

## **'The archaeological resource in store – informing the future'**

### **Project summary**

The project is collaboration between the Society of Museum Archaeologists (SMA) and the Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers (FAME), supported by funding from English Heritage and the SMA.

It is exploring a range of issues relating to the curation of archaeological archives. Planning guidance and professional practice require the deposition of archaeological archives in museums, but this is causing increasing difficulties at a time when financial pressures on local authorities have led to a reduction in resources. This has affected the space available for archaeological archives, the amount of funding for managing them and levels of curatorial expertise. Archaeological contractors are consequently not always able to deposit completed archives in museums.

The SMA will carry out a survey of all museums with archaeological collections in England, and FAME's contribution in kind will be a survey of contracting archaeological organisations working in England, Scotland, and Wales. The project will be enhanced by a study of the potential for established museums and proposed archaeological resource centres to attract new audiences. It will result in an updated version of the online map of museum collecting areas in England which will also show the distribution of specialist archaeological expertise in museums. A report will be prepared which will focus on

- collecting areas,
- the space available for archaeological archives,
- completed archives which cannot currently be delivered,
- the availability of specialist expertise,
- research and wider public use of deposited archives,
- archaeological resource centres and the opportunities these could offer,

and will make some recommendations on ways forward.

The project formally began in December 2011 and the report will be due at the end of June 2012.