted as the IHBC's response on your web site, which focussed on clarifications over our joint working.

The IHBC seeks to encourage the growth and development of other organisations engaged in their own specialist part of the sector. This may involve conservation as a specialism in its own right, or conservation as a specialism within a particular discipline or area. The key role is that of 'specialist', and the assumption is that specialists adopt appropriate professional standards based on their discipline. Accepting that members of both our Institutes are experts in their own area, the same must be said for their professional institutes, which should uphold the role of the professional specialist, and represent their highest aspirations.

The IHBC supports the recognition of the Historic Environment as a broad spectrum but also recognises that the two organisations still offer distinct functions to their members. Broadly, as their core documents attest, the IHBC is the lead body for those involved in managing the Historic Environment while the IFA largely aimed at those who survey and record, and while the two are not mutually exclusive this distinction is a useful one to maintain.

Many of our members are hugely supportive of the need to work closely together, with better co-operation between sister organisations who work in distinct but complementary areas of the historic environment. This strategy is embedded in our corporate business plan, and applies equally to archaeologists as it does to architects, planners, surveyors and engineers. Suggestions included sharing resources and making events and activities available to members of both Institutes, all of which is in line with our joint memorandum. Most IHBC members have joint membership of more than one professional body such as RTPI, RICS, and RIBA. Co-operation with the whole range of professional bodies concerned with the historic environment and the built environment generally represents the correct future course for IHBC. The joint response to the heritage white paper by IHBC, RICS and RTPI was concrete evidence of this approach.

Some of our members felt sad that IFA should want to become a 'broader church' in the conservation sector and dilute its specialism in this way. They noted, in the consultation responses reported on your web site, the comments of some Field Archaeologists who feel that IFA would no longer represents their particular specialism.

The Heritage White Paper proposes some essential and welcome changes to the regulatory regime which will require greater joint working between members of a range of professional bodies including IHBC and IFA. But as the IHBC is a UK professional institute we recognise that the coming together of local authority archaeological and building conservation services as described in the White Paper is only happening in England. In Wales, as in Scotland and Northern Ireland, there will be no significant change in current service delivery beyond the natural evolution of the structures.

The IHBC is happy to join you in discussions concerning the IFA's future and would welcome the opportunity to participate in your deliberations on 1st October. To this end our Director Seán O'Reilly will attend the pre-AGM meeting to help you by explaining our perspective on the issues.

Yours sincerely

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