

Summary of Council Responses to Autumn 2019 consultation

Responses have been grouped into subject area. The figure in the right-hand column denotes the contributor, as described as Reply 1 etc in Sharon's email of 28th November. I apologise both to those who think I've included too much in this for it to be called a summary, and to those who feel I've left important things out.

General

It is a matter of professionalism to enhance our reputation by meeting the highest standards of contemporary practice. To that end, it is essential that our activities be assessed against explicit measures of expected benefit and ensuing satisfaction with regard to our members and other recipients of our largesse.	3
There is value in auditing what the Institute does do and its value and what it has the potential to do that would enhance British and wider archaeology while delivering on its charitable aims.	8
The third option would be to agree that we do once again want to be relevant to mainstream archaeology, in a measured sustainable way, and set out to consider options for this.	8
This [might] take the form of a piece of external consultancy where someone consults with the wider sector and brings recommendations as to what the Institute could do with its resources that would be of material benefit to British archaeology in the mid-21 st century.	8
This should include full consideration of the activities and functions of the Institute and its current strategy, evaluation of existing structures (governance, activity-based, and administrative), proper consideration of the existing needs and requirements of the organisation (business model), and strategic considerations (options for future direction), together with a range of actions and recommendations for Council to consider.	12
We have plenty of time to think about how we can adapt to the changing landscape of archaeology in the C21st	5
It is still seen as a very positive thing to take on roles with organisations such as RAI.	7
Perhaps a good place to start would be to look at how similar institutes do things, and how they are growing. Is there scope to employ someone with e.g. marketing expertise (in a relevant sector such as heritage) to assist with this?	7
The RAI struggles to have a USP that differentiates it sufficiently - for example from SAL and the other non-period/topic specific bodies.	12
The £178k legacy that we have received presents us with a choice that will perhaps define our future direction. Do we bank it and increase our income, or do we spend the money received on one or more initiatives? If we do the first I think we, as an organisation, will have set our face against change,	14

Audience

There are many, many YACs who would suggest [archaeology is a 'niche' interest for the young] is not the case. Also see archaeology in the primary school curriculum	1
'Younger members' should perhaps now be defined as people in their sixties, and that is the market we should be aiming at, when people have retired, but have more money and	2

time, and we should perhaps be looking at activities and involvement that might tempt such people, like more opportunities to travel with good informed guides.	
Retirees, of course, are the people who have the time and resources to attend. As many local societies have found the matter is not as problematic as it might at first appear as new retirees come on board to take the place of others no longer able to attend meetings.	10
Build a new USP attractive to a new generation of archaeologists. For my money we should perhaps look at the large (and, I think) unsatisfied cadre of early career/early profession archaeologists: post-docs, young project managers, etc - and try to provide this group with a strong intellectual and organisational network, including perhaps some form of tailored information services? For obvious reasons it is with this group that the future of the profession lies.	12
Preference for projects that relate to young and early-career archaeologists (such as a dedicated lecture series and/or mentoring schemes) – not because this constituency would necessarily provide us with new-blood members but because it comprises a significant part of the world we, as RAI members, value. The RAI has charitable aims and we should exercise them as widely as possible	3
Get in touch with Archaeology Departments and offer to sponsor lectures – do better membership deal for students (post-grads & undergrads) & under 30s.	4
We are losing relevance to a younger generation. Should explore ways through which we could ‘add value’ to our offering to make it relevant and attractive to a broader range of people, whilst at the same time not alienating existing members. In this regard I thought that the proposed link-up with the commercial side of archaeology, such as BAJR, was an excellent idea	5
I think it’s easy to equate ‘younger members’ with undergraduates, PhD students or in general people under 25 years of age. I think that it would be better to think of it in terms of those under 40 years of age. This is a group that needs growing in the Institute but not easily dismissed as a group that ‘only takes part in fieldwork during the summer’.	11
Perhaps attending University Archaeology Day events in future could be beneficial for raising awareness amongst a younger audience	1
Are there opportunities for getting more involved with commercial units and heritage organizations rather than just universities? Perhaps a day or two of the lecture series could be devoted to show-casing the best of commercial archaeology? Would there be other ways of engaging with staff at these organizations? Organizational memberships that would allow their staff to attend lecture series – copies of the Archaeological Journal etc?	11

Delivery

1. Lectures

The Post-grad. and early career lectures are a very good initiative. Has the time come to incorporate them into the regular 1700 lecture slot to increase audience attendance?	PO
Work with other London and south-east organisations but at the same time look outside London and south-east. Abandon/change the London format – contact county/London organisations and offer to arrange & co-host events to which RAI members have access	4
The programme of lectures held at the Soc of Antiquaries seems a core activity that brings professional and non-professional members together and provides opportunity for dissemination of recent work and gives opportunities to those starting out in the profession.	10

An obvious thing would be to run a couple of the lectures out of different locations. Edinburgh with the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, or York would be good locations. These would need to become fixed events and a commitment to run them every year. I anticipate that the first few years would be painful, and attendance would be low (as membership in these regions has been stunted by the SE focus). We would need time for this to become a draw for people in these regions to join.	11
Holding lectures outside London has been suggested; the Roman Society does by having meetings with local branches of the Classical Association. We would need to develop a Regional programme, perhaps with the same organisation each year for a number of years. We would need a 'representative' (Officer, VP, ?Hon VP) at each one. We could perhaps 'sell' the Regional lectures by trying to get 'star speakers from a distance?	14

Delivery

2. Meetings

Meetings [and Research] (as identified by TC, 2017) should be reviewed, as these provide benefits for the membership and maintain the reputation of the RAI in the wider archaeological world.	3
Do we see the meetings as they currently stand as purely events for our existing membership demographic or as a way of attracting new audiences?	1
Meetings seem to be much appreciated especially when there are lectures or guided tours from people directly involved with work on sites that were visited. The best-attended conferences seem to be those that also include some site or museum visit.	10
The current format of Summer meetings is good both in member contact and study of a region but can be expensive and perceived as too time consuming. Really a kind of high standard archaeological holiday week. Maybe we should be thinking more in terms of more short events, for some of which individual Council members could be asked to lead to make use of their detailed knowledge of their area.	11
Summer Meetings have huge value for the membership. I see the importance of retaining them in the format and style that exist now, subject to the willing involvement of an organiser(s). I propose capturing those with different interests, less need of accommodation comfort, and who perhaps are more conscious of cost considerations, by visiting seasonal fieldwork (excavation and survey) on the ground. There are a number of archaeological excavations taking place around the whole of the UK (to start with), which may be difficult to visit as an individual. Advantages include major excavation(s) attended - guided by the experts on the ground, with the opportunity to speak to the site director, etc. This would assist the general remit for such excavations to carry out community archaeology/outreach programmes, and enable excursion attendees to learn about excavations that otherwise don't hit the press for a good period post-excavation. Expenses could be kept low.	15

Delivery

4. Publications

Reviews of books [] useful. I have occasionally reviewed books and felt frustrated that I could only do a cursory review when perhaps an in-depth commentary might have been useful. I was wondering if the RAI might set up a	2
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website for in-depth reviews (like review articles), whether solicited by the RAI or not, but with long reviews like the London review of books, and perhaps make it the 'go-to' place for a major analysis	
Perhaps an annual report shared with all members, but accessible in terms of writing and style could be a good way of advertising the work of the RAI?	4
Is there scope for shorter or more interim reports to be included in AJ?	10

Delivery

3. Research

The RAI and ArchJ do have unique points with multi period focus and a mix of academic/commercial archaeology interest. What can we do to establish this unique identity and make sure the broad ranging focus doesn't lead to a diluted identity? Could we become more involved in the research community? Develop a revised research strategy that could then be used to guide grants etc. I think the grants could be redesigned to attract a greater number of applicants	7
RAI grants are very much about focusing on material and themes for which other funding may not be available. Two broad areas here can be suggested, revisiting unpublished, partly published or out-of-date published excavations, and thematic analysis of the growing amount of grey literature. These are both areas, especially the latter, for which more attention and promotion is desirable.	13

Delivery

4. Grants

Can we give out more to research projects? Could we sponsor a Masters bursary (fees + subsistence) for a student from a low-income background? Offer bursaries to attend Summer meetings (we used to?).	1
Spend some money ?£200,000 and target volunteer groups in areas not well covered and sponsor their work/research and ways/events to publicise this – this could then move from county to county. Not to have a specific project ourselves but work through the communities.	4
? c 50,000 to 75,000 p a; encourage eg completion or new short-term or new 3 year programmes – initial scoping/prelim year if needed + 2-3 more. Stressing wide community involvement	4
Support for the CBA's annual Festival of Archaeology, depending on the persuasiveness of the business case offered Funding of the biennial British Archaeological Awards is within our capacity should Council feel an appropriate case is made Financial and organisational support of conferences and meetings with other institutions can be developed.	9
To review, as far as possible, the effectiveness of the research grants scheme (e.g. applications, recipients, outcomes), and consider the value of grants other than for research projects (e.g. studentships, training courses, conference support), and how they might be administered.	9
Could the RAI become the normal sponsor of a student led conference? I believe that the Prehistoric Society now are the normal sponsors of IARSS, but could we find an annual (PhD) student led conference that we could sponsor and wheel out a couple of	11

the Institute's big names for a plenary lecture (extolling the virtues of the Institute) in return for £300? Alternatively could we sponsor an annual session at TAG?	
The other most important weapon in RAI's armoury is research and our 'potential' ability to foster / facilitate new research - again especially with early career archaeologists. The SAL library offer plays a part in this - as of course do the journal, the conferences, and the grants. All these already exist, but perhaps could be packaged together better to raise their profile and make them more attractive to potential members.	12

Digital/Social Media/Website

Digital outreach has an important role to play for the RAI in future. Some suggestions could include – using more pictures, encouraging content / exciting results from projects receiving grant funding from us, 'live-tweeting' / updates as they happen from meetings and events. We could possibly be taking advantage of key 'moments' more effectively (eg 175 th anniversary?) and perhaps the election of a new president during 2020 is an opportunity for a news story. Tim Champion's presidential lectures could be highlighted as part of a 'story strand'.	1
Council could meet using Skype for any Council members not able to attend in person	4
Revamp web pages – needs to be clear about the benefits of joining – what members get out of it, clear and approachable design.	4
We do need a digital strategy, and a well designed website is a part of this. But if we want to attract more members, then we need to do what all universities and professional bodies are now doing and engage with how these audiences use the internet i.e. social media. I say this having sat through many University meetings as archaeology 'marketing rep', and my own experience as a mid-career archaeologist	7
A greater digital presence might also be something that the Society could promote, perhaps through a dedicated appointment. The RAI could not only publicise its own activities, but retweet or link to a Facebook site the activities of others and make its pages an essential resource for breaking news in British Archaeology	10
Each year's Dissertation winner could be given a piece in the Newsletter and the offer of a publication. Perhaps an on-line gallery of pics with short biography could be established on the web site to be added to every year? I am sure that winners will of course find their achievement helpful for their CV but this would also raise their profile.	13

Archive

Put together material as soon as possible – so biogs of famous/influential members, historical photos from trips, lists of trips – "did you know" type facts. All this stuff is incredibly useful longer term for content and marketing.	4
Tim Champion identified the need to make provision for the proper recording and maintenance of the Society's archives, and this seems to be something that ought to be done and for which money would need to be provided. It would seem to be something on which professional advice needs to be taken.	10

Governance

Maybe look to recruit more members from commercial units, Historic England etc? Would a student representative or a rep from a local archaeological society be too radical (volunteer representation?)? Membership of Council (and of the RAI itself) could be promoted as CPD – it's an honour to sit on Council!	1
The whole membership, together with the President, constitutes 'one body corporate' (Royal Charter). TC pointed out (2017) that enhancing and increasing our activities would require additional resources of time and personnel. I think that all members could be encouraged to actively assist the work of those members who represent them on Council – as already happens with the various committees. The members possess many skills and much experience and I would like to see these being utilized.	3
We are very un-diverse and very unrepresentative.	8
Voluntary leadership tends to be turned on and off like a tap and it is difficult to get sustained change – it's why a paid executive is always more effective.	8
Other people that we could approach for joining teams could include experts in their field and driving them forward.	11
All sub-Committee minutes should regularly be circulated around Council members	13
Make the first Council meeting of each cycle rather longer with an introductory session perhaps before lunch; or maybe an introductory session with officers for new members and others who wish.	13
It is probably sensible currently to plan staying at Burlington House but the future of this arrangement is uncertain.	13
The Secretary and Treasurer should be on fixed terms. They should also serve 3 years, renewable once to give some continuity. Retirement should be staggered: President one year, Secretary the next, Treasurer the one after.	14

President

Absolutely the President should present a lecture every year. A 'job description' for the role would be very helpful – both for the RAI to define what they want in a President (public spokesperson, attendance on other groups, attendance at meetings etc) and for those who might be offered the role.	1
We should be proactive in getting younger people into the different groups within the Institute. Instead of waiting for people to apply for these roles we should be approaching dynamic people that could inject new ideas and momentum into the Institute. The President's role could be the place to start. Rather than appointing someone with the usual profile perhaps we could approach one of the women who are leading their fields but who could still be described as in the prime of their careers.	11

Miscellaneous

Should we emphasise our royal connections? Are we the only 'royal-approved' archaeological society? Why are we 'royal'?	1
There are some 'big names' in our list of previous presidents whom we could feature on social media.	1
Joining with the CBA to help support YACs?	1
Affiliate with Post-med Arch, Med Arch and Prehistoric Society – all have reduced membership in the last ten years – offer a joint membership with access to a journal	4

of member's choice - but affiliation gives access to meetings /conferences that are run by individual societies	
AGM - should be a day of lectures and lunch; should this be tried on a Saturday? In London eg. Soc Antiq or Institute Archaeology? Or combine AGM May with a Conference in or outside London?	4
Trial Collaborations with Archaeology Departments – start with one or two to create a model to build out from – to encourage student membership, host public lectures with support of department and thereby strengthen connections to local organisations that are already connected to the academic departments.	4
Worth looking at attending events? EG Hay history festival? To advertise work done and what the benefits of membership are.	4
There is also considerable scope for exploring the area of 'continuing professional development', such as putting on workshops and training opportunities that are free to members. These would probably be of interest to a lot of people and may also help to address some of the skills shortages we see in the profession these days	5
Local societies and other archaeological groups are perhaps people with whom we could work – providing advice, publicising activities and results of their archaeological work, offering grants	10
Could access be negotiated to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland library for members of the RAI?	11
Re linking with local societies. In the medium term would it make sense financially and in other ways to consider relocating our focus to somewhere further north, with a link to an appropriate university department or museum?.	13

AW 12.xii.19