

## UNITED KINGDOM, England

This review has been checked and approved by Dan Miles (Historic England), 15 July 2024.

**Country:** United Kingdom, England  
**Type:** Various national, period based, geographical and thematic research frameworks cover England:

**Place or Geographical:**

- Regional
- County/ city/ local/ national parks/ World Heritage Sites etc

**National thematic research frameworks:**

- Periods (e.g. the Mesolithic)
- Themes (e.g. Roman pottery, historical mining, maritime)

**Name:** Various.

### Who has created /funded the frameworks?

Historic England (formerly English Heritage) has funded a suite of research frameworks from the late 1990s as part of a programme to support decision making within the management of the historic environment and to bring the different parts of the sector – academia, commercial and local government together. Some frameworks have been independently funded by local authorities, universities, community groups.

They have been created by different stakeholder groups depending on the framework. Most place-based/geographical frameworks have been created by local authority archaeology or heritage services as they form part of the suite of heritage management tools.

Thematic (often national in scope) frameworks have mostly been created by subject specialist interest groups e.g. the Association for Historical Mining, the Study Group for Roman Pottery, the Prehistoric Society.

In addition to funding, Historic England provides support in terms of engagement and advice on the process of producing research frameworks and has funded the development of the online website and database to manage the different frameworks together and to make them more publicly accessible.

### Who owns the frameworks?

The ownership of each framework is different and depends on who created them.

Most place-based/geographical frameworks are owned or managed by a specific local authority or a regional Association of Local Authority Archaeologists (ALGAO) group. Recently more partnership management groups have been established that include representatives from different stakeholders including local authority, national agency, academic, commercial contractors and community groups. These steering groups manage the monitoring, embedding into practice and updating of the frameworks.

Thematic frameworks are often owned by specialist interest groups e.g. the Study Group for Roman Pottery, the Prehistoric Society etc.

### **What was the process of creating the frameworks?**

- For Historic England/English Heritage funded projects the normal funding application process is followed.
- The project is usually managed by a local authority representing others in a region, or a specialist society – this could include contracting a consultant to manage the project or an in-house project assistant.
- A project steering group established and includes a range of key stakeholders to help support the project and provide critique and quality assurance.
- Period specialists identified to write up the resource assessments – which presents the current state of archaeological knowledge and describes the nature of the archaeological resource and provides the basis for identifying major gaps in knowledge and formulating archaeological research priorities for the region.
- Stakeholder workshops held to identify gaps in knowledge and strategic priorities
- Public consultation – with wider historic environment stakeholders – conferences, workshops etc.
- Publication and dissemination.
- Future management and sustainability plans to monitor and build on the framework created.

Recently there has been a drive to develop more inclusive frameworks by including more community involvement in the process to provide local knowledge and more grassroots engagement. This could be local community archaeological groups or local residents with an interest in their local place.

Archaeological research frameworks have also developed more holistically to cover the broader historic environment, including the historic built environment. This has also provided the opportunities for built heritage specialists to be involved in the process of creating the frameworks.

### **Aims and objectives of the framework**

#### ***Who is it for?***

Anyone working or interested in archaeology/the historic environment in a specific place or subject matter. The primary audiences are:

- Heritage management practitioners (e.g. local authority historic environment services) and commercial archaeological contractors working within the context of development-led archaeology.
- Academics (including students) to identify research topics.
- National agencies for funding and permissions or decision making.
- Independent and community groups to help contextualize their local research projects.

### ***What is it for?***

Research Frameworks play an important role in providing:

- an overview of current understanding
- coordinating research
- informing decision making – particularly planning /development led decisions.

They have many different uses:

#### 1. Local authority heritage services:

- As a reference to provide context for assessing the significance of heritage assets and proposed investigations.
- To provide a research focus for mitigation work in planning-led investigations.

#### 2. Commercial archaeological contractors:

- As a reference resource (contextual information, site types, references etc) to help write desk-based assessments and environmental impact assessments.
- Referred to when writing Project Designs in response to project briefs.
- Setting out research aims of investigations that contribute to regional or national research gaps – providing the research context.

#### 3. Academics:

- To scope out research projects and provide direction for postgraduate research.
- To assess the 'impact' of their research, e.g. in relation to Research Excellence Framework (REF) impact assessments.

#### 4. Local Societies:

- To improve their knowledge and scope out research projects.
- To establish research priorities linking into the regional and national picture.
- To help with grant funding bids or for permissions to investigate through providing the research context of their projects.

## **Structure and content of the framework**

### ***What does it contain?***

The frameworks in England are based on a 3 part formula that was established in the publication *Frameworks for our Past* (Adrian Oliver, 1996). They comprise:

#### 1. Resource Assessment

- An up to date overview of current understanding – i.e. "what we currently know".
- This provides an overview of a specific period, place or theme.

#### 2. Research Agenda

- Identifying gaps in our knowledge and providing questions to fill these gaps.
- This is an agreed set of research areas and questions that is used to help co-ordinate research – they help focus what the sector wants to know more about.

#### 3. Research Strategy

- These strategies provide the framework within which the research can be carried out – promoting potential ways forward and partnerships.

### ***How is it structured?***

The majority of place-based research frameworks in England are chronological – with the resource assessment covering archaeological and historical periods. Within these periods each section is split into topics, e.g. material culture, industry, military, funerary, settlement, population, chronology etc. Some place-based frameworks are split into thematic topics rather than being period based.

### ***What period/themes does it cover?***

Periods:

- Palaeolithic and Mesolithic
- Neolithic
- Bronze Age
- Iron Age
- Roman
- Medieval
- Post Medieval
- Modern/20<sup>th</sup> century

Themes:

- Archaeological science
- Marine and Maritime
- Methodological approaches
- Environmental assessments
- The historic built environment
- Urban/rural
- Industrial
- Military

## **Outputs**

### ***Format***

Traditionally the research frameworks were all published as hardcopy monographs. The majority are now available as online PDFs.

Recently an online platform has been created to host all the research frameworks. This digital format – database and website – organises the information in a more structured way providing opportunities for users to cross search for information across the different research frameworks, and the ability to keep them updated and relevant. Underpinned by agreed data standards the research framework platform can now be integrated with other online historic environment management tools, such as the sites and monument registers.

### ***Date of publication***

1997 onwards. The recent research frameworks are from 2018- 2022.

### ***Where can you find it?***

[www.researchframeworks.org](http://www.researchframeworks.org)