



The Essex Society for Archaeology & History

FORMERLY THE ESSEX ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
FOUNDED 1852

Essex Society for Archaeology and History (ESAH) 10-year Strategy

'...the past is not dead, but is living in us, and will be alive in the future which we are helping to make...' William Morris

1. Introduction

Appropriately our vision is taken from the words of that great Essex man and early conservationist William Morris. Implementation of the strategy set out below will help us maintain and develop a deep and lively interest in all aspects of the archaeology and history of Essex. It will strengthen our Society's position as a vital centre for the dissemination of knowledge of the County's past and enable us to work more closely with others to ensure that the past is both conserved and helps shape the future of Essex.

2. Dissemination

This has been and will remain the core of the Society's activities with *Essex Archaeology and History* at its heart. The strategy will seek to maintain that, whilst developing our approach to dissemination in the context of the present and future potential of digital publication.

2.1 *Essex Archaeology and History* 'Transactions' (EAH)

First Phase: such is the range of material known or likely to be available for EAH in the next few years that it can reasonably be anticipated publication will continue in the existing format.

Second Phase: continue publication as now whilst considering future options, hard copy, hybrid or digital. Consult with membership, contributors, and users regarding future possibilities. A useful initial step could be to make EAH available via the Archaeological Date Service (ADS), as some other County Societies have already done.

Third Phase: decide ways of implementing any desired changes identified in phase two.

2.2 *Essex Journal* (EJ)

Consideration of the future format of EJ should broadly follow that outlined for EAH above, the 'magazine' format of EJ may tend to favour maintenance of a hard copy format.

2.3 Occasional papers (occ paps)

Hitherto production of occ paps has been less regularised and systematic than for EAH and EJ, partly because of their nature.

Initially, the two occ paps currently nearing production can reasonably be expected to proceed under the current somewhat ad hoc arrangements. Unlike EAH, EJ and

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the newsletter occ paps do not have a specific editor and the strategy will aim to regularise the editorial arrangements for occ paps.

Consideration should be given to the number of occ paps we produce and the topics they cover which at the moment include; articles rather too long for EAH and in-depth consideration of particular subjects. It may be that inviting or commissioning more synthesis or thematic volumes would be useful.

As for EAH and EJ consideration should be given for future options, hard copy, hybrid or digital in consultation with membership, contributors, and users regarding possibilities.

2.4 Newsletters

The ESAH newsletter is a key part of services to members and its regular appearance is a key element in the functioning of the Society. In addition, the Essex Industrial Archaeology Group (EIAG) produces its own newsletter sent to EIAG members, and made available to the wider ESAH membership via our website.

The current mix of short articles, often but not always inspired by current research and issues, together with some news items provides an interesting read very much in line with the newsletters of comparable societies and that will be maintained.

Following the recent switch to digital distribution, contributors will be encouraged to include more images and active links in their items, in the longer term consideration will be given to developing the potential of the digital format.

In conjunction with 2.6, and 2.6 below consideration will be given to inclusion of more short news items.

2.5 Website

The success of the recent revisions and relaunch has given us a more effective and stable website.

Initially arrangements will be put in place to ensure that the website is maintained and updated so that it remains live.

Subsequently consideration should be given to the website's relationship to the other aspects of the strategy so that it becomes a hub for the Society's activities. An early development might be online booking for Society events (see 4 below)

2.6 Twitter and other social media

At present the Society has had little involvement with social media, probably, in part at least, the result of the age profile of its membership in general and Council in particular. It is clear that situation will need to change during the life of this strategy.

The Society's Twitter account which had fallen into abeyance has recently been taken over by the current newsletter editor and been revitalised.

In the first instance Twitter should be seen as a means of the Society communicating with the wider world (there may be links to 7 below).

Consideration will be given to more active and effective use of social media.

3. Library

The Library is the Society's most valuable asset both intellectually and financially, it is the most extensive library devoted to the archaeology and history of Essex, and probably the finest archaeological library in the East of England outside Cambridge. Its development and maintenance is and will remain, part of the core purpose of the Society. Whilst digital publication may become dominant in future decades, we know that books can last for

many hundreds of years, digital information may prove to be similarly long-lasting, but it is conceivable its accessibility may be short lived.

The Society will continue to seek to maintain the Library's complete runs of journals and acquire books to enhance and maintain its coverage.

The partnership with the University Library is essential and will be maintained and developed to encourage use of our Library, the relationship will clearly be vital to the development of the Library as digital publication becomes more widespread. Here there is a clear link with 2 above, indeed the Society's website with its digitally available runs of EAH, newsletter and EJ can already be seen as an integral part of the Library.

4. Events

Events such as visits, annual symposium, Morant lecture, Morant Lunch etc have been an integral part of the Society since its inception, though their variety and nature has of course changed over the years. The EIAG arranges a specialised programme of lectures and visits including a biennial Industrial Heritage Fair. It is essential that Society's like ESAH have such events which are by their nature social occasions. The pandemic has brought the programme of events more or less to a halt over the last couple of years, providing an enforced pause to consider future arrangements.

Initial actions will need to be around capacity, the current Programme Secretary is also the Society's Librarian, bookings are made through the Society's Secretary that was instituted as a temporary measure but has now been going on for two years. A permanent booking system, perhaps online, must be created as a priority, additional members of the Programme Committee should be sought to actively support the work of the Programme Secretary.

The annual symposium is a core event for the Society's annual programme, but it appears the Morant lunch may have run its course and other options will be considered, perhaps a more informal buffet to allow greater circulation and conversation maybe combined with the Morant Lecture.

In the longer term the range and nature of the Society's visits will be reviewed.

5. Grants

The recent adoption of an application form for or grants will give the Society the possibility of developing a better understanding of the range of grants it gives each year. In the longer term the Society, may wish to consider promoting particular types of activity, research and publication by targeting its grant funding.

6. Planning and land management issues

6.1 Individual planning applications and strategic issues

Following last year's white paper it appeared that a new Planning Bill would introduce sweeping changes to the current system, however, following the decision to postpone the Bill it seems that drastic change is less likely, though clearly change is still in the offing.

Currently the Society comments quite regularly and fully on strategic planning issues such as, major infrastructure projects, changes to planning process etc, though even there the Society's has not commented on all such schemes. By contrast the Society comments on very few individual planning applications and generally on a somewhat ad hoc basis. That is hardly surprising given the huge number of applications across the County which have some impact on heritage assets (to use the current planning jargon). The EIAG is more actively engaged with planning issues, regularly commenting on applications which affect industrial buildings and is occasionally asked, by Essex County Council Place Services, to provide specialist advice.

Should the Society wish to become more actively involved in planning matters it will need to increase its capacity, firstly in the number of people who prepare comment on the Society's behalf, secondly in developing the necessary skills. The Society's members will have considerable specialist knowledge but perhaps less skill in engaging in with the planning process. The first issue will need at least a small group of members willing to take on the role of commenting on behalf ESAH and committing to such training as may be necessary. It is uncertain what appetite there may be for that. Identifying training may be simpler (though it will require some financial commitment on behalf of the Society) there are often appropriate courses available, and it may be that bespoke training could be commissioned for Society members.

The aim should be to develop the Society's capacity in dealing with Strategic issues. If the planning system remains as it currently is the Strategic level is probably where the Society can most effectively engage with the planning process. A principal aim might be for the Society to provide input into the next round of Local Plans likely to be under development at the end of this decade and provide comment on major infrastructure schemes as they arise. Currently the number and range of individual planning applications are too great for the Society to comment on. Once it has developed capacity at the Strategic level, considering how to better engage with individual applications may be something for the next ten year strategy in the 2030s. Should changes to the planning system along the lines of those suggested by the White Paper be introduced, engagement at the strategic level will be even more important since the plan making stage will be pretty much the sole option for consideration of historic environment issues, comment on individual applications is unlikely to be possible.

6.2 Other land management issues, green infrastructure, natural environment enhancement

This area has been growing in importance in recent decades a trend which looks set to continue. Agri-environment schemes, habitat creation, extensive tree planting, flood risk management both on the coast and in river and stream valleys can have considerable historic environment impacts. Here again the best role for ESAH may be in providing input at a strategic level and recently, Essex County Council has added ESAH to its list of consultees on Green Infrastructure initiatives.

7. Relations with external bodies

7.1 Local

As the oldest, largest and probably best resourced Society concerned with archaeology and history in the County it would be useful to develop closer ties with organisations within the Essex which share our aims. That is perhaps particularly so since we have inherited the Essex Archaeological and Historical Congress's resources and should perhaps begin to take on something of Congress's co-ordinating role.

An initial step might be to become corporate members of the Friends organisations for all of the accredited museums in Essex, and of Museums Essex. That would have the practical advantage showing our support for organisations across the county, help raise our profile and potentially generate a range of items for our newsletter and website. We could then consider our relations with other local archaeological and historical societies and organisations which are concerned with historic landscapes such as Essex Gardens Trust, Gardens of Easton Lodge, Marks Hall etc

7.2 Wider world

Whilst our focus has always been and will always remain on Essex, we have never pursued our aims narrowly, indeed the very nature of Essex on the edge of the southern North Sea, its coast indented by creeks and estuaries and latterly close to London means that it has always been part of the wider world.

ESAH already has representation on the Council for British Archaeology's East of England and London Regional Groups, and EIAG is a member of both, the Association for Industrial Archaeology and European Route of Industrial Archaeology. It would be sensible to join the Heritage Alliance, as a number of other County Archaeological Societies already have. That would help us develop a way forward for point 5 above and would certainly help to generate news items for the website and newsletter. Closer relations with the Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) would be helpful particularly with regard to 6.2 above and of course the EWT owns or manages many of the most significant historic landscapes in Essex. Similarly closer relations with the National Trust might be beneficial.

8. Diversity

8.1 Gender

Only one woman has ever held the office of President of the Society for a full term, Jennifer Ward, in addition Ann Turner served as President for one year, other than that the Presidency has been a male preserve. On the Society's Council men outnumber women by a considerable margin, there seems no reason why that should be so. The Society will move toward a better gender balance on its council during the life of this strategy and will seek to ensure that there is a woman president by the end of this strategy period and a better gender balance in the presidency thereafter.

8.2 Ethnicity

As noted in 7.2 above by its very nature of Essex on the edge of the southern North Sea, its coast indented by creeks and estuaries and latterly close to London means that it has always been part of the wider world. The Society will reflect the deep connections Essex has had from remote prehistory onward with the rest of Europe and with the wider world particularly as a legacy of Empire. Famously the Empire Windrush which has become emblematic for an entire generation of post war immigrants docked at Tilbury. Hitherto, ESAH has not taken part in Black History Month (October), and since one of the two annual issues of the *Essex Journal* will now be appearing in the autumn, an obvious early move would be to seek an article each year on a Black History theme, for the Autumn EJ.

8.3 Age

ESAH seeks to engage with as wide a range of people as possible, at present the Society's membership is predominantly middle aged or older. Whilst it may be that societies such as ours become more attractive as we age, during the life of this strategy ESAH will consider ways of making its activities attractive to a younger age groups. It is likely that 2.5 and 2.6 above will help with that and closer engagement with issues touched on in 6.2 and 7.2 might also be beneficial.

8.4 Disability

ESAH seeks to engage with as wide a range of people as possible. Accordingly, during the life of this strategy, the Society will explore ways to make as full a range of its activities as possible available to anyone who wishes to access them, seeking to make reasonable adjustments to facilitate that.