



## Perth & Kinross Council Archaeology Services: Request for Reversal of Proposed Cuts

**To:** Council Leader Mr Grant Laing, c/o Perth & Kinross Council, 2 High Street, Perth PH1 5PH

**Date:** 5 July 2024

Dear Mr Laing,

### **Urgent Request to Reverse Cuts to Historic Environment Services**

We are writing on behalf of various organisations who are deeply concerned about the recent decision by Perth & Kinross Council to reduce funding for the region's Planning and Archaeology Service, coordinated by Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT), by 70% from April 2025.

We understand that all Local Authorities in Scotland are under financial pressure, but we believe that this relatively small saving of £70,000 from 2025 will have a disproportionate effect on historic environment services provided in the planning system and beyond for Perth & Kinross Council.

The Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO), who represent archaeologists working for, or on behalf of, Local Government and National Parks in Scotland, have advised that such a cut would decrease the level and scope of this essential service to a point where it is unsustainable. We would set out the points below:

### **Role of a Local Authority Historic Environment Service**

Working for local government specialist experts in the historic environment have four key functions to encourage the identification, recording, protection, management, interpretation and promotion of heritage:

- Provide advice and information on the care and management of the historic environment, especially through the planning system.
- Maintain an Historic Environment Record (HER) encompassing sites, monuments, finds locations and landscapes of historic significance.
- Promote the recording, interpretation and understanding of the historic environment.
- Champion the historic environment's contribution to economic development and regeneration as well as learning, leisure, tourism and local distinctiveness.

#### **telephone**

• general enquiries 0131 247 4133 • director 0131 247 4115 • **facsimile** 0131 247 4163  
• finance 0131 247 4135 • publications 0131 247 4145 • **website** [www.socantscot.org](http://www.socantscot.org) • **email** [info@socantscot.org](mailto:info@socantscot.org)

Within the planning system they have some key responsibilities:

- pre-determination assessment and evaluation to assess the significance of heritage assets and the potential impact of development
- setting planning conditions to secure programmes of archaeological investigation before or during development (often referred to as pre-commencement conditions)
- signing off planning conditions only when a programme of investigation is complete
- providing specialist archaeological advice to developers, the local authority and the general public

### **Negative Impacts of Proposed Cuts**

Cutting funding for the region's archaeology service would have a number of detrimental effects on Perth & Kinross, and on Scotland more widely, including:

1. **Reputational Damage to Perth & Kinross Council:** It is certain that heritage sites and artefacts will be lost to development without appropriate preservation (either in situ or by record through archaeological research or other conservation expertise) and such inappropriate development could lead to reputational and economic damage. A reduction in planning advice would also be a retrograde step for the protection of the unique and rich heritage of Perth and Kinross, especially while major infrastructure projects such as the A9 dualling are ongoing.

What's more, sites will likely only be identified during development rather than in advance, when mitigation measures can be put in place, with significantly higher costs for developers. Perth & Kinross Council will still need to meet the obligations in National Planning Framework 4, Policy 7, which relies upon the application of specialist knowledge by an archaeological advisor to instruct planners on when to request archaeological evaluation from developers, and to assess the potential impacts of and mitigation measures required from development, as well as to ensure the quality of the work undertaken.

An independent report found that for every £1 invested in a local authority historic environment service £15 is generated for the local economy alongside UK-wide savings of an estimated £1.3bn to the construction industry through reduced delay costs<sup>1</sup>.

2. **Loss of Expertise:** There will be a loss of objective professional historic environment advice regarding housing, forestry, agri-environment and peatland restoration, public utilities, human remains, standing building recording, and battlefields. The cuts may also mean the loss of the [Historic Environment Record](#), the publicly searchable database maintained by PKHT containing information of over 17,000 records of locally significant monuments, historic buildings, artefact find spots and other places. The provision of this data to the national [Spatial Hub](#) is a legal requirement for

---

<sup>1</sup> [Archaeology and Development Management : \(landward.eu\)](#) 2019

Perth & Kinross Council.

- 3. Wider Cultural Impact on Perth & Kinross:** Heritage plays a vital role in education, fostering a sense of place and sparking curiosity about the past in younger generations. Cuts would reduce or eliminate these valuable learning experiences. Perth & Kinross's heritage is also a significant draw for tourists, such as the [3,000-year-old Carpow log boat](#) which is a star attraction in the new Perth Museum's permanent collection. Reduced investment in the historic environment services could negatively impact tourism revenue and associated jobs.

### **Call to Action**

We urge Perth & Kinross Council to reverse the proposed cuts to historic environment services. We understand that all local authorities are under pressure to find cuts in their budgets. However, the potential loss to the heritage, education, and economy in Perth & Kinross is simply too great to continue with the 70% cut.

We believe that strong historic environment services are an investment in the future of Perth & Kinross and repay that investment both financially and culturally. If required, we stand ready to work with the Council to explore alternative solutions that ensure the preservation of our irreplaceable heritage.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Simon Gilmour, Director, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland  
([director@socantscot.org](mailto:director@socantscot.org))

Ailsa Macfarlane, Director, Built Environment Forum Scotland  
([amacfarlane@befsf.org.uk](mailto:amacfarlane@befsf.org.uk))

Dr Gavin Macgregor, Director, Archaeology Scotland  
([g.macgregor@archaeologyscotland.org.uk](mailto:g.macgregor@archaeologyscotland.org.uk))

Stuart Brooks, Director of Conservation & Policy, National Trust for Scotland (c.c.  
[dhearns@nts.org.uk](mailto:dhearns@nts.org.uk))