

Archaeology Services

Users Survey

Summary of Results



business intelligence *Using Information to put Residents First*

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Introduction

The Archaeology Service users survey was undertaken as part of a wider Archaeology Services consultation. The purpose of this consultation was to gather the views of service users and stakeholders about the Archaeological Planning Advisory Service (APAS) and the Historic Environment Team (HET) – These are the teams providing archaeology services in Cheshire, and are currently under review. Results from this survey, and the wider consultation, will then be used to inform decision-making on some suggested options for their future.

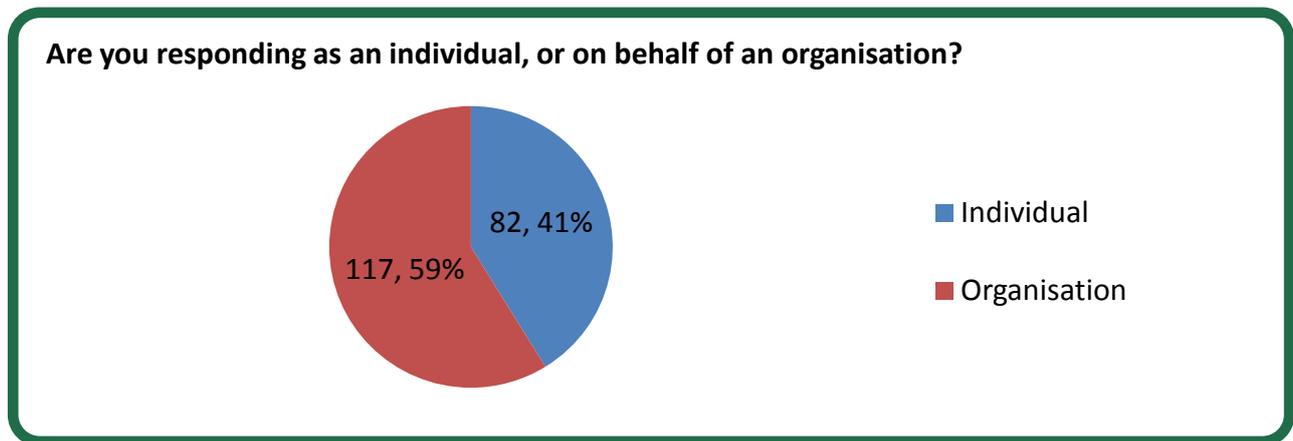
The survey was conducted between 8th September and 2nd December 2014. In total, 199 responses were received, on behalf of individuals and local and national organisations. This represents a good sample size which gives validity to the results – A sample size of 199 means we are 95% confident that results are accurate to +/- 7%. The survey was also more akin to a ‘Census’ Survey, rather than a sample survey, which further adds validity to results.

The majority of respondents (168) completed the survey via a ‘website link’ on the Archaeology Service website, which serves both APAS and HET. This was a link to the [Cheshire East Council consultations page](#), on which a link to the survey was promoted. This link was throughout the four local authorities within Cheshire (Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington). 30 respondents also completed the survey via an ‘email campaign’, whereby a link to the survey was sent directly to various stakeholders in an email. One response was also received via a Twitter campaign, promoted through Cheshire East’s Twitter account (@CECResearch).

Archaeology Service users survey - Responses by method of promotion



At the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked to name the organisation they worked for, or that were representing, if indeed they were. Of the 199 respondents, 82 were individuals and 117 indicated that they worked for, or were representing, an organisation:

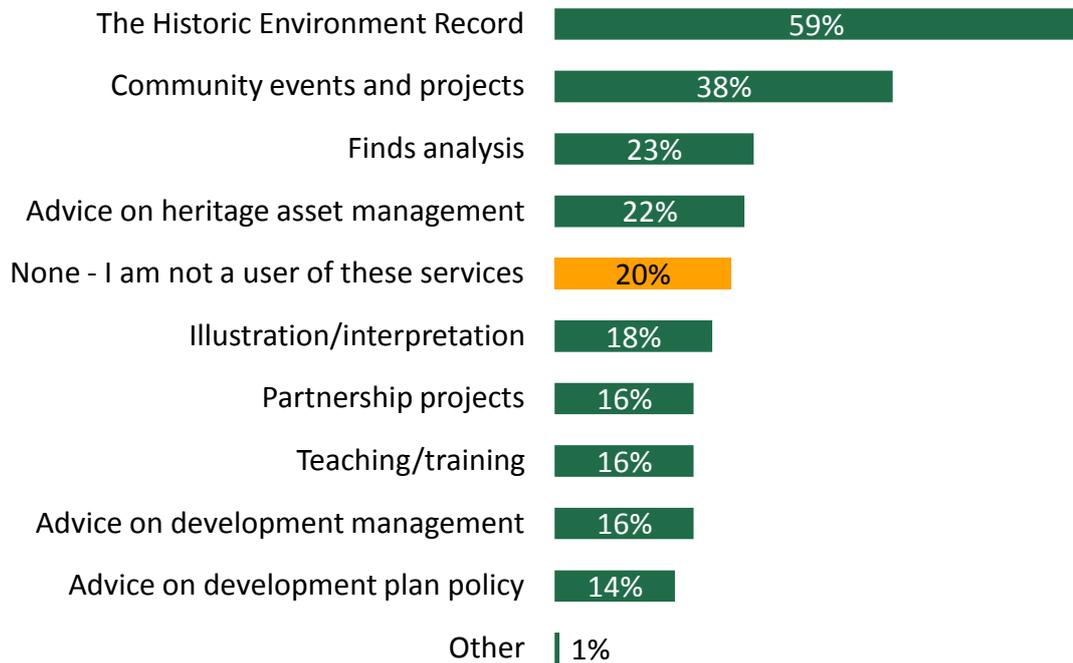


The following report presents a summary of results to the survey, and includes a breakdown of results by individuals Vs organisations where appropriate.

Usage of archaeology services

80% of 190 respondents had used at least one archaeological service in the past 12 months. Of these, the Historic Environment Record was the one most used, with 59% of the 190 respondents having used it in the past 12 months. 73% of respondents had used at least one of the other services:

Which of the following APAS or HET services have you used in the past 12 months?



Sample = 190

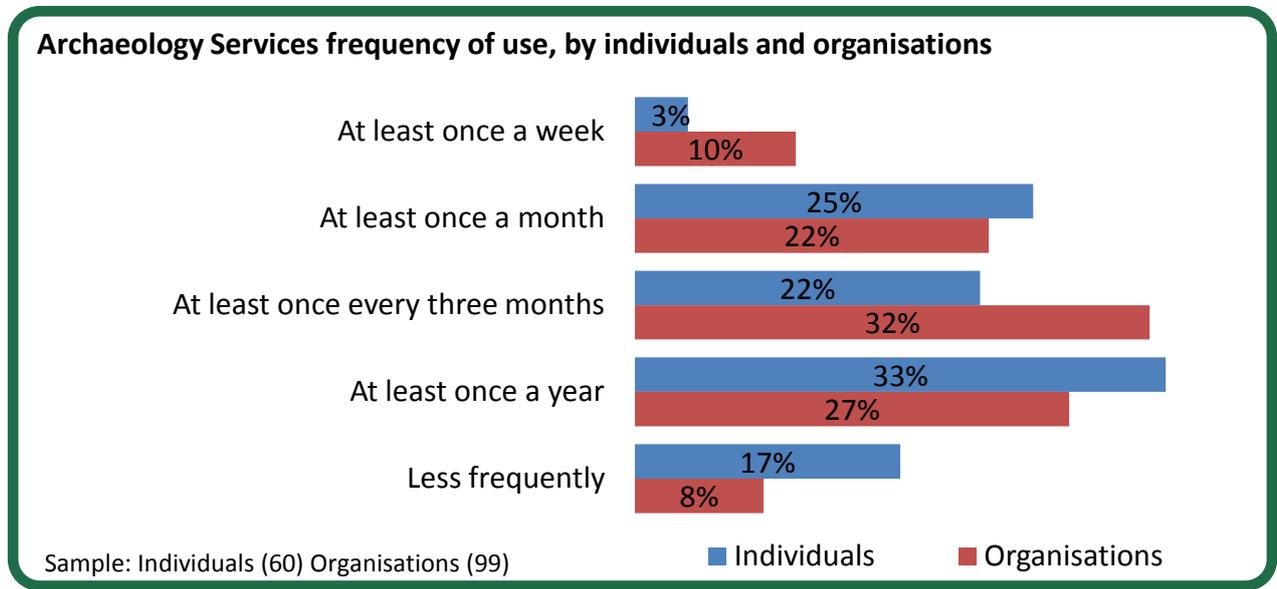
Of those respondents that had used a service in the past 12 months, over half (59%) had used them at least once every three months:

On average, how frequently have you used these services in the past 12 months?



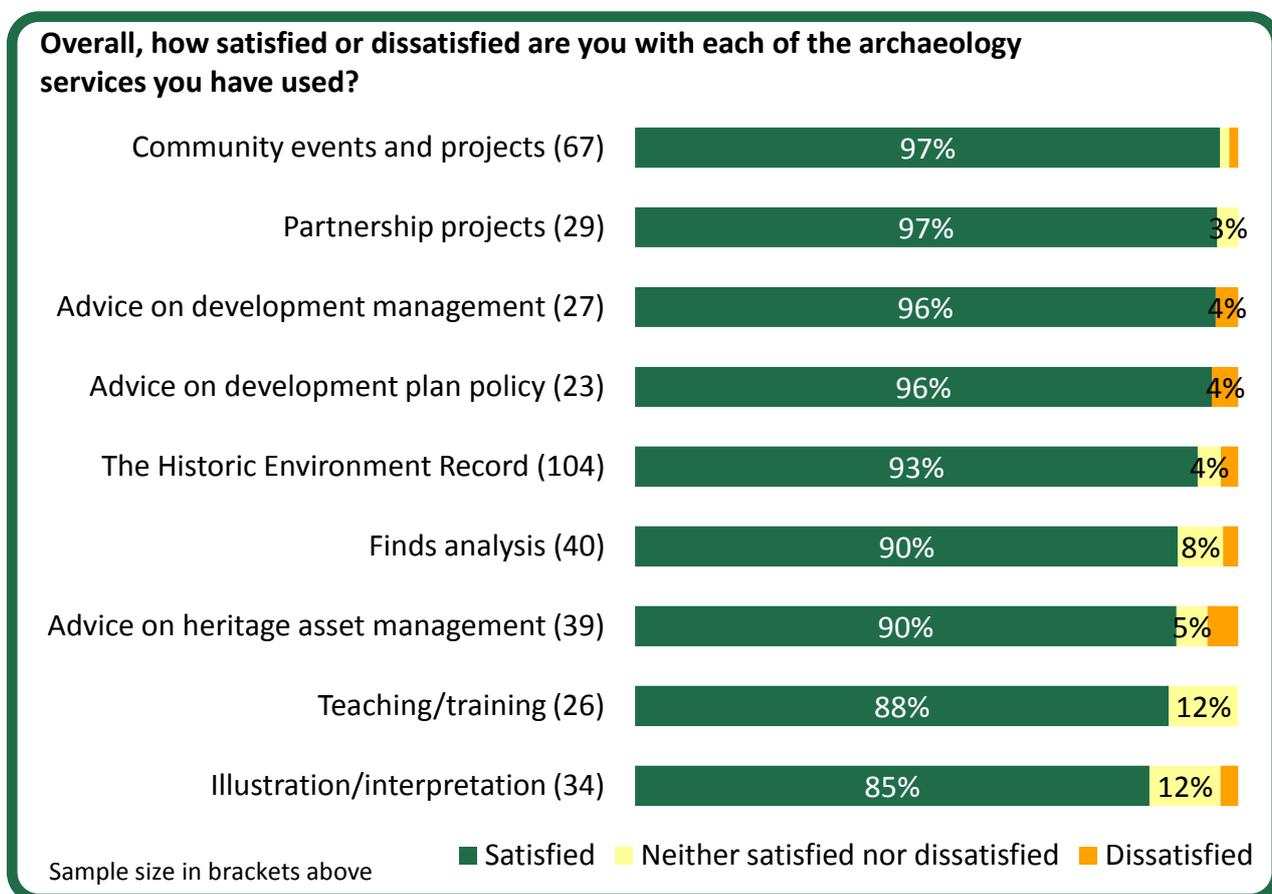
Sample = 159

Respondents who represented an organisation were more likely to have used an Archaeology Service at least once in the last 3 months (65%) compared to those responding as an individual (50%):



Satisfaction with archaeology services

Satisfaction with all archaeology services was high – At least 85% satisfied in all cases:



Respondents were given the opportunity to give reasons for their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the services they had used. The majority of reasons were given by respondents who were satisfied with services, and came under two categories: Satisfaction is due to the high quality of the staff (35 comments) and satisfaction is due to the high quality of the records/resources available (7 comments). There were a few comments made by those dissatisfied with services, and these included: Poor location, time or theme of events (2 comments); Failure to update records (1 comment); Lack of online resources (1 comment); and decline in staffing levels (1 comment).

Respondents were asked in an open comments question what they particularly valued about the services they received. 131 respondents answered this question, making a total of 153 comments between them – These comments have been grouped into the following categories:

- The staff (89 comments made). These comments compromised positive comments about staff knowledge (55%), staff helpfulness (25%) and staff speed/efficiency (20%)
- The range/quality of resources (43 comments made)
- The educational value of the services (12 comments made)
- The low cost of the services(3 comments made)
- Ease of service accessibility (3 comments made)
- Ease of use of the services (3 comments made).

Respondents were also asked, in an open comments question, what could be improved upon or added to the services they are provided with. 100 respondents answered this question, making a total of 113 comments between them – These comments have been grouped into the following categories:

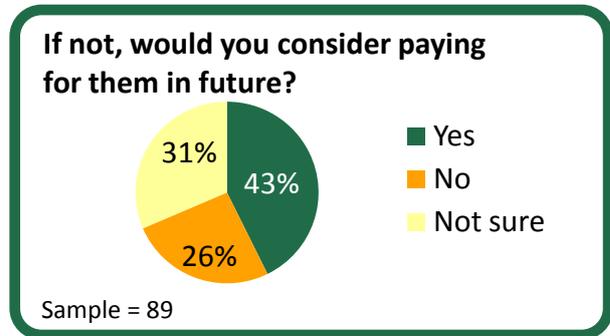
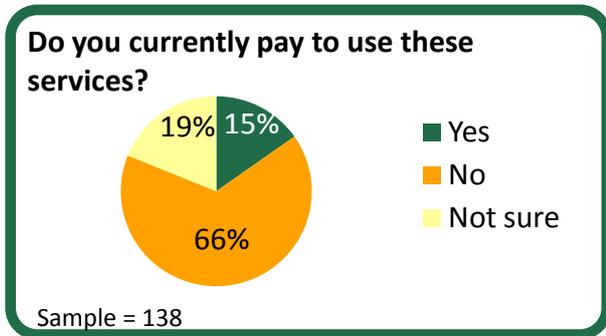
- Improve the promotion of, and increase the usage of, the services (32 comments)
- Improve accessibility to the services, several respondents stated they have to travel a long way to get to some of them (22 comments)
- Increase the number of staff (15 comments)
- Increase funding for the services (14 comments)
- Increase resources for the services (9 comments)
- Improve service information – What exactly is provided by the services? (9 comments)
- Ensure the future of the services is guaranteed (7 comments)
- Nothing can be improved (3 comments)
- Improve how the services are integrated with education programs (2 comments).

Respondents were also asked, in an open comments question, if these services were not provided by the council, where would they obtain them. 125 respondents answered this question, making a total of 130 comments between them – These comments have been grouped into the following categories:

- Nowhere else (53 comments made)
- Don't know (41 comments made)
- Personal/private funds (7 comments made)
- English Heritage/Central national government body (7 comments made)
- A relevant consultant/contractor (6 comments made)
- A university (including Centre for Applied Archaeology, Salford) (5 comments made)
- Cheshire Record Office (5 comments made)
- The internet (4 comments made)
- Freelance specialists (2 comments made).

Paying to use archaeology services

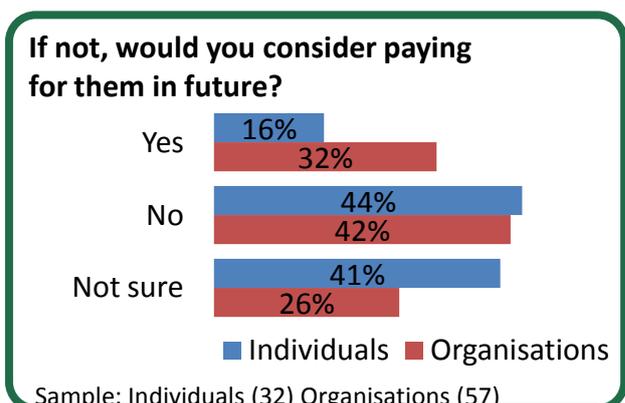
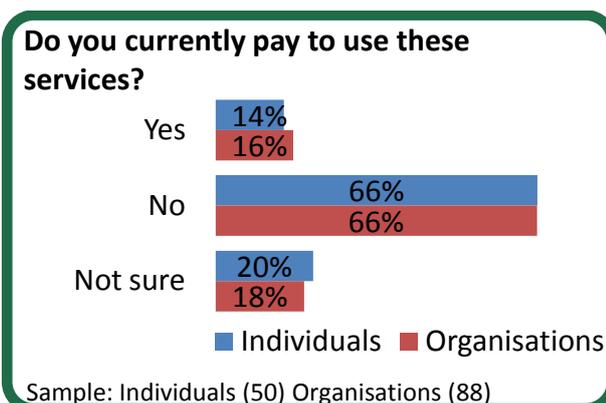
15% of archaeology service users currently pay to use them, whereas a majority (66%) do not. Of those that did not, 43% would consider paying for them in future:



Respondents were asked to explain why they would/wouldn't pay for services in future. Just 2 comments were made by those that would pay – They would be happy to do so because they used services for their own personal research. Those who wouldn't pay several reasons, including that:

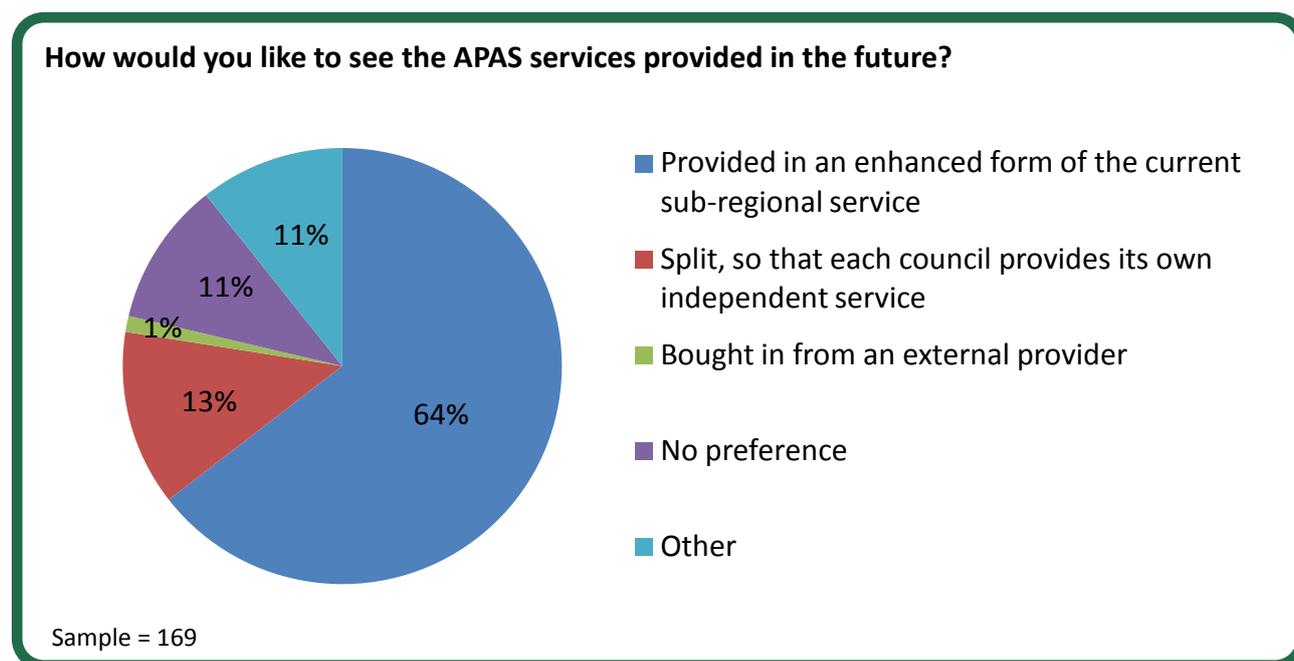
- The council should provide the service, it should be covered by Council Tax (20 comments)
- They wouldn't be able to afford to pay for these services (13 comments)
- Other organisations don't charge for these services (7 comments)
- Charges would be appropriate for commercial projects, but not otherwise (4 comments).
(Note - Currently APAS charges for commercial enquiries to the Historic Environment Record, but non-commercial enquiries are free).

Organisations were more likely to consider paying for services in the future than individuals. However, there was a distinction between commercial organisations/local authorities, who would consider paying and national/local organisations/societies, educational establishments and museums, who would not consider paying for services in the future:



Future provision of the Archaeology Planning Advisory Service (APAS)

64% of respondents felt APAS services should be provided in an enhanced format of the current sub-regional service, through closer partnership with other heritage agencies (e.g. English Heritage). 13% felt APAS services should be split between each of the four councils in Cheshire, while just 1% felt APAS services should be bought in from an external provider:



Under the “Other” option, 16 respondents made 17 suggested alternatives between them:

- Continue as is (10 suggestions made)
- Retain as a fully funded council service (2 suggestions made)
- Have a regional team (Cheshire) (2 suggestions made). *(Note - Currently APAS covers the whole of Cheshire and Halton and Warrington).*
- Join APAS with the HET (1 suggestion made)
- None of the above (1 suggestion made).

Respondents were also given the opportunity to give reasons for their answers to this question – 54 respondents did so, giving a total of 65 reasons between them. These reasons are summarised under each of the possible answer options:

Provided in an enhanced form of the current sub-regional service, through closer partnership with other heritage agencies (e.g. English Heritage)

The main reason given as to why APAS should be provided in an enhanced format of the current service was around economy of scale/critical mass – In essence the current sub-regional service is a good ‘size’, making it cost effective (11 comments made). It was also felt that coordination between different councils within Cheshire is sensible and useful (1 comment).

Other reasons given for selecting this option included that it was the best, or least worst, option of those presented (3 comments made), and that the service should be left as it is, as change costs money (3 comments made).

However, concerns were expressed about the ability of English Heritage to increase their contribution towards archaeology services in Cheshire, due to their recent reduction in resources and reorganisation (5 comments made).

Split, so that each council provides its own independent service

There were a few reasons given for why the service should be split, including that:

- Local knowledge/expertise is paramount, and that splitting the service would improve that (4 comments made)
- Splitting would mean the service would be available in areas where it isn’t currently – It would make it more accessible (2 comments made). *(Note – The service is currently available in all the local authorities it would be split into)*
- It would be more practical to split the service up between the different councils (2 comments made).

There were also several reasons given for why the service shouldn’t be split, including that:

- A split has no historical/geographical precedence, whereas Cheshire does (3 comments made)
- Splitting would be too onerous on each Council, many of whom do not have dedicated specialists, to maintain and provide the information/It would be inefficient (2 comments made)
- Splitting services reduces quality of service (1 comment made)
- Professionals work better in larger teams (1 comment made).

Bought in from an external provider (e.g. council-owned company, private sector provider, independent charitable trust)

There were two reasons given in favour of buying in the service from an external provider – These were:

- Advice should be independent and external to the Council (1 comment)
- Because local government is developing a poor record in honouring its responsibilities to common heritage and this trend should be reversed (1 comment).

There were several reasons given for why the service should not be bought in from an external provider, including:

- Local knowledge would be lost when employing an external provider (5 comments)
- Archaeological remains should be public sector owned, are of national importance and shouldn't be in the hands of an external provider (2 comments)
- External companies give no long-term continuity (2 comments)
- External providers reduce quality of service (1 comment).

No preference

Finally, there were two comments made by those who selected no preference:

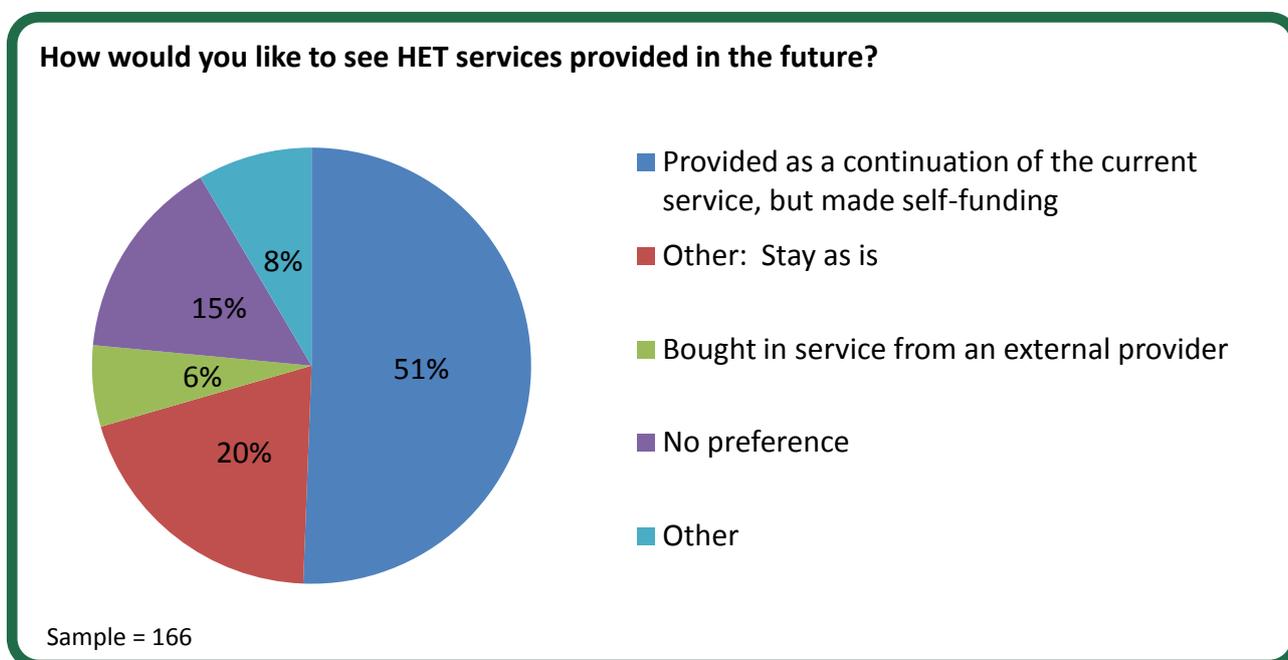
- Not concerned about how the service is provided, as long as it is fit for purpose and properly resourced (3 comments)
- All the models defined work well in some parts of the country. I am however very aware of what (a fine) margin there is for error. Once broken it's difficult to mend (1 comment).

Future provision of the Historical Environment Team (HET)

Similar to results for APAS, the largest proportion of respondents (51%) felt HET services should be provided as a continuation of the current service, but made self-funding before 2017 (in line with the 2012 decision to gradually withdraw core funding).

However, within the “Other” option that was available to respondents, a large proportion, 20% of all answering the question, wrote that the service should remain as it is, in that it should be funded by the council, from CW&C resident Council Tax, and not be made self-funding by 2017.

Just 6% of respondents felt HET services should be a bought in service from an external provider:



Under the “Other” option, respondents made 10 suggested alternatives between them:

- Join APAS and the HET together (3 suggestions)
- HET should be managed by/in partnership with Chester University (3 suggestions)
- Charge commercial clients (2 suggestions)
- None of the above (2 suggestions).

Respondents were also given the opportunity to give reasons for their answers to this question – 44 respondents did so, giving a total of 55 reasons between them. These reasons are summarised under each of the possible answer options:

Provided as a continuation of the current service, but made self-funding before 2017 (in line with the 2012 decision to gradually withdraw core funding)

Reasons given for why respondents had selected this option were few in number – The majority of comments made by those selecting this option were in relation to the self-funding part of the question. The few reasons given for selecting this option included that:

- Any other format would result in the further loss of experienced staff, which would further be to the detriment of the service (5 comments made)
- A bought in service would reduce the service quality – Becoming too profit orientated would be to the detriment of the service (2 comments made).

Even though many respondents selected this option, many concerns about the self-funding aspect were expressed. Self-funding concerns begin with reservation/cynicism about it:

- I would prefer the service left as it is , but I do understand funding pressures (1 comment)
- I'm cynical about this consultation as it seems a decision is already made about funding (1 comment).

There were also comments made about the practicalities of the HET becoming self-funding:

- Self-funding will raise a commercial expectation, and therefore an extra skill base requirement that is not currently available within the HET team (2 comments).

And ways suggested around how the HET could become self-funded:

- The HET should be funded through a greater public profile/commercial expansion (1 comment)
- The HET should be funded by commercial enterprise with education/schools (1 comment)
- There should be different pricing structures for different clients, e.g. Commercial Vs Individual Vs Charitable (1 comment).

Thereafter, there were several comments made about why the HET should not become self-funded:

- Chester tourism is dependent on its heritage/historical assets, therefore it should be funded, indeed it would be short-sighted if it were not (1 comment)
- The self-funding aspect of the HET would only work if relevant Local Authorities pay for the work they need doing/Give a realistic payment (1 comment).

Other: Stay as is

A significant proportion of respondents (20%) stated as an “Other” option that the HET should stay as it is currently provided. Reasons given by those that selected this option began with some general ones, including that:

- Why change/deplete a service which works so well? (1 comment)
- If the HET service were to disappear, it would be difficult to re-start (1 comment)
- The service has been drastically depleted since Cheshire West and Chester was formed (1 comment).

Thereafter, reasons given for keeping the service as it is revolved around fears about the service becoming self-funding:

- Chester tourism is dependent on its heritage/historical assets, therefore it should be funded, indeed it would be short-sighted if it were not (14 comments)
- Self-funding would reduce service quality/May result in loss of local focus/Would not enable team to make new archaeological finds (2 comments)
- Self-financing by 2017 is unrealistic (1 comment).

Bought in service from an external provider (e.g. council-owned company, private sector provider, independent charitable trust)

Reasons expressed as to why the service should be bought in from an external provider included that:

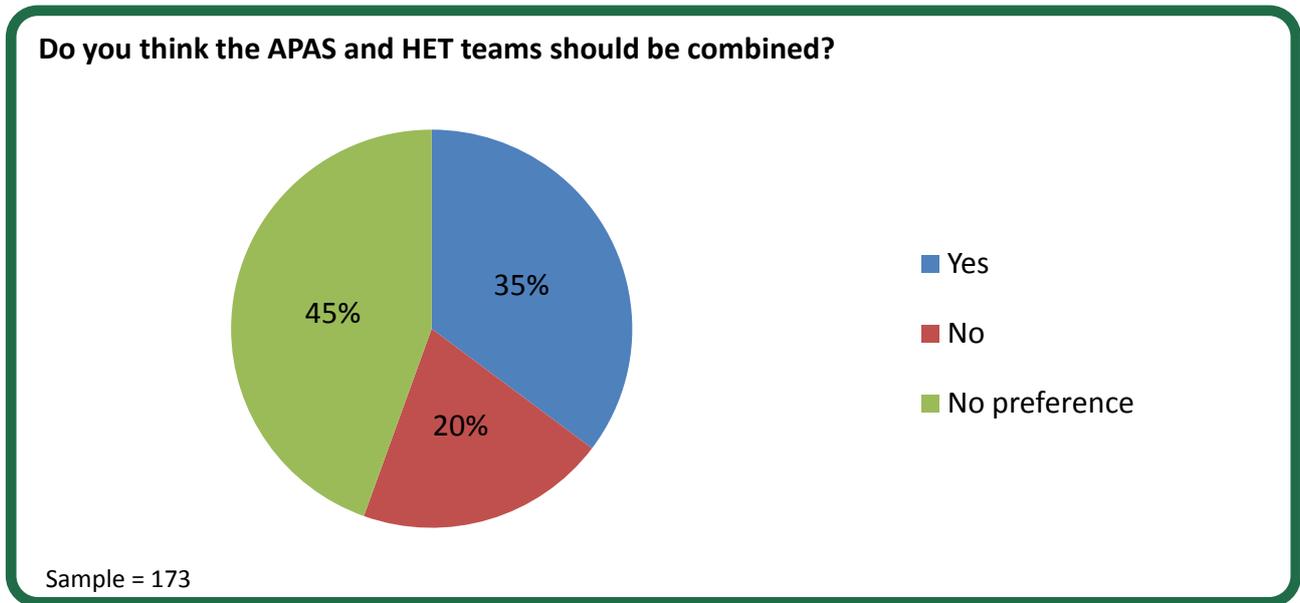
- There are limits to the amount self-funding can bring in (1 comment)
- Having a Council owned company was a good idea (1 comment).

Reasons expressed for not buying the service in from an external provider included that:

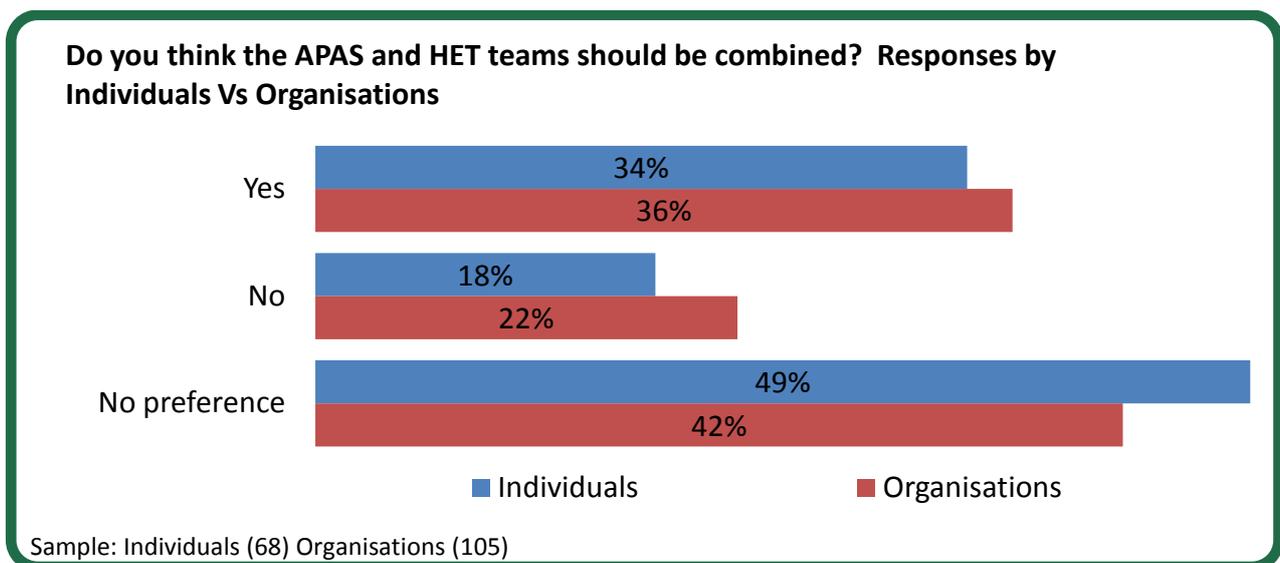
- Charitable trusts can struggle
- Bought in services equal poor quality/Profit orientated/Risk to staff.

Combining APAS and HET

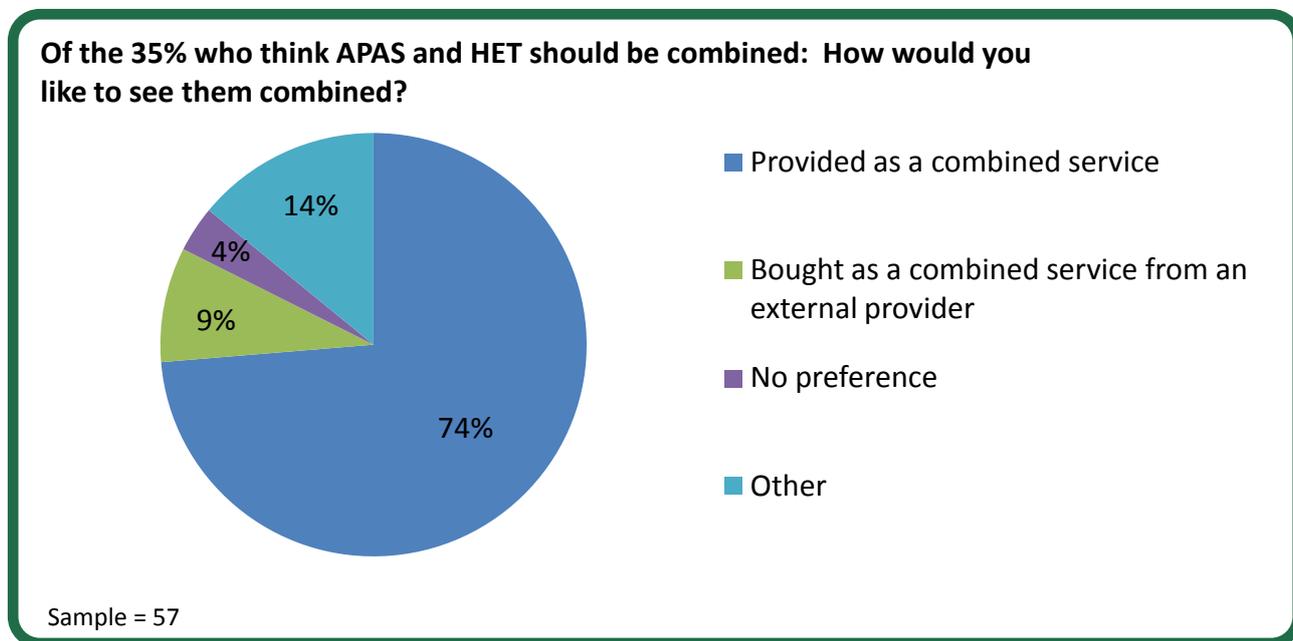
Opinion was more evenly split on whether APAS and HET should be combined. 45% of respondents had no preference, with 35% thinking they should be combined, and 20% thinking they should not:



There was little difference of opinion between individuals and organisations as to whether the APAS and HET teams should be combined – Individuals were slightly more likely to have no preference:



Of the 35% that would like to see them combined, the majority (74%) felt they should be provided as a combined service (partly self-funding before 2017) – Just 9% felt they should be bought as a combined service from an external provider:



Under the “Other” option, 8 respondents made the following suggested alternatives:

- It should be a combined service, fully funded (4 comments)
- It should be provided as an enhanced in-house service (1 comment)
- Get Government funding and perhaps some help from English Heritage and possibly apply for Lottery Funding. (1 comment)
- Increased funding to ensure continuity (1 comment)
- None of the above (1 comment).

8 respondents gave reasons for their answers to whether APAS and the HET should be combined, and these were:

- The HET team have a great knowledge of the archaeology of Cheshire, and Chester in particular, built up over the last 20-30 years. But they don't have the detailed knowledge of planning and the HER that APAS have - together they provide a stronger service based on shared knowledge and expertise. This may also enable them to go for larger grants.
- As a combined service they may be "more than the sum of their parts". This is a formula that has, thus far, been successful in Worcestershire
- It is necessary to maintain the expertise already in house to sustain protection of the historic environment in a manner that the public today expects, and that future

generations will appreciate as a legacy which it is in our hands to decide whether to keep and conserve, or lose forever

- They should be joined provided jobs and expertise are not at risk.

And again there were reservations expressed about self-funding, and external providers:

- I am not convinced about 'self-funding'. Where would the money come from in the bad times? Big business?
- Again, I'm somewhat anxious about 'self-funding'
- The reason such services should be funded, is that we all benefit from the protection of heritage assets
- I don't like the idea of external providers. In my experience it means higher costs for less service, even charitable trusts.

Conclusions

Usage of, and satisfaction with, archaeology services

APAS and the HET seem to be quite well used services, with at least 94 respondents having used them at least quarterly throughout the past year.

Satisfaction with each of the services provided was extremely high, with at least 85% of those using each of the individual services satisfied with them – These are high levels of satisfaction for any service. It is clear that those who use these services value them highly, indeed, if they were not provided by local authorities in Cheshire, the vast majority of respondents would either not be able to find these services elsewhere, or wouldn't know where to look.

Promoting services and service charges

The most valued aspects of these services were the staff, and the range/quality of resources made available. In terms of improving these services, promoting them more widely, and improving accessibility to them, may be the most effective way of doing so – Improvements which may become increasingly necessary as parts of these services move towards self-funding in future.

It may be that future funding of the services could come in part by implementing charges for services. 66% of respondents stated that they do not pay for the services they use, and perhaps importantly, 43% of those would consider paying for them in future – That equates to 38 respondents who would consider paying charges for the services they receive in future. However, the introduction of any charges for services may need to be implemented carefully – 26% of those who don't currently pay for services would not consider doing so in future, with reasons given for this being that they felt Council Tax payments should cover the provision of this service, and that they simply wouldn't be able to afford paying for them.

Respondents representing organisations were more likely than individuals to say they would pay for services in future (32% for organisations Vs 16% for individuals), however, the sample sizes for these results are low and so they must be treated with care. Further to that, commercial organisations and local authorities were more likely to say they would consider paying for services

in future, compared to national/local organisations/societies, educational establishments and museums, who were less likely to consider paying for services in the future.

Future provision of APAS

Opinion on how APAS should be provided in future was fairly clear cut.

A very small minority of respondents felt this service should be bought in from an external provider (just 1%), with fears around the resulting loss of local expertise/knowledge, and fears around a reduction in quality of service being the main reasons against.

A minority (13%) also felt that APAS should be split between each of the councils in Cheshire, with reasons against this being: a split has no historical precedence; splitting would be too onerous for the individual councils; fears around reductions in the quality of service; and that APAS professionals work better in larger teams.

A majority of respondents (64%) felt APAS should be provided in an enhanced form of the current sub-regional service, through closer partnership with other heritage agencies (e.g. English Heritage). The main reason given for the selection of this option was that the current sub-regional service has a good economy of scale, or critical mass – In essence that it was the most cost effective format available. However, there were some serious doubts raised about the ability of English Heritage to significantly contribute towards any future partnership, due to their own reduction in funding and reorganisation.

Finally, several respondents suggested that APAS should continue as is, or be retained as a fully-funded council service in future, a viewpoint that was frequently expressed. In essence, there was significant resistance to service cuts.

Future provision of the HET

Opinion around the future provision of the HET, whilst not as clear cut as for APAS, was still fairly clear. Just 6% felt the HET should be bought in from an external provider, and 51% felt the HET should be provided as a continuation of the current service, but made self-funding before 2017, in line with the decision taken by Cheshire West and Chester Council in 2012.

However, there were significant reservations about the self-funding nature of that proposal. A significant proportion of respondents (20%) instead selected “Other” and stated that in future the HET should remain as it is, and continue as a fully-funded service – This is a significant proportion, and especially so when considering that these respondents had to name an option that was not listed outright.

Even several of the 51% who selected the self-funding by 2017 option expressed significant reservations about the self-funding proposal. They felt that Chester tourism in particular is greatly dependent on its heritage/historical assets, and therefore, why should this service not be funded? They also suggested that self-funding would only work if the relevant Local Authorities agreed to pay for the services they needed.

It should be noted that significant comments were made in relation to the future funding of HET, particularly those relating to the important link between tourism and heritage assets. It is felt that these comments were made in relation to HET within the survey, as the future funding of this service was specifically mentioned in the question. However, these comments are as relevant to APAS as well, as management of heritage assets is broader than just HET, and in fact includes APAS. In essence, the link between tourism and the management of heritage assets is as attributable to APAS as it is HET.

Combining APAS and HET

Opinion was more evenly split on whether APAS and the HET should be combined – It may not be possible to make a clear decision on this proposal on the basis of results to this survey, further consultation on this matter may be required. Having said that, if the services were to be combined, respondents were clear in that they felt they shouldn't be bought in from an external provider.

Overall

These services are clearly highly valued by those that use them, and there was a strong indication within the survey that the future provision of the services should be based on a continuation of current arrangements. Cuts to either service are strongly resisted, which is perhaps unsurprising,

and the most significant concerns raised were around future funding – There was significant resistance to the decision that has already taken to make the HET self-funding by 2017.

Ideally, respondents felt the services should continue to be fully funded, and that Local Authorities should continue to provide these services, particularly as a result of the many benefits they provide. It may be that promotion of the services, and of the role they play (particularly in terms of tourism), should be increased – Both to the general public, but also within local authorities themselves.

If these services are to become self-funded, promotion of them would also seem to be sensible, and it may be that the services should consider the employment of a ‘commercial expert’ to help advance this cause. Funding routes that could be explored include implementing charges for services (especially to commercial, individual and charitable clients), and increasing the commercial appeal of the services within tourism, and within local schools.

business intelligence *Using Information to put Residents First*

