



Historic England

Research Strategy for Prehistory



On 1st April 2015 the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England changed its common name from English Heritage to Historic England. We are now rebranding all our documents.

Although this document refers to English Heritage, it still reflects the Commission's current research approach and will in due course be rebranded as Historic England.

[Please see our website](#) for up-to-date contact information.

We welcome feedback to help improve this document, which will be periodically revised. Please email comments to Research@HistoricEngland.org.uk

We are the government's expert advisory service for England's historic environment. We give constructive advice to local authorities, owners and the public. We champion historic places helping people to understand, value and care for them, now and for the future.

HistoricEngland.org.uk/research

English Heritage Thematic Research Strategies

Research Strategy for Prehistory

CONSULTATION DRAFT

June 2010

Summary

1. The Thematic Research Strategy for Prehistory is one of a suite of strategies outlining what more we need to know about specific themes and subjects in order to address English Heritage's objectives. The present draft has been developed in relation to the corporate strategy for 2005-2010; it will be revised in due course to align it with the new strategy for 2010-2015 and the National Heritage Protection Plan, which forms a key part of this.
2. The Strategy is primarily intended to serve English Heritage's needs by identifying research which underpins corporate objectives. However, English Heritage works in close partnership with many other organisations, and the Strategy has therefore been developed through a review of current Research Frameworks (see Appendix 3) and a targeted consultation process to ensure it reflects, as far as possible, the concerns and views of all those engaged in understanding and protecting our prehistoric heritage.
3. Dissemination and implementation of the Strategy is intended to ensure the effective use of English Heritage resources by directing support to the most critical aspects of research. It provides a framework for the study of prehistory that will contribute to the understanding, enjoyment and protection of prehistoric remains.
4. The document sets out the need for a Research Strategy for Prehistory and relates this to the threats facing our prehistoric heritage. Amongst other things, it locates the strategy within the wider English Heritage research agenda, identifies key research Topics for the present plan period, provides guidance on establishing research projects and criteria for prioritising them, and explains how the Strategy will be reviewed and updated.
5. The Strategy is arranged in two main sections:

Part 1 outlines the place of research in English Heritage, sets the Thematic Research Strategies within this corporate framework, and explains how they will be implemented and refreshed. Appendices 1 and 2 provide details of relevant corporate aims, objectives, research themes and programmes.

Part 2 presents the Thematic Research Strategy for Prehistory and explains the underlying principles that have led to the identification of nine research themes and six Critical Priorities for English Heritage:

- Integrated approaches to prehistoric landscapes
- Setting prehistoric sites in context
- Understanding 'sites without structures'
- Managing the impact of climate change
- Improving access to unpublished data
- Teaching prehistory.

Research Topics addressing these themes and priorities will contribute to providing the evidence base for better understanding and protection of the resource, mitigating the threats to vulnerable site types, skills and processes, enhancing HERs and other heritage databases, and achieving better public appreciation of prehistory. Appendix 4 gives details of 51 Topics, mapped against corporate objectives; within these, 21 Topics linked to the Critical Priorities are highlighted. Finally, guidance is provided on establishing research projects within the corporate framework for brigading and undertaking research.

English Heritage Thematic Research Strategies

Research Strategy for Prehistory

Contents

PART ONE: The Context of Research at English Heritage

1	Introduction	3
2	English Heritage research policy	3
3	Thematic Research Strategies	5
4	Implementing the Strategies	6
5	Refreshing the Strategies	7

PART TWO: English Heritage Thematic Research Strategy for Prehistory

1	Introduction	8
2	The need for a Research Strategy for Prehistory	8
3	Identifying priorities, threats and opportunities	9
4	Research themes and priorities for prehistory	11
	Theme PR1 Landscape perspectives	
	Critical Priority 1 Integrated approaches to prehistoric landscapes	
	Theme PR2 Innovative studies of sites and monuments	
	Critical Priority 2 Setting prehistoric sites in context	
	Critical Priority 3 Understanding ‘sites without structures’	
	Theme PR3 Understanding prehistoric society	
	Theme PR4 Critical approaches to key transitions	
	Theme PR5 Realising the full potential of scientific techniques	
	Theme PR6 Studying human interactions with the environment	
	Theme PR7 Responding to changing environments	
	Critical Priority 4 Managing the impact of climate change	
	Theme PR8 Integrating research and building partnerships	
	Critical Priority 5 Improving access to unpublished data	
	Theme PR9 Raising profiles	
	Critical Priority 6 Teaching prehistory	
5	Establishing research projects	19
6	Contacts	20

APPENDICES

1	English Heritage Aims and Objectives with relevant SHAPE Sub-Programmes	21
2	English Heritage Research Themes and Programmes with relevant SHAPE Sub-Programmes	23
3	Current Prehistoric Research Frameworks	25
4	Research Topics for Prehistory	28

PART ONE

The Context of Research at English Heritage

I Introduction

The value of the historic environment is acknowledged in many Government programmes and has been set out most recently in *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment*,¹ which emphasises its importance to our cultural heritage and its contribution to key policies such as sustainable development.

English Heritage exists to identify, protect and promote nationally significant aspects of England's historic environment. A broad spectrum of research activity underpins English Heritage's functions and activities, helping to provide new insights into the historic environment, establishing and explaining the significance and values of heritage, supporting local communities and partners in the heritage sector, and underpinning protection and conservation. Part One of this publication explains:

- The role of research within English Heritage;
- The relationship of Thematic Research Strategies to corporate aims and objectives;
- The means of implementing the Thematic Research Strategies;
- Arrangements for ensuring that the Strategies reflect changing priorities.

Part Two then sets out the detailed English Heritage Thematic Research Strategy for Prehistory, identifying the threats and challenges that are faced, the need for research in formulating our response to these, and the relevant criteria that will underpin those responses. It also outlines the priorities for the plan period and provides brief guidance on the formulation of research proposals. Appendices include a list of the primary research Topics to be addressed and their links to corporate objectives.

2 English Heritage research policy

English Heritage research activity is diverse, embracing socio-economic investigations, new methodologies for restoration and protection, innovative presentation of historic sites, and increased understanding of the historic environment at all scales from landscapes to individual sites and objects. It falls into a number of categories described by the Frascati definitions², covering basic research, applied research and experimental development.

Research carried out or supported by English Heritage is directed towards achievement of the organisation's strategic aims and objectives, set out in the **Strategic Plan** for the period 2005–2010³ (Appendix I). The strategy is built around the concept of the 'heritage cycle' (Fig. I).

¹ DCLG, 2010; see <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps5>

² see *SHAPE 2008: A Strategic Framework for Historic Environment Activities and Programmes in English Heritage*, p 96

³ *English Heritage Strategic Plan 2005-2010: Making the Past Part of Our Future*. [A new corporate strategy for the period 2010-2015 is currently in preparation; it is anticipated that the National Heritage Protection Plan will form a key part of this and the Thematic Research Strategies will be revised accordingly when it is published.]

The six high level aims for the plan period are:

- Help people develop their understanding of the historic environment;
- Get the historic environment on other people's agendas;
- Enable and promote sustainable change to England's historic environment;
- Help local communities to care for their historic environment;
- Stimulate and harness enthusiasm for England's historic environment;
- Make the most effective use of the assets in our care.

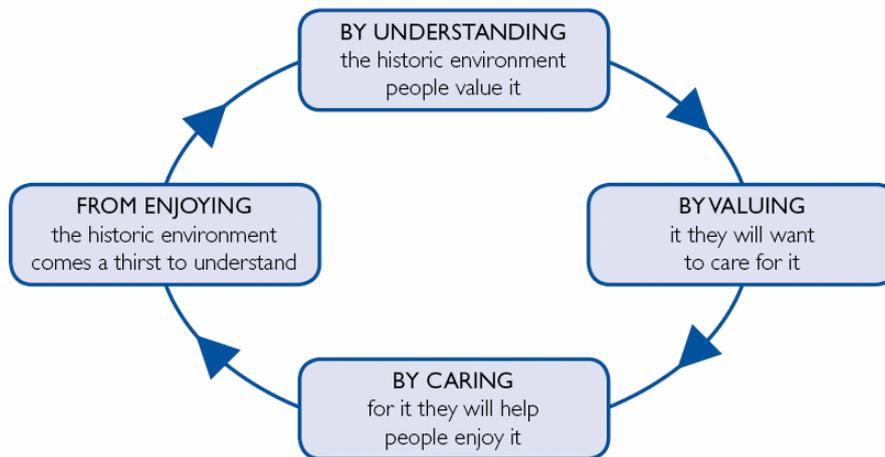


Figure 1 The Heritage Cycle diagram

English Heritage's current **Research Strategy**, *Discovering the Past, Shaping the Future*⁴, sets out high-level priorities to be addressed in its research activity. These are to:

- Develop new approaches which improve understanding and management of the historic environment;
- Provide better evidence of the importance and value of the historic environment;
- Provide better advice to improve the care of the historic environment;
- Develop policies, guidelines and exemplars to promote better management of change in the historic environment;
- Stimulate access to, interest in and enjoyment of the historic environment.

The accompanying **Research Agenda**⁵ sets out seven *Themes* which support these priorities, each comprising a number of *Programmes* that define the types and scope of work required to enhance understanding of the historic environment (Appendix 2). The Themes and Programmes are underpinned in turn by more detailed *Sub-Programmes* which are outlined in English Heritage's Strategic Framework (**SHAPE**)⁶.

Thematic Research Strategies, one of which is presented here, provide more detailed analysis of key aspects of the historic environment within the framework established by the

⁴ *Discovering the Past, Shaping the Future: Research Strategy 2005-2010*

⁵ *English Heritage Research Agenda: An Introduction to English Heritage's Research Themes and Programmes* (2005)

⁶ *SHAPE 2008: A Strategic Framework for Historic Environment Activities and Programmes in English Heritage*

Strategic Plan, corporate Research Strategy and **Conservation Principles**⁷. The relationships within this complex hierarchy are shown in diagrammatic form in Fig. 2.

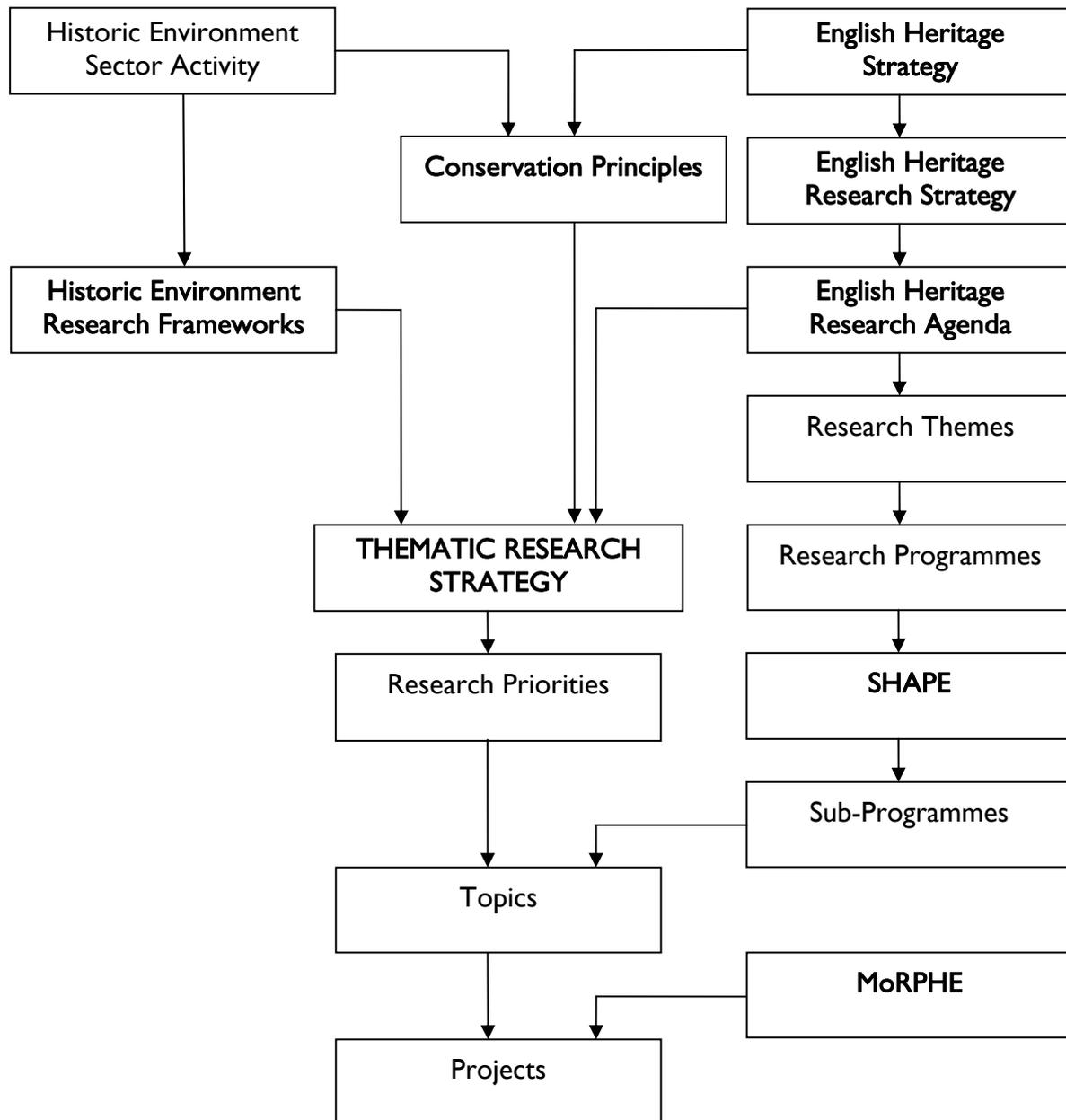


Figure 2 Diagram showing how the thematic research strategies are informed by other relevant documents (in bold); and how projects are generated in relation to the research Topics identified in the strategies, the framework set out in SHAPE and the management principles outlined in MoRPHE

3 Thematic Research Strategies

Individual Thematic Research Strategies have been developed to address key aspects of England’s historic environment. They share the aim of supporting English Heritage’s strategic

⁷ Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (English Heritage, 2008)

goals and seek to address common issues such as the impact of change, both natural and planned, on the historic environment. The subject areas are, however, very diverse in terms of chronological scope, academic discipline, their relationship to conservation, management and protection, and the threats and opportunities affecting them.⁸ Research responses in each field will, therefore, differ, and the Strategies set out specific priorities designed to address the particular needs for each theme. Where interests overlap, this is indicated in the description of the priority research programmes within each document.

The Thematic Research Strategies are primarily intended to serve English Heritage by identifying research which furthers corporate goals but, since English Heritage shares its responsibilities with many other agencies, they also seek to express wider concerns and reflect views from the different communities engaged in understanding and managing the historic environment. Publication of the Strategies is intended to assist in making the most effective use of resources by directing support to the most important research issues. The aim is to ensure that English Heritage research makes a difference to the protection, care and enjoyment of the historic environment, whether through new understanding, better support for partner organisations, wider public engagement or more effective conservation and management.

The different nature of each Thematic Research Strategy means that the criteria used to identify priority research themes and assess proposals for research will vary between them, with different weight given to considerations such as risk, vulnerability and significance, the level of existing knowledge, and the potential for enhancing access, understanding and appreciation. Common to all the strategies, however, is the need to address the most urgent and important issues affecting the historic environment in order to provide it with better care and protection.

4 Implementing the Strategies

English Heritage will seek to implement the Thematic Research Strategies through supporting research programmes and projects in a number of ways. These include:

- Using English Heritage staff resources;
- Using English Heritage's grants programmes for funding external projects;
- Collaborating with universities and academic funding bodies (AHRC, EPSRC, ESRC, NERC);
- Assisting local authorities and regional development agencies;
- Working with government agencies;
- Working with developers and owners;
- Working with amenity groups and societies;
- Working with museums and the education sector;
- Working with the voluntary sector.

Whatever the approach, it is essential that the heritage sector has the ability to undertake high-quality research. An underpinning objective is therefore to enhance training and

⁸ Companion Thematic Research Strategies to the present document cover the Roman Period, the Urban Historic Environment and the Historic Industrial Environment. In preparation are strategies for Freshwater Environments, Places of Worship, Marine and Maritime Archaeology, Characterisation and the Archaeology of the Contemporary Past.

capacity building within projects such that they contribute to a legacy of expertise and skills which can be used for the benefit of the historic environment.

5 Refreshing the Strategies

The publication of this and companion Thematic Research Strategies is intended to encourage debate about priorities. The documents are inevitably statements rooted in their time and it is envisaged that the drivers for research will evolve as circumstances change. Dialogue about research priorities is therefore essential to maintain the Strategies' relevance to current needs and their periodic refreshment is an important part of their implementation. This will be informed by ongoing consultation and horizon-scanning to identify the changing needs of the sector, the development of collaborative approaches, and regular reports on progress. The Strategies therefore represent iterative documents under constant review and will be regularly updated on-line.

PART TWO

The English Heritage Thematic Research Strategy for Prehistory

I Introduction

Prehistory is a diverse and wide-ranging field of study, accounting for over 99% of the time that people have inhabited this country, from the earliest human occupation at least 700,000 years ago to the arrival of the Romans in the 1st century AD. Spanning enormous environmental and technological changes, and including at least three human species, the study of prehistoric archaeology strongly illustrates ‘the multi-cultural and many-layered development of England’⁹. Prehistory has bequeathed us evocative monuments and landscapes across England, from the hillforts of Northumberland to the megalithic tombs of Cornwall, while many more places owe their present character to a development that began thousands of years ago. On the other hand, many prehistoric sites are now hidden below very different modern landscapes or even submerged beneath the sea.

Prehistoric finds provide intimate insights into ways of life radically different to anything seen today but can also inform our understanding of and responses to important contemporary issues, such as climate change. There remains much we do not know about our prehistoric past, however, and there are many threats to the surviving resource, which is often ephemeral and fragile. At the same time, public appreciation of prehistory is limited in comparison to later periods, so that many of the most fascinating sites and discoveries remain little-known. This Strategy identifies the key research themes which will address these issues in the context of English Heritage’s corporate objectives.

2 The need for a Research Strategy for Prehistory

Prehistoric archaeology shares many research issues with other parts of the historic environment but some pertain largely or specifically to prehistory and provide the justification for a separate research strategy. Conversely, although each period of prehistory has its own distinctive data-sets, research traditions and current research questions – a diversity that makes it such a rich field of study – there are particular themes that give the subject as a whole a certain distinctiveness: these include the long spans of time with which prehistorians often operate, certain interpretative approaches which reflect the absence of documentary sources, and a generally low profile within historic environment policy, education and outreach.

The intellectual context for this Strategy is provided by English Heritage’s corporate priorities (see Part One), as well as a series of published research frameworks (Appendix 3) and palaeoenvironmental reviews¹⁰, many of which have been supported and sponsored by English Heritage. Additional sources include academic books and papers, conferences and seminars, less formal discussions and selective consultation. Inevitably any claim to comprehensive coverage has to be tempered by the reality of the need to synthesise a mass of information into a few key headings, but the ongoing process of reviewing and refreshing the Strategy (see Part I, section 5) will identify any major omissions.

⁹ *Power of Place* (English Heritage, 2000)

¹⁰ see <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.9206>

3 Identifying priorities, threats and opportunities

The Strategy has been developed to ensure that research into prehistory which is funded or undertaken by English Heritage is, as far as possible, aligned both with corporate priorities and research priorities identified by the sector; also that the needs of prehistory are addressed in all aspects of English Heritage's work. To a large extent English Heritage objectives overlap with those of the wider sector but it is clear that, financially and logistically, English Heritage cannot immediately address every relevant issue. Prehistory is one aspect of a much bigger picture, and its needs must be set alongside those of other parts of the historic environment in the allocation of limited resources. With numerous aspects of historic environment policy now being revised, including heritage protection¹¹ and planning policy¹, an emerging priority for English Heritage is to ensure the protection of the most significant parts of the historic environment. The primary aim of the Strategy, therefore, is to set out an achievable plan to improve understanding of our prehistoric heritage, its significance, condition and threats, in order to deliver better protection.

Direct threats to England's prehistoric heritage comprise natural processes of erosion (potentially exacerbated by climate change) and the impacts of human activity. To respond to these adequately we need better understanding of the significance of the resource and the nature of the threats. Incomplete understanding also creates indirect threats, including the use of inappropriate methods, inadequate management, and the failure to communicate results and engage the interest of policy-makers and the public.

Opportunities for research in the near future are just as wide-ranging and significant. For instance, the emphasis in the new PPS 5¹² on improving understanding of heritage assets through developer-funded fieldwork, rather than simply providing a record of what has been destroyed, has important implications for how we devise, implement and monitor research frameworks. Meanwhile, new scientific techniques and interpretative approaches have the potential to greatly enhance our understanding of many aspects of prehistory, but may require further development or capacity building, and need to be applied appropriately.

With all this in mind, a broad set of research themes is outlined below; distilled from current research agendas, they aim to summarise what the sector regards as the key issues. Within these a smaller number of Critical Priorities are clearly identified; this is where the balancing of factors suggests English Heritage resources should be primarily focussed at present. Inevitably this division creates some imbalances, such as the under-representation of artefact-based studies in the Critical Priorities. These reflect English Heritage's role within the sector, and are emphatically not a judgement on the broader academic value of such work. Moreover, there remains scope to address such issues, in this case, for example, through partnership projects and exemplary work on English Heritage's own collections. And because there will – fortunately – always be important unexpected discoveries, such as the Ice Age cave art at Creswell Crags¹³, enough flexibility will be retained in order to respond appropriately to such events.

It should be noted that the Strategy concentrates on activities which can be termed research under the definitions given above; it does not set detailed priorities for policy formulation, heritage management, empowerment and communication¹⁴, for which there are other

¹¹ *Draft Heritage Protection Bill* (HMSO, 2008)

¹² Policy HE12: Policy principles guiding the recording of information related to heritage assets

¹³ see the *English Heritage Research Agenda*, p 8

¹⁴ non-research activity types as defined by SHAPE

mechanisms and documents. However, all these areas will naturally be informed and supported by the enhanced understanding that comes from relevant research. Successful implementation of the Strategy will therefore also involve:

- Improving access to key data-sets, such as HERs;
- Publishing guidance documents and encouraging the use of appropriate methods;
- Building inter-disciplinary and inter-agency working relationships;
- Facilitating discussion and raising awareness through meetings and other fora;
- Providing training for specialists and volunteers;
- Delivering educational and outreach initiatives;
- Developing management recommendations.

More broadly these practical outcomes can be grouped into three main areas:

- Supporting those who manage and protect prehistoric objects, sites and landscapes;
- Enabling communication of the results of research across the sector;
- Promoting prehistory to diverse audiences.

The support role is twofold: firstly, in accordance with the aims of heritage protection reform and PPS 5, the Strategy will promote research that addresses the needs and sustains the work of English Heritage and partner organisations which are charged with the protection of prehistoric sites and monuments. Secondly, by identifying and collating current priorities in a broader sense (the research themes) it aims to inform and support the development of relevant research projects beyond English Heritage.

The communication role is crucial in ensuring that the Strategy continues to evolve in response to changing needs. Existing research frameworks provide only a partial picture of current issues, so ongoing consultation with key organisations in the academic, commercial, curatorial, policy and voluntary sectors is required¹⁵. A co-ordinated approach to joint working with non-archaeological agencies¹⁶ which look after prehistoric sites and landscapes is also vital. Additionally, it is intended that communication and liaison will extend beyond England to other parts of the UK and neighbouring countries in Europe. National boundaries did not exist in prehistoric times and many aspects of England's prehistory can only be understood in relation to these areas (see below).

Finally, an advocacy role is necessary in order to demonstrate to funding bodies, policy makers and the public the relevance of prehistory as a significant part of the historic environment and the value of specific projects that fit the priorities identified here. For instance, the evidence of climate change in prehistory and its impact on people's lives is not only of academic importance but can provide useful data for contemporary policy-making, as well as a way of engaging people with the remote past. The internet and other new media offer opportunities to enhance people's understanding and experiences of prehistoric objects, sites and landscapes, and thereby increase interest and participation, especially in the context of engaging people with their local heritage¹⁷, so long as the information is pitched and presented appropriately. Through progress reports and other web-based resources,

¹⁵ e.g. the Prehistoric Society, the Quaternary Research Association, the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers, the Institute of Field Archaeologists and the Portable Antiquities Scheme

¹⁶ e.g. the British Geological Survey, the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission, the National Trust and Natural England

¹⁷ see *Conservation Bulletin* 63 (2010)

therefore, the Strategy will provide a mechanism for promoting and publicising relevant research.

One approach to increasing public and professional awareness and interest in prehistory is through high-profile, multi-disciplinary projects relevant to contemporary 'Big Issues', which provide a means of linking research, policy aims and outreach. Potential 'Big Issue' projects can be identified from current government priorities: they include climate change and related environmental and sustainability issues, where study of the remote past can contribute to understanding present-day events; issues of social inclusion, engaging people with aspects of their local prehistory to help build a sense of place; major cultural events, such as the London Olympics in 2012; and the promotion of Britain's shared heritage with other parts of Europe. Opportunities to include prehistory in such broader initiatives ought to be taken wherever possible.

4 Research themes and priorities for prehistory

The results of a critical review of current research frameworks (Appendix 3) and ongoing consultation have been distilled into the following research themes, which provide the context for the Critical Priorities (CPs) that sit within some of them. Each theme and CP is explained here briefly¹⁸ and supported by a group of research Topics (Appendix 4). They are designed to provide a framework for the development of projects through which the Strategy can be implemented (see below).

Theme PR1 Landscape perspectives

(Topics 1–9)

Prehistoric sites can only be properly understood as part of a landscape and English Heritage's survey and scientific teams have a commitment to innovative and exemplary landscape archaeology. Such approaches are necessary not only to address academic research questions but also to inform policy and management initiatives such as Historic Landscape Characterisation and implementation of the European Landscape Convention: the contribution prehistoric remains make to contemporary landscapes is often overlooked or wrongly assumed to apply only to 'marginal' areas. Prehistoric landscapes come in a variety of forms, from areas of chalk downland with upstanding field monuments to deeply buried Pleistocene river channels¹⁹ and the submerged land surfaces that are now being revealed under the North Sea and other UK waters by remote sensing.²⁰

¹⁸ more detailed essays on the CPs will be available via the Research Strategy for Prehistory page on the English Heritage website

¹⁹ as informed by a considerable body of work funded through the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund: see *Extract: the ALSF Annual Report 2004-2005* (English Heritage, 2005), pp 14-15

²⁰ see V. Gaffney *et al.*, *Mapping Doggerland: The Mesolithic Landscapes of the Southern North Sea* (Archaeopress, 2007)

Critical Priority I: Integrated approaches to prehistoric landscapes (Topics 3–6)

Filling gaps, understanding biases, improving methodologies and connecting different types of landscape (see also the Thematic Research Strategy for the Roman Period)

Within the bigger context of Theme PR1, this CP highlights projects that seek to better characterise prehistoric landscapes across the country and develop more integrated approaches to their understanding and protection. The first aspect covers the need to address gaps in the record and investigate biasing effects, whether related to research histories, the visibility of prehistoric remains on different geologies and under different land-uses, or genuine differences in how areas were inhabited in prehistory. Understanding the landscape context of surface artefact finds like those reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme is one possible area of work, linked to CP3 (see below). The development of more formal approaches to characterise the deeply buried resource, including geoarchaeological approaches to sedimentary contexts with well-preserved sites and palaeoenvironmental remains, especially those of early Holocene date, is another.

The second part of the CP covers approaches that synthesise, connect or compare different regions or types of landscape, e.g. linking marine and terrestrial distributions through study of the coastal and intertidal zones, or integrating upland and lowland survey; enhanced chronological frameworks are an important aspect of this (see CP2). As well as addressing key research questions to do with the scale and nature of settlement networks in different periods, such work is essential if we are to improve assessments of significance and develop more effective management, e.g. through predictive models; it will also allow us to write more nuanced regional prehistories and thus raise awareness of the importance of prehistoric landscapes.

Other research Topics for landscapes involve the development of interpretative and analytical approaches to extend our knowledge of individual areas and address academic research questions to do with understanding how particular landscapes were inhabited or structured, such as the emergence of sedentism or the development of territories.

Theme PR2 Innovative studies of sites and monuments (Topics 10–16)

While recognising the limitations of a wholly site-based approach (see Theme PR1) and the arbitrary nature of any distinction between 'site' and 'landscape', the site nevertheless remains a key archaeological entity in terms of designation and protection as well as academic analysis. In the absence of a documentary record, it is only by developing methods and theories for interrogating contextual data that the analytical and interpretative potential of prehistoric features, artefacts and biological remains can be fully realised and the significance of particular sites assessed.

Critical Priority 2: Setting prehistoric sites in context (Topics 10, 12, 13, 16)*Improving understanding of the spatial, typological and chronological context of key sites*

Three areas where our understanding of prehistoric sites and monuments needs improvement are specified here: investigating their environs, thinking about categories and refining chronologies. The first reflects the emphasis in Conservation Principles⁷ on understanding the setting and context of a place: a key aspect is the integration of different scales of evidence (including palaeoenvironmental data) to bridge site-based and landscape-scale approaches, improve understanding of relationships between sites and investigate the spaces around and between them.²¹ For example, recent surveys of both rock art and subterranean sites (caves, rock-shelters and mines) have led to specific recommendations for contextualisation of this sort in order to improve their management.

The second area relates to various strands of current work which are challenging traditional ways of thinking about prehistoric monument types, including the range of new sites uncovered during commercial projects or recognised from the air by the National Mapping Programme (NMP)²². These require better characterisation (through survey and targeted excavation) and assimilation into academic understanding, which includes the revised classification and designation that form a key aspect of heritage protection reform.

The third area of work, which underpins the others, is improved chronologies: recent advances in radiocarbon dating, especially the application of Bayesian models pioneered by English Heritage's scientific dating team²³, have shown the potential for improving the precision with which many sites can be dated, allowing new appreciations of their significance, reflected, for example, in narratives of monument construction and use based on generational timescales. Alongside this, the continued development of other dating techniques suitable for material of different types and ages is also required.

²¹ see R. Thomas, 'New challenges of past' (*British Archaeology* 103 [Nov/Dec 2008], pp 38-9)

²² see <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/nmp>

²³ see A. Bayliss *et al.*, 'Bradshaw and Bayes: towards a timetable for the Neolithic' (*Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 17 Supplement S1, 2007)

Critical Priority 3: Understanding ‘sites without structures’ (Topics 14–16)

Improving characterisation and understanding of ephemeral sites, especially lithic scatters

The proposal in the draft Heritage Protection Bill to permit the designation of ‘sites of human activity without structures’²⁴ has thrown light on the need to better understand and protect those sites, primarily of pre-Middle Bronze Age date, which are principally characterised by groups of objects. Whether buried Pleistocene surfaces within areas of mineral extraction or early Holocene flint scatters, both intra-site and landscape-scale research are required. Ploughsoil archaeology is particularly vulnerable as the balance of arable and uncultivated land in England continues to change in relation to economic drivers (see CP4): whether areas are being taken out of or back into cultivation, research to inform appropriate management is required (e.g. using the new data on distributions of prehistoric lithics that are emerging from the Portable Antiquities Scheme²⁵). There is also a need for research to help ensure that the evaluation and characterisation of such sites is consistent and effective, especially in developer-funded archaeology where machine stripping of topsoil is common practice but rarely conducive to the discovery of artefact scatters. In the marine context, meanwhile, a key priority is the development of better means of evaluating and populating the submerged early prehistoric landscapes of the North Sea and other UK waters in order to identify areas of high potential that merit protection, e.g. within Marine Conservation Zones.

Alongside the issues emphasised in CP2 and CP3, it remains important to understand other aspects of how prehistoric sites were used and inhabited, for example through studies of spatial patterning, depositional practices or site formation processes. It can be argued that – with notable exceptions, especially various investigations of ‘structured deposition’ – intra-site studies have seen less innovation in recent years than other scales of analysis.

Theme PR3 Understanding prehistoric society (Topics 17–24)

Robust theories and interpretations of past societies and cultures are the ultimate goal of prehistoric archaeology, to which every piece of research should contribute: they often involve the synthesis of different types of data, and the role of material culture is usually foregrounded. Research Topics identified here range from social aspects of technology to the treatment of the dead, and from investigations of diet and food preparation to long-term thematic approaches. Though frequently considered to be primarily of academic interest, social theory is relevant to all prehistoric archaeology, for example in articulating the links between specific pieces of fieldwork and broader research questions, or ensuring that reports and publications maximise the academic value of a project. Although this theme does not contain any current Critical Priorities for English Heritage, it is therefore implicit in all the other themes and CPs, and fundamental to any programme of analysis. Well-constructed narratives of prehistory serve to demonstrate its relevance and value to contemporary communities, making the illumination of past lives interesting in their own right and showing the possibility of other ways of living.

²⁴ *Impact Assessment: Draft Heritage Protection Bill* (DCMS, 2008), para 23; note that the absence of evidence for (built) structures does not mean these sites lack ‘structure’ in the sense of meaningful spatial distributions of objects – quite the opposite

²⁵ see C. Bond, ‘The Portable Antiquities Scheme: the contribution of lithics and lithic scatters’ (forthcoming)

Theme PR4 Critical approaches to key transitions (Topics 25–26)

The study of prehistory is impossible without chronological frameworks, but these can also impose artificial boundaries on the past²⁶. The inadequacies of the Three-Age System are well-established but the traditional period names remain in common use and have led to some important phases of change being studied from one side of a chronological divide rather than in a more integrated fashion (e.g. the lack of a Mesolithic input to studies of the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition), while period specialisms effectively discourage long-term approaches that span more than one period. The number of transitional phases flagged as priorities in national and regional research agendas suggest a widespread need for better understanding of socio-economic change and improved chronologies of different classes of sites and artefacts. At the same time, more sophisticated approaches to scientific dating (see CP2) and the application of other techniques with the potential to inform on various aspects of human lifeways (see Theme PR5) offer scope for significant advances in understanding key transitions and general processes of change. Although no Critical Priorities are linked primarily to this theme, chronology is at the heart of many of the Topics linked to CPs within other themes, which offer scope for considerable contributions in this area.

Theme PR5 Realising the full potential of scientific techniques (Topics 27–31)

As indicated in relation to other themes, a number of recent scientific developments have huge potential for advancing knowledge in many areas of prehistoric archaeology. In addition to dating methods (see CP2 and Theme PR4) they include various techniques for analysing human diet and mobility (e.g. stable isotopes), artefact production and exchange (petrography, metallurgical analysis) and the uses of material culture (organic residues, microwear), as well as electronic means for the capture, presentation and analysis of spatial data (laser scanning, GIS). Exemplary case-studies and methodological development of high-quality, cutting-edge science are required, linked to the development of guidance that ensures these techniques are used appropriately across the sector. Maximising the potential of such approaches also includes the development of appropriate social theory, as outlined in Theme PR3 (e.g. theories of identity/personhood and artefact biographies). As with Theme PR4, no Critical Priorities are linked primarily to this theme but the use of many of these techniques will be central to addressing CPs attached to other themes.

Theme PR6 Studying human interactions with the environment (Topics 32–34)

While prehistoric archaeology has generally moved away from the determinist approaches of a few decades ago, there remains a need for better understanding – derived from both the archaeological and palaeoenvironmental record – of how human activity has responded to and caused changes in the natural environment, from the impact of sea-level rise in the early Holocene to the development of farming in its various guises through later prehistory. While aspects of that understanding can be addressed under Theme PR1 (e.g. geoarchaeological approaches to landscape modelling) this theme includes a variety of other research Topics, including the enhancement of existing environmental data for many periods and better understanding of how prehistoric human activity is reflected in the palaeoenvironmental record generally. The theme also offers opportunities for improved liaison with natural environment agencies who manage deposits of palaeoenvironmental interest. Once again, no Critical Priorities are identified here at present but it is axiomatic that environmental data

²⁶ see R. Bradley, *The Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, pp 26, 226 (Cambridge University Press, 2007)

and interpretations will be relevant to many of the site- and landscape-based Topics within other themes.

Theme PR7 Responding to changing environments (Topics 35–39)

Current understanding suggests climate change and related processes will have a major impact on the natural and historic environment of Britain in the coming decades, especially in the countryside and around our coastline. Targeted archaeological and environmental research will be important for understanding, prioritising and finding solutions to the conservation and management problems that arise in relation to prehistoric sites and landscapes. There is considerable scope for working in partnership with other agencies, such as Natural England.

Critical Priority 4: Managing the impact of climate change (Topics 36–39)

Understanding and mitigating the impacts on prehistoric sites of climate change, changing land-use and desiccation of wetlands (see also the Thematic Research Strategy for the Roman Period)

Current understanding of the likely future impact of climate change suggests the condition of the prehistoric archaeological resource will be affected both directly by changes to the natural environment, e.g. increased storms or sea-level rise leading to coastal erosion, and indirectly by measures aimed at reducing emissions, such as changing land-use to grow biomass fuel crops; the nature and location of prehistoric remains mean they may be proportionately more vulnerable to some impacts than sites of later periods. Research is required to better understand these impacts and how to mitigate them.

A more specific aspect of this CP reflects the urgent need for action in relation to key wetland sites, many of which are drying out irreversibly as a result of current farming practices, exacerbated by climate change²⁷. It will be necessary to prioritise sites and areas for rewatering or ‘rescue’ excavations and to develop partnerships and advocacy roles to deal with them. In addition to these aspects, the CP recognises the value to the climate change debate of the evidence for similar processes in prehistory (see Themes PR6 and PR9).

Alongside the Topics within the CP, the climate change agenda is also foregrounded in relation to the planning process, especially in PPS 5²⁸. Additional research Topics may therefore be identified in relation to development pressures or other processes in the future. The development of inter-agency partnership approaches to managing and protecting prehistoric sites and landscapes is also essential in relation to the climate change agenda, as outlined in the *English Heritage Strategy for Historic Environment Research in Protected Landscapes*.

²⁷ see e.g. <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.5868>

²⁸ Policy HE1: Heritage assets and climate change

Theme PR8 Integrating research and building partnerships (Topics 40–46)

An important aim of this Strategy, as with the Regional Research Frameworks (Appendix 3), is to promote integration across the sector, for example encouraging commercial organisations to produce high-quality and innovative research in order to inform academic understanding of prehistory, and conversely helping other parts of the discipline to engage more with the results of commercial archaeology²⁹.

Critical Priority 5: Improving access to unpublished data (Topics 40-42, 44, 46)

Grey literature synthesis, archival research, and enhancing data-sets and research frameworks (see also the Thematic Research Strategies for the Roman Period and the Historic Industrial Environment)

It is an archaeological truism that ‘without publication, excavation is nothing but a meaningless destruction of evidence’³⁰. Today, however, the problems of accessing archaeological information and ensuring that results are incorporated into current thinking and teaching have a number of facets of which conventional publication is just one. Several recent books and papers have demonstrated the value of academic engagement with the results of commercial excavations of prehistoric sites buried in ‘grey literature’³¹, but there remains much to do in terms of detailed period, regional and thematic synthesis, as well as making data available for researchers and producing more publicly accessible outputs. A second aspect concerns the numerous important ‘backlog’ sites, pre-dating PPG16 or investigated by academic institutions, that remain unpublished³², as well as the archives and museum collections which still await basic cataloguing or have unrealised potential for further work utilising modern techniques and approaches, including contextualisation through new fieldwork.

Another key element in maximising the value of prehistoric data is the maintenance and enhancement of the research framework process, especially addressing gaps in the process (e.g. the Mesolithic) and ensuring that the results of projects contribute iteratively to the updating of research priorities. Related to this, information on prehistoric sites and finds accessible through HERs needs to be improved in terms of both consistency and accuracy, in order to make them more useful for research, especially assessments of significance within the planning process.

There are a variety of other aspects to this theme, including undertaking and publicising exemplary projects – especially those to aid the development of partnerships – and providing research outcomes to support activities like training³³ and policy development. Meanwhile, interest in relations between England and neighbouring countries of the UK and

²⁹ as Bradley has pointed out, academic courses, museum displays and the policies of agencies like English Heritage are all out of date in this respect (*The Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*, p xv)

³⁰ *From The Ground Up. The Publication of Archaeological Projects: a user needs survey* (CBA, 2002)

³¹ e.g. D. Yates, *Land, Power and Prestige: Bronze Age field systems in southern England* (Oxbow, 2007)

³² consultation with ALGAO and other bodies is required to develop a prioritised list of prehistoric sites

³³ the recession in 2008-9 shows how vulnerable archaeology is to the loss of key skills and capacity:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200809/ldhansrd/text/90309-0001.htm#0903094000338>

Europe during prehistory has been rekindled by recent finds and scientific advances³⁴, though cultural similarities and differences across modern national borders (which were, of course, largely irrelevant in prehistory) remain under-researched for many periods. There is a need both to develop research projects with an international perspective and to create more regular channels of communication for the effective dissemination of results.

Theme PR9 Raising profiles

(Topics 47–51)

As discussed under CP5 above, the value of research is much diminished if results are not disseminated effectively – which includes audiences beyond the research community and the heritage sector. The first two of English Heritage's *Conservation Principles*³⁵ relate to participation in the historic environment, which for the less visible aspects, including many prehistoric sites, depends on making the general public and local communities more aware of them and their significance. However, prehistorians have generally been better at communicating with each other than enhancing public understanding of prehistory or raising its profile with Government and other agencies, while publications for wider audiences are an integral aspect of the research process but too often approached in a cursory or unimaginative fashion.

Despite recent high-profile discoveries and projects, the prehistoric periods, especially the 'deep time' of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic, remain undervalued and we currently have little understanding of the reasons for their 'invisibility' or how this might be addressed. We will not be able to make the case for researching and protecting prehistoric objects, sites and landscapes if we fail to communicate the value and importance of these parts of the historic environment – arguably the challenge is greater for prehistory than for more recent and familiar periods. In order to increase engagement and widen participation, partnerships with museums and the education sector are required, e.g. to develop community projects or undertake experimental reconstructions. If communities understand the value of their local heritage its protection can be enhanced within the planning process³⁶. The risks of not acting are a continuing low awareness and appreciation of prehistory among the public, policy makers and even other parts of the historic environment sector, potentially leading to weak political resolve, reduced funding, and a low priority within heritage policy and planning.

³⁴ e.g. the isotope evidence for the Continental origin of the 'Amesbury Archer' (http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/projects/amesbury/tests/oxygen_isotope.html)

³⁵ Principle 1: The historic environment is a shared resource; Principle 2: Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment.

³⁶ PPS 5, Policy HE 7.2: In considering the impact of a proposal on any heritage asset, local planning authorities should take into account the particular nature of the significance of the heritage asset and the value that it holds for this and future generations...

Critical Priority 6: Teaching prehistory**(Topics 50–51)**

Developing educational resources and popular narratives to engage new audiences (see also the Thematic Research Strategy for the Roman Period)

Many areas could be targeted for raising profiles but the absence of prehistory teaching in schools has a lot to do with the public being less well informed about these periods than later ones, and engaging children will automatically extend to other family members. The All-Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group report acknowledges that ‘... prehistory does not feature in the national curriculum in England ... the UK is the only European state to neglect prehistory in this way’ and goes on to recommend that ‘Prehistory should be part of all national curricula’³⁷. While changing the curriculum should remain a long-term goal, this CP is focussed on developing educational resources for classrooms, sites and landscapes that are appropriate for the current national curriculum, including textbooks, websites and site-based material, such as exemplary presentations of research at English Heritage’s own prehistoric properties which can demonstrate an integrated and contextual approach.

Two key aims must be to translate more of current academic knowledge and approaches into accessible popular and educational material, and to link archaeological evidence to other important topics, such as the prehistoric perspective on climate change (see Theme PR7) and how the historic environment contributes to making the places people live in. We also need to find ways of incorporating the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic, which are particularly neglected, into more general historical narratives.

Other Topics within this theme cover research to better understand the levels and kinds of knowledge and interest in prehistory that people have, e.g. in relation to Palaeolithic humans and the need to challenge non-scientific ideas, such as theories of ‘intelligent design’; as well as innovative ways of engaging new audiences and communicating the needs and values of prehistory more effectively to policy-makers.

5 Establishing research projects

The list of Topics set out in Appendix 4 (with examples of possible areas for project development) provides the basis for developing project proposals. The Topics are intended to be specific enough to allow judgement of the relevance and value of a proposal without being overly prescriptive or exclusive. Naturally, many overlap in scope with one another and with priorities identified in other Thematic and Operational Strategies; research projects may well address more than one Topic, but a primary link should always be identified. Multi-stranded but intellectually coherent projects which cross-cut different areas and offer added value are nevertheless encouraged, as are projects which provide exemplary approaches to particular places or themes, and those which establish or improve methodologies that will find wider application.

English Heritage sets out generic criteria for funding in its Research Agenda⁵ and in SHAPE⁶. Research proposals from external organisations must be submitted to the Historic

³⁷ *The Current State of Archaeology in the United Kingdom: First Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group* (APPAG, 2003)

Environment Commissions Team³⁸ in the correct MoRPHE format³⁹ and linked to the appropriate SHAPE Sub-Programme (see Appendices 1 and 2 for a list of relevant Sub-Programmes in relation to English Heritage objectives and research programmes). Guidance on developing a research proposal compatible with MoRPHE and SHAPE is also available on the English Heritage website³⁸. Decisions on funding will be based upon the criteria set out in this document, links to priorities in other relevant framework documents, and the importance of the proposal relative to other demands on English Heritage resources.

If all its objectives are to be achieved the Strategy needs the approval of the sector; comment is therefore invited on its contents, which will be taken into account in future revisions, while early discussion of grant applications and partnership projects seeking to address the Critical Priorities outlined above is welcomed (see Contacts below). In order to assess progress against each priority and ensure the right balance of resources, regularly updated information on relevant projects will be provided on the English Heritage website.

6 Contacts

To comment on this strategy document, or to discuss project proposals, please contact:

Jonathan Last (Head of Research Policy for Prehistory)
English Heritage
Fort Cumberland
Eastney
Portsmouth
PO4 9LD

Email: jonathan.last@english-heritage.org.uk

³⁸ see www.english-heritage.org.uk/keep

³⁹ *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: the MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (English Heritage, 2006)

Appendix I: English Heritage Aims and Objectives 2005–2010 with relevant SHAPE Sub-Programmes

I: Help people develop their understanding of the historic environment

IA: Ensure that our research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment

Understanding Place: Confirming new historic assets detected by remote sensing (1111.120)
 Understanding Place: Analysis of specific historic assets and locales (1111.130)
 Understanding Place: Assessing the national resource (1111.140)
 Understanding Place: Assessing historic areas (1111.150)
 Understanding Place: Assessing regional historic environment components (1111.170)
 Understanding Place: researching regional diversity (1111.170)
 Understanding the impact of past Climate Change (1111.410)
 Understanding ancient environments and ecologies (1111.420)
 Understanding artefacts and material culture (1111.510)
 Understanding historic fixtures, fittings and decorative elements (1111.520)
 Revealing ancient cultures (1111.610)
 Understanding past populations of Britain: Historical demography and human biology (1111.710)
 New Frontiers: Mapping our marine heritage (1112.110)
 New Frontiers: Understanding subterranean places (1112.210)
 New Frontiers: The Remote Past (Pleistocene and Palaeolithic archaeology) (1112.310)
 New Frontiers: Clarifying poorly understood chronologies (1112.510)
 Realising the research dividend from past unpublished historic environment investigations (1113.110)
 Tapping the motherlode: Supporting synthesis of key commercial project research (1113.410)
 Supporting Research Frameworks: National, regional, local, diachronic and thematic frameworks (1117.110)

IB: Enhance public understanding and appreciation of the historic environment and its conservation through education and training

IC: Make sure our professional expertise and knowledge is more accessible to others who need it

ID: Develop new approaches which improve understanding and management of the historic environment

Experimental research (14171.110)
 Bright Science: technical and technological innovation (14171.210)
 Fresh toolkits: Methodological and theoretical research and innovation (14171.310)

2: Get the historic environment on other people's agendas

2A: Provide better evidence of the importance and value of the historic environment

Socio-economic values of the historic environment (21121.110)
 Researching perceptions of the historic environment (21122.110)

2B: Lead campaigns and national debates to influence policies which affect the historic environment

2C: Engage with key stakeholders on issues affecting, or affected by, the historic environment

Protected Landscape research (23111.110)

2D: Identify and cultivate new public and private sector partnerships and sources of funding and support for the historic environment

2E: Develop cross-Government recognition of the value of the historic environment

3: Enable and promote sustainable change to England's historic environment

3A: Promote better legislation, policies, guidance and good practice to improve the system of protection

Heritage Protection Research (31143.110)

3B: Ensure that the condition of the most significant parts of the historic environment is recorded and monitored to enable their better protection

Heritage at Risk: Monitoring surveys (32141.110)
 Heritage at Risk: Identifying threats arising directly from Climate Change & developing responses (32142.110)
 Heritage at Risk: Identifying threats (other than Climate Change) & developing responses (32142.210)
 Heritage at Risk: Recording historic sites, buildings and monuments under imminent threat outside the planning process (32144.110)

3C: Provide better and more accessible advice to help people appreciate the benefits of maintaining and caring for historic places

4: Help local communities to care for their historic environment

4A: Help local authority members and officers develop their skills, knowledge, advice and capacity to make the most of the historic environment

Researching Local Authority priorities and requirements (41123.110)
 Systems research for Historic Environment Records (41161.110)

4B: Develop and disseminate policies, principles, guidelines, standards and exemplars to promote better management of change in the historic environment

4C: Provide support and guidance to other organisations engaged in the care, study, and promotion of the historic environment

Researching historic environment sector support requirements (43123.110)

4D: Use our role in the planning process to develop appreciation of the historic environment and its relevance to the sustainability, planning and design of new development

4E: Ensure that our grants to third parties are used in the most effective way to regenerate, protect and enhance the historic environment

5: Stimulate and harness enthusiasm for England's historic environment

5A: Increase public awareness of the historic environment

5B: Broaden access to the historic environment and engagement with diverse communities

Researching barriers to inclusion (52131.110)

5C: Stimulate access, interest and enjoyment through the sites and collections in our care

Researching public participation at English Heritage sites (53131.110)

Research for interpretation and presentation of EH properties and collections (53151.110)

6: Make the most effective use of the assets in our care

6A: Use our financial resources efficiently and maximise the commercial benefits we gain from our assets

6B: Invest in the development of our staff

6C: Invest in the development of our operating systems

6D: Maintain and conserve our properties, collections and archives to a standard consistent with their importance

Researching safe storage of collections and archives (64143.110)

6E: Increase the income generated by our properties to meet the cost of opening them to the public

6F: Develop the English Heritage brand as a symbol of authoritative advice, responsible custodianship, first class service and the leading source of knowledge and understanding of England's historic environment

6G: Implement the recommendations of the National Monuments Record Review, *Unlocking Heritage Information*

Appendix 2: English Heritage Research Themes and Programmes with relevant SHAPE Sub-Programmes

A: Discovering, studying and defining historic assets and their significance

A1: What's out there? Defining, characterising and analysing the historic environment

Understanding Place: Confirming new historic assets detected by remote sensing (1111.120)
 Understanding Place: Analysis of specific historic assets and locales (1111.130)
 Understanding Place: Assessing the national resource (1111.140)
 Understanding Place: Assessing historic areas (1111.150)
 Understanding Place: Assessing regional historic environment components (1111.170)
 Understanding Place: researching regional diversity (1111.310)
 Understanding the impact of past Climate Change (1111.410)
 Understanding ancient environments and ecologies (1111.420)
 Understanding artefacts and material culture (1111.510)
 Understanding historic fixtures, fittings and decorative elements (1111.520)
 Revealing ancient cultures (1111.610)
 Understanding past populations of Britain: Historical demography and human biology (1111.710)
 Protected Landscape research (23111.110)
 Heritage at Risk: Monitoring surveys (32141.110)

A2: Spotting the gaps: Analysing poorly understood landscapes, areas and monuments

New Frontiers: Mapping our marine heritage (1112.110)
 New Frontiers: Understanding subterranean places (1112.210)
 New Frontiers: The Remote Past (Pleistocene and Palaeolithic archaeology) (1112.310)
 New Frontiers: Clarifying poorly understood chronologies (1112.510)

A3: Unlocking the riches: Realising the potential of the research dividend

Realising the research dividend from past unpublished historic environment investigations (1113.110)
 Tapping the motherlode: Supporting synthesis of key commercial project research (1113.410)

B: Studying and establishing the socio-economic and other values and needs of the historic environment and those concerned with it

B1: Valuing the historic environment: Quantifying the economic and social value of historic assets

Socio-economic values of the historic environment (21121.110)

B2: Gauging the mood: Establishing perceptions and attitudes to the historic environment

Researching perceptions of the historic environment (21122.110)

B3: Understanding the needs: Delivering 'sector intelligence'

Researching Local Authority priorities and requirements (41123.110)
 Researching historic environment sector support requirements (43123.110)

C: Engaging and developing diverse audiences

C1: Opening doors: Understanding public participation in the historic environment

Researching barriers to inclusion (52131.110)
 Researching public participation at English Heritage sites (53131.110)

C2: Making friends: Building understanding and appreciation through education and outreach

D: Studying and assessing the risks to historic assets and devising responses

D1: Heritage at risk: Quantifying and analysing the condition of the historic environment

D2: Measuring threat: Studying the reasons for risk and devising responses

Heritage at Risk: Identifying threats arising directly from Climate Change & developing responses (32142.110)
 Heritage at Risk: Identifying threats (other than Climate Change) & developing responses (32142.210)

D3: Keeping it safe: Protection and conservation

Heritage Protection Research (31143.110)
 Researching safe storage of collections and archives (64143.110)

D4: Rescue! Threat-led last resort analysis

Heritage at Risk: Recording historic sites, buildings and monuments under imminent threat outside the planning process (32144.110)
--

E: Studying historic assets and improving their presentation and interpretation**E1: Presenting the past: Research to inform the presentation to the public of historic places**

Research for interpretation and presentation of EH properties and collections (53151.110)

F: Studying and developing information management**F1: Navigating the resource: Developing standards for Historic Environment Records**

Systems research for Historic Environment Records (41161.110)

F2: Wired! Studying and developing information management

Experimental research (14171.110) Bright Science: technical and technological innovation (14171.210) Fresh toolkits: Methodological and theoretical research and innovation (14171.310)

G: Studying and devising ways of making English Heritage and the sector more effective**G1: Sharpening the tools: Developing new techniques of analysis and understanding****G2: Defining the questions: Devising research strategies, frameworks and agenda**

Supporting Research Frameworks: National, regional, local, diachronic and thematic frameworks (14171.310)

G3: Impact and effectiveness: Measuring outcomes and effectiveness of English Heritage and the 'sector'

Appendix 3: Current Prehistoric Research Frameworks

I English Regional Research Frameworks

(* incomplete; ** currently under revision/review)

- *Revision of the Regional Research Framework for the Eastern Region* (East Anglian Archaeology, 2008; http://www.eaareports.org.uk/framework_revised.htm)
- *The Archaeology of South-West England: resource assessment and research agenda* (Somerset County Council, 2008)
- *Bedfordshire Archaeology – Research and Archaeology: resource assessment, research agenda and strategy* (Bedfordshire Archaeological Council, 2007) [aligned with Eastern Region RRF]
- *The Undiscovered Country: the earlier prehistory of the West Midlands* (Oxbow Books, 2007 [*resource assessment only]; seminar papers at <http://www.iaa.bham.ac.uk/research/projects/wmrrfa/seminar.shtml>)
- *The Archaeology of the East Midlands: an archaeological resource assessment and research agenda* (Leicester University Press, 2006; *draft strategy at <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/tpa/research/project3/index.htm>)
- *Shared Visions: the North-East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment* (Durham County Council, 2006)
- *Research and Archaeology in North West England. An archaeological research framework for north west England* (Archaeology North West, 2006 [resource assessment], 2007 [research agenda and strategy]; draft documents at <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/mol/archaeology/arfl>)
- *The Archaeology of Yorkshire: an assessment at the beginning of the 21st century* (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 2003 [*resource assessment only])
- *A Research Framework for London Archaeology 2002* (Museum of London, 2002)**
- *Research and Archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties* (East Anglian Archaeology, 1997 [resource assessment], 2000 [research agenda and strategy]; http://www.eaareports.org.uk/research_and_archaeology.htm)
- *An Archaeological Research Framework for the Greater Thames Estuary* (Essex County Council, 1999)**
- **Solent-Thames Archaeological Research Framework* (draft documents at http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/archaeology/solent_framework.page?)
- **South East Research Framework* (seminar papers at http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/heritage/south_east_research_framework.aspx)

2 Other Areas/Landscapes in Britain and Ireland (including offshore)

- *An Archaeological Research Agenda for West Yorkshire: the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods* (West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service, 2010)
- *An Archaeological Research Agenda for West Yorkshire: the Iron Age and Romano-British periods* (West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service, 2009; <http://www.archaeology.wyjs.org.uk/wyjs-archaeology-research-r.asp>)
- *Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site Research Framework* (The Heritage Council, 2009; <http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/archaeology/heritage-council-initiatives/bru-na-boinne-research-framework/>)

- *An Archaeological Research Agenda for West Yorkshire: the Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age* (West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service, 2008; <http://www.archaeology.wyjs.org.uk/wyjs-archaeology-research-r.asp>)
- *A Research Framework for the Archaeology of Wales* (<http://www.archaeoleg.org.uk/intro.html>)
- *An Outline Resource Assessment and Research Framework for the Archaeology of Worcester* (Worcester City Museums, 2007; http://www.worcestercitymuseums.org.uk/archaeo/res-framwkv2_51.htm)
- *A Review of Research Needs in Irish Archaeology* (The Heritage Council, 2007; <http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/archaeology/heritage-council-initiatives/a-review-of-research-needs-in-irish-archaeology/>)
- *Surrey Archaeological Research Framework* (Surrey County Council, 2006; http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/sccwebsite/sccwspages.nsf/LookupWebPagesByTITLE_RTF/Surrey+Archaeological+Research+Framework?opendocument)
- Offshore Strategic Environmental Assessments in regard to prehistoric archaeological remains (DTI, 2002–2006; http://www.offshore-sea.org.uk/site/scripts/category_info.php?categoryID=37)
- *Palaeolithic Research Framework for the Bristol Avon Basin* (Bristol City Council, 2005; <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Leisure-Culture/Local-History-Heritage/archaeology/palaeolithic-in-bristol.en;jsessionid=5FB98520FF88645E33119159610A5E05.tcwwwaplaws2>)
- *The Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Research Agenda* (Historic Scotland, 2005; <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/heritage/worldheritage/world-heritage-sites-in-scotland/neolithic-orkney.htm>)
- *Stonehenge World Heritage Site: an archaeological research framework* (EH and Bournemouth University, 2005; <http://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/9689>)
- *Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: an archaeological research framework* (Museum of London, 2004; <http://www.conservancy.co.uk/page/Research-Frameworks/361/>)
- *Dorset Coast Historic Environment Research Framework – Draft* (Wessex Archaeology, 2004; http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/projects/marine/eh/dorset_coast)
- *Submarine Prehistoric Archaeology of the North Sea: research priorities and collaboration with industry* (CBA, 2004)
- *Aspects of Archaeology and History in Surrey: towards a research framework for the county* (Surrey Archaeological Society, 2004)
- *The City by the Pool: assessing the archaeology of the City of Lincoln* (Oxbow Books, 2003; includes Lincoln Archaeological Research Assessment on CD-ROM)
- *Time and Tide: the archaeology of the Witham Valley* (Witham Valley Archaeological Research Committee, 2003)
- *Archaeological Research Agenda for the Avebury World Heritage Site* (AAHRG, 2001; <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/leisureandculture/museumhistoryheritage/worldheritagesite/aveburyarchaeologicalresearchagenda.htm>)*
- *England's Coastal Heritage* (English Heritage/RCHME, 1997)
- **Maritime and Marine Historic Environment Research Framework* (draft documents at http://www.soton.ac.uk/archaeology/research/projects/maritime_research_framework.html)
- **Scottish Archaeological Research Framework* (draft documents at <http://www.socantscot.org/scarf.asp>)

3 Periods

- *Research and Conservation Framework for the British Palaeolithic* (English Heritage/Prehistoric Society, 2008)
- *Britons and Romans: advancing an archaeological agenda* (CBA, 2001)
- *Understanding the British Iron Age: an agenda for action* (Wessex Archaeology, 2001)
- *Research Frameworks for the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic of Britain and Ireland* (Prehistoric Society, 1999)

4 Site/Material Types

- *Metals and Metalworking: a research framework for archaeometallurgy* (Historical Metallurgy Society, 2008)
- *Research Frameworks for Holocene Lithics in Britain* (Lithic Studies Society, 2004)
- *English Heritage Strategy for Wetlands* (English Heritage, 2002)

Appendix 4: Research Topics for Prehistory

(those addressing critical priorities are in **bold**)

Topic	Selected areas for project development	Critical Priority	SHAPE Sub-Programme (see also Appendices 1 & 2)	
THEME PRI – LANDSCAPE PERSPECTIVES				
1. Moving beyond the prehistoric site: developing landscape perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding prehistoric perceptions of landscapes and natural places investigating the development of routes and roads understanding human exploitation of different landscape zones understanding the causes and consequences of changes in settlement patterns 		Understanding place: Assessing historic areas	11111.150
2. Political and ritual landscapes in prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding monument complexes, their environs and 'catchments' understanding the emergence of territories and polities investigating (hill)forts and their landscapes beyond Wessex 		Understanding place: Assessing historic areas	11111.150
3. Integrating prehistoric research across different landscape zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> integrating data from upland and lowland landscapes linking the archaeology of the terrestrial, coastal and submarine zones integrating studies of caves and open sites 	I	Understanding place: Assessing historic areas	11111.150
4. Understanding biases in prehistoric data and distributions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> accounting for variations in development and land-use determining and overcoming differences in the effectiveness of remote sensing in different areas 	I	Understanding place: Assessing regional historic environment components	11111.170
5. Addressing gaps in the prehistoric record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> field survey in areas subject to land-use change/environmental stewardship investigating periods and regions where material culture is scarce researching the landscape contexts of artefact deposition modelling sedimentary contexts for well-preserved Mesolithic sites and associated palaeoenvironmental evidence 	I	Understanding place: Assessing regional historic environment components; Understanding place: Historic Landscape Characterisation	11111.170 11111.220
6. Regional diversity in prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> characterising prehistoric landscapes and developing predictive models understanding regional variations in the appearance of different types of site understanding regional differences in artefact styles and economies writing regional prehistories that move beyond 'Wessex models' 	I	Understanding place: researching regional diversity	11111.310
7. Mobility and sedentism in prehistoric agricultural societies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding the nature of settlement, particularly c 4000–1500 BC linking settlement patterns and subsistence regimes (e.g. pastoralism) investigating the origins and purpose of land division 		Understanding ancient environments and ecologies	11111.420
8. Submerged prehistoric landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reconstructing landscapes and environments of the seas around England understanding human occupation and activity in now-submerged landscapes 		New frontiers: Mapping our marine heritage	11112.110
9. Reconstructing Pleistocene and Early Holocene landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> investigating the routes of pre-glacial rivers in relation to early human activity understanding the chronology of human presence and absence understanding patterns of occupation – where are the campsites? 		New frontiers: The remote past	11112.310

Topic	Selected areas for project development	Critical Priority	SHAPE Sub-Programme (see also Appendices 1 & 2)
THEME PR2 – INNOVATIVE STUDIES OF SITES AND MONUMENTS			
10. Characterising and contextualising prehistoric sites and monuments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> following up NMP and similar discoveries through survey and excavation investigating the settings and environs of sites and monuments (e.g. rock art) 'off-site' archaeology: studying spaces between sites 	2	Understanding place: Confirming new historic assets detected by remote sensing; Understanding place: Analysis of specific historic assets and locales
			11111.120 11111.130
11. Intra-site studies in prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> interpreting pit-digging, deposition and discard understanding domestic architecture and how it was inhabited 		Understanding place: Analysis of specific historic assets and locales
			11111.130
12. New approaches to the classification of prehistoric sites and monuments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improving dating of poorly understood site types or monument classes understanding monument variability and 'non-conventional' forms 	2	Understanding place: Assessing the national resource
			11111.140
13. Understanding and protecting prehistoric caves, rock-shelters and mines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> audits, surveys and assessments of subterranean assets and their contexts characterising sub-surface stone, flint and metal ore extraction sites 	2	New frontiers: Understanding subterranean places
			11112.210
14. Addressing the needs of prehistory in developer-funded archaeology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing evaluation and recording techniques for 'sites without structures' developing evaluation and recording techniques for submerged sites 	3	Fresh toolkits: Methodological and theoretical research and innovation
			14171.310
15. Understanding ploughsoil archaeology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> making sense of spatial patterning within artefact scatters investigations to date and characterise important lithic scatters 	3	Fresh toolkits: Methodological and theoretical research and innovation
			14171.310
16. Supporting heritage protection reform in relation to prehistoric sites of special interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> research to develop and update HPR documentation and guidance, e.g. Heritage Asset Descriptions (HADs) research to develop principles of selection for 'sites without structures' research to support the designation and protection of vulnerable site types 	2, 3	Heritage protection research
			31143.110
THEME PR3 – UNDERSTANDING PREHISTORIC SOCIETY			
17. Linking different regions of Britain, Ireland and NW Europe in prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding relations between prehistoric Britain, Ireland and NW Europe understanding the nature of maritime links in later prehistory better understanding of the European dimension to metalworking in Britain 		Understanding place: researching regional diversity
			11111.310
18. Technology and society in prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> investigating lithic, groundstone and pottery production, use and exchange understanding the extraction and production of metals investigating 'old' technologies (e.g. flint-working in the metal ages) interpreting the evidence for 'invisible' crafts (e.g. carpentry, textiles) 		Understanding artefacts and material culture
			11111.510

Topic	Selected areas for project development	Critical Priority	SHAPE Sub-Programme (see also Appendices 1 & 2)	
19. Prehistoric material culture in context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing and refining regional ceramic and lithic sequences • writing object biographies: understanding consumption and deposition • undertaking quantitative studies and inter-site comparisons • interpreting prehistoric art (e.g. rock art styles, 'Celtic art') 		Understanding artefacts and material culture; Understanding historic fixtures, fittings and decorative elements	11111.510 11111.520
20. Long-term themes in prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • warfare and conflict • transport and communication (e.g. seafaring) • the past in prehistoric societies (e.g. the re-use of monuments) 		Revealing ancient cultures	11111.610
21. The place and role of the dead in prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investigating death and burial in hunter-gatherer communities • interpreting human remains as symbolic resources • understanding 'invisible' burial rites 		Revealing ancient cultures	11111.610
22. Eating and drinking in prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying diet and investigating the role of different foods • understanding food preparation and consumption practices • investigating food processing and preservation (e.g. salting, brewing) 		Revealing ancient cultures	11111.610
23. Prehistoric communities and individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • characterising the size and social structure of human groups • understanding migration and mobility (e.g. through isotope studies) • interpreting social identity and personhood • explaining later prehistoric social and political change 		Understanding past populations of Britain: Historical demography and human biology	11111.710
24. Developing theoretical perspectives for prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building multi-disciplinary perspectives • new approaches to integrated analysis and publication • developing approaches to link different scales of analysis 		Fresh toolkits: Methodological and theoretical research and innovation	14171.310
THEME PR4 – CRITICAL APPROACHES TO KEY TRANSITIONS IN PREHISTORY				
25. Key transitions in prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploring the impact on populations of the Pleistocene-Holocene transition • understanding the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition and the adoption of farming • better understanding of all aspects of the Early Iron Age • understanding continuity and change in the 1st century AD 		New frontiers: Clarifying poorly understood chronologies	11112.510
26. Building chronologies for prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving chronologies for poorly dated periods (e.g. the LBA and EIA) • dating particular artefact styles and industries, including regional sequences • connecting palaeoenvironmental sequences to archaeological chronologies • dating the introduction and disappearance of plant and animal species 		New frontiers: Clarifying poorly understood chronologies	11112.510
THEME PR5 – REALISING THE FULL POTENTIAL OF SCIENTIFIC TECHNIQUES				
27. Developing high-quality experimental archaeology projects for prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investigating prehistoric technology through reconstructions • investigating formation processes through taphonomic experiments 		Experimental research	14171.110

Topic	Selected areas for project development	Critical Priority	SHAPE Sub-Programme (see also Appendices 1 & 2)	
28. Developing dating techniques for prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing appropriate applications of various dating methods exemplary projects to develop sector capacity in Bayesian modelling 		Bright science: technical & technological innovation	14171.210
29. Developing scientific techniques for prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> stable isotopes to understand human diets and mobility lipid analysis to understand pottery function and food consumption petrography and chemical analysis to understand manufacture and trade reviewing artefact typologies in light of new scientific techniques 		Bright science: technical & technological innovation	14171.210
30. Developing survey and prospection techniques for prehistoric sites & landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> geophysical prospection methods for hunter-gatherer sites 'seeing through' and evaluating alluvial, colluvial and peat deposits developing the use of Lidar and allied techniques for prehistory 		Bright science: technical & technological innovation	14171.210
31. Developing quantitative and spatial methods for prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> characterising and defining artefact assemblages developing analytical uses of GIS and statistical methods 		Fresh toolkits: Methodological and theoretical research and innovation	14171.310
THEME PR6 – UNDERSTANDING HUMAN INTERACTIONS WITH THE ENVIRONMENT				
32. Human responses to environmental change in prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding the effects of sea-level change and coastal inundation investigating upland settlement and abandonment researching faunal/botanical proxies for environmental change 		Understanding the impact of past Climate Change	11111.410
33. Human interactions with the environment in prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding human impacts on faunal and plant communities interpreting the cultural significance of animals and plants characterising the subsistence strategies of hunter-gatherers and farmers 		Understanding ancient environments and ecologies	11111.420
34. Managing the prehistoric environmental resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> researching storage requirements for samples and cores quantifying peat wastage and wetland desiccation 		Researching safe storage of collections and archives	64143.110
THEME PR7 – RESPONDING TO CHANGING ENVIRONMENTS				
35. Multi-agency approaches to conservation and monitoring of prehistoric sites and landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> research to support the protection of prehistoric sites and landscapes in conjunction with other assets (e.g. SSSIs) undertaking palaeoenvironmental assessments in protected landscapes 		Protected landscape research	23111.110
36. Establishing priorities for protection of prehistoric sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assessing the vulnerability of different sites interpreting and following up the results of condition surveys 	4	Heritage at Risk: Monitoring surveys	32141.110
37. Understanding the impact of changing climate and land-use on prehistoric sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> investigating and monitoring the impact of new crop regimes responding to the impact of coastal change and coastal defence investigating and monitoring changes in hydrology 	4	Heritage at Risk: Identifying threats from Climate Change and developing responses	32142.110
38. Assessing risks to prehistoric sites and landscapes and developing conservation strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> research to develop wetland strategies measuring the impact of arable cultivation to inform policy development 	4	Heritage at Risk: Identifying threats (other than Climate Change) and developing responses	32142.210

Topic	Selected areas for project development	Critical Priority	SHAPE Sub-Programme (see also Appendices 1 & 2)	
39. Evaluation and investigation of threatened prehistoric sites outside the planning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> investigating exemplars of irreversibly deteriorating wetland and coastal sites investigating exemplar sites threatened by agriculture monitoring dredging and peat cutting for votive deposits and other artefacts 	4	Heritage at Risk: Recording historic sites under threat outside the planning process	32144.110
THEME PR8 – INTEGRATING RESEARCH AND BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS				
40. Publishing key backlog prehistoric sites and assemblages	<i>priority list under development</i>	5	Realising the research dividend from past unpublished historic environment investigations	11113.110
41. Realising the potential of prehistoric archives and collections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> auditing museum collections and enhancing artefact identifications applying new scientific techniques to archived assemblages targeted fieldwork to enhance and contextualise old excavations survey and excavation to contextualise Portable Antiquities finds 	5	Realising the research dividend from past unpublished historic environment investigations	11113.110
42. Synthesising unpublished prehistoric data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'grey literature' and HER syntheses for key themes and topics collating and synthesising Portable Antiquities data 	5	Tapping the motherlode: Supporting synthesis of key commercial project research	11113.410
43. Building research links for prehistory with other parts of Britain, Ireland and Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> integrating research across Great Britain and Ireland developing research projects with European partners 		Supporting research frameworks: National, regional, local, diachronic and thematic frameworks	11172.110
44. Identifying and addressing gaps in the research framework process for prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> defining areas, periods and themes that need research strategies research to inform revision and updating of existing research strategies monitoring and enhancing the impact of research strategies 	5	Supporting research frameworks: National, regional, local, diachronic and thematic frameworks	11172.110
45. Researching training needs in prehistoric archaeology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> research to develop specialist training and 'apprenticeships' research to support the development of guidance for non-specialists managing prehistoric resources 		Researching local authority priorities and requirements; Researching historic environment sector support requirements	41123.110 43123.110
46. Making HERs and related resources more accurate, relevant and useful for prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> verifying and enhancing information about prehistory on HERs and other databases 	5	Systems research for Historic Environment Records	41161.110
THEME PR9 – RAISING PROFILES				
47. Establishing the socio-economic values of prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> showing how prehistory can support social and environmental agendas assessing the non-financial values of prehistoric monuments to communities 		Socio-economic values of the historic environment	21121.110

Topic	Selected areas for project development	Critical Priority	SHAPE Sub-Programme (see also Appendices 1 & 2)	
48. Gauging and responding to perceptions of prehistory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research to understand public knowledge, interest and priorities 		Researching perceptions of the historic environment	21122.110
49. Engaging people with prehistoric research to build awareness and enthusiasm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research projects aimed at developing community participation • research and dissemination to raise awareness of prehistoric sites and landscapes • challenging theories of 'intelligent design' through Palaeolithic research 		Researching barriers to inclusion; Researching public participation at EH sites	52131.110 53131.110
50. Teaching prehistory to children and adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research to develop educational resources for prehistory • research to develop teachers' packs for EH prehistoric properties 	6	Researching barriers to inclusion; Researching public participation at EH sites	52131.110 53131.110
51. Innovative presentation methods for prehistoric sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research to develop audioguides and web pages for EH prehistoric properties • using the 'Stonehenge dividend' to promote other sites and regions • integrating prehistory into long-term landscape studies around later sites • engaging audiences through experimental reconstructions 	6	Research for interpretation and presentation of EH properties and collections	53151.110

If you would like this document in a different format, please contact
our Customer Services department:
Telephone: 0870 333 1181
Fax: 01793 414926
Textphone: 01793 414878
E-mail: customers@english-heritage.org.uk