

News

Consultants' database for the Cairngorms

The Cairngorms National Park Authority have set up a database of consultants, including those interested in working on interpretation, for projects in the National Park.

The Authority does not own or manage any land, visitor centres or visitor attractions in the Park, but works closely with land managers and communities to raise visitors' appreciation of the Cairngorms' special qualities. For projects funded by the Authority they often encourage people to use interpretation professionals, and the database will be a source of possible contractors.

Registration is free, and copywriters, designers, manufacturers, illustrators and interpretive planners are all invited to register. Details can be found at www.cairngorms.co.uk/parkauthority/consultants/

For more information contact Andy Ford, Visitor Services Officer with the Authority on 01479 870558 e-mail andyford@cairngorms.co.uk

More about Art

Matt Baker's article (page 9) gives some insight into how artists approach interpretation projects. A recent study in *Museums Practice* (published by the Museums Association) looks in detail at arts projects. The information is geared towards museums, but should be of interest to anyone considering such a scheme. It includes case studies, how to establish a mutually beneficial relationship between the artist and host organisation, what to think about in evaluating arts projects, and some simple 'do's and don'ts'. See *Museums Practice* Issue 31, Autumn 2005.

Letter - Presenting archaeology

Ronan Toolis and Stephen Carter are concerned about an apparent lack of commitment to interpreting archaeological remains that are discovered as a consequence of the planning system (*Planners, Public and Profits*, issue 12, autumn 2005). At East Lothian Council's Archaeology Service (ELCAS) we share those sentiments. We have always been of the mind that the future of the past lies in engaging the very people who are (in many cases) excluded from the process. We include this statement in planning recommendations and project briefs:

"If significant archaeological remains are uncovered, the applicant is encouraged to make provision for public accessibility, either through local media involvement, school visits/talks, open days (dependant on site conditions), exhibitions or evening talks. Community involvement should be seen as a positive step in creating both a local

sense of history and an important aspect for the development of community well-being.”

Unfunded public dissemination and interpretation is not just confined to the private contracting companies, nor to Highland Council, as I am sure other council archaeology services would agree . Many local authority archaeology services spend evenings and weekends engaging the public because we too see community involvement as essential to the sustainability of the archaeological profession.

Developers and their archaeological contractors often say that public site visits are out of the question because of site safety issues, but there are a range of options available for making sure that the public are aware of the archaeological remains that have been discovered.

In East Lothian and Midlothian, significant archaeological remains discovered as a result of the planning process are brought to the attention of the public through site open days and interpretation, press releases, local popular publications, local evening talks or the East Lothian Archaeology Week. The City of Edinburgh Council and East Lothian Council run an annual one-day archaeological conference, which invites archaeologists to give informal lectures to the general public about recent discoveries in both counties. This event usually attracts 150 attendees: this year the conference will include recent discoveries in Midlothian.

As the authors have pointed out, involving and engaging the public with archaeological remains (be they very recent discoveries or long known monuments), is of paramount importance. It is important not just because public support is fundamental to the sustainability of the profession, but because Scotland's heritage belongs to us all. As archaeologists and heritage managers we therefore have a duty to enable anyone, no matter what their level of interest or intellectual background, to know more about the archaeological heritage around them and to understand its context and significance.

Biddy Simpson, Heritage Officer, East Lothian Council Archaeology Service