**Summary:**

**Annual Survey of Museums Collecting Archaeology, Pr 7358**

**23/6/16**

**Background:**

It is recognised that there is currently an annual increase in the number of museums that cease to collect archaeological archives mainly due to pressure on storage space. Meanwhile, nearly every local authority museum is experiencing budget cuts that lead to staff losses. The true extent of the reductions in collecting and expertise is not accurately being measured. For a number of years Historic England has supported the gathering of information on local authority staffing levels in planning and HER services but there has been no concomitant survey of museums, despite such institutions supporting archaeological project work through the curation of archive material.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this project is to conduct an annual survey of museums that have archaeology collections and to establish which are continuing to collect archives from archaeological projects. The survey will be repeated each year for three years in the first instance. It is hoped that the intelligence gathered will inform discussions on the future of archaeological archive provision in England at a time when there is growing uncertainty over the role of museums and the ways they are resourced.

**Delivery:**

The project will be delivered by the Society for Museum Archaeology and was developed by a working group of three museum professionals (all members of the SMA Committee) who will oversee its delivery in conjunction with a Project Assurance Officer nominated by Historic England. The working group will design and build a ‘Survey Monkey’ to gather data and SMA members will be appointed to act as regional reps across seven regions that England has been divided into for survey purposes. The regional reps will encourage institutions to complete the survey as well as offering support and site visits if required. The findings will be collated the working group who will produce the annual reports. The SMA working group will also ensure that all major stakeholders are fully aware of the scope and aims of the project and a summary of the project and the draft survey questions will be communicated to them for comment in advance of the survey’s launch.

**Timescale:**

The project will run over three years from the date of commission. Project milestones will be monitored by the working team during scheduled face to face meetings within the active project phases, with additional communication via email and telephone for the duration of the project. The first report will be completed by November 2016, (Yr 2 in Nov 2017, Yr 3 in Nov 2018) in order for it to be disseminated among the SMA membership and to relevant stakeholders, using the SMA annual conference as a launch pad.