



Archaeological sites and monuments in the care of the state

– sharing our experiences

EAC Symposium, Dublin, Ireland, 28 February - 1 March 2019

CONCEPT NOTE

The focus of discussion in regard to archaeological heritage management within EAC over several years has been on archaeology and development and, in particular, maximising the value of the results of development led archaeology. This reflects the wider trend in archaeological heritage management in Europe and in many ways reflects the focus of the Valletta Convention.

Discussion at EAC symposia over several years has also touched on wider issues of connecting the public with their archaeological heritage which is of course a key theme of the Faro Convention. The Valletta Convention also touches on public engagement, and on the topic of sites and monuments in state care – it provides expressly in Article 9 for the promotion of public access to important elements of the archaeological heritage, while at the same time (in Article 5) requiring that the opening of archaeological sites to the public does not adversely affect their archaeological and scientific character.

The provision of public access to archaeological sites and monuments is, along with access to well-presented museum collections, a powerful way of connecting the public to their past and enabling them to directly experience the physical remains of that past. While public access can be achieved in some cases in regard to archaeological sites and monuments which remain in private management, it is safe to say that, at the least, the bringing of such sites into public or state ownership or management has been throughout Europe a key means by which countries have sought to promote public access. Indeed, in some cases currently existing state archaeological services had their origins in the services created in the 19th century for the management of the first archaeological monuments in state care.

While the challenges of managing development led archaeology have been a central focus of debate across Europe for several decades past, the challenges of presenting archaeological monuments to the public while (in the words of the Valletta Convention) protecting their archaeological and scientific character have continued throughout this period. With a new focus on the achieving the aims of the Faro Convention in the archaeological context, meeting those challenges must now be seen as an issue of even greater relevance. Furthermore, presentation of archaeological sites and monuments to the public in the context of tourism has long been seen by governments as of great economic value. While this is a welcome argument in support of the value of archaeological heritage and one evident in recent EU statements on cultural heritage, this has often presented challenges for managers of the archaeological heritage in terms of reconciling economic and heritage interests. Accordingly the theme is seen as one of great relevance to EAC.



Key aspects of the topic to be addressed in the EAC Symposium would include matters around:

- **Conservation**
- **Interpretation**
- **Branding**
- **Sustainability**
- **Investment**
- **Acquisition**
- **Usage**

Questions arising for discussion may include:

- When is direct state management of archaeological sites and monuments necessary and appropriate to provide public access to such sites and monuments?
- What are the various mechanisms that have been developed across Europe for state management (e.g. outright ownership, partnership with private owners) and what lessons can be drawn from these comparisons?
- At what governmental level (local, regional, national) does state management of archaeological sites and monuments take place in cases where they are being made accessible to the public and, where this occurs at multiple governmental levels, how do these relate to each other?
- Is the challenge set in the Valletta Convention of making archaeological sites and monuments accessible while protecting their archaeological and scientific character being met, and if so, how?
- How is a balance to be struck between making archaeological sites and monuments accessible to the public for educational reasons and for tourism reasons – is there in fact any conflict or, if there is, how is it resolved?
- Are there conflicts between what the public wants or expects from the experience of visiting archaeological sites and monuments and what archaeologists think the public should get?
- What is the appropriate balance between top-down (governmental driven) and bottom-up (community led) initiatives in regard to presenting archaeological sites and monuments to the public?
- How do archaeological heritage managers co-operate with other heritage managers (e.g. conservation architects and engineers) in managing sites and monuments and are there conflicts in terms of professional approaches and philosophies to be reconciled?

Exploring this topic will also open up debate on issues relevant to wider aspects of archaeological heritage management. What do we consider to be archaeological sites and monuments – do we limit the definition by reference to date or type of monument? How do



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state archaeological services deliver their functions in relation to state managed archaeological sites and, in particular, to what extent are such services delivered via private sector actors and what are the implications of this?

Such a symposium will continue EAC's exploration of themes arising from the Valletta and Faro Conventions and will complement those symposia.