Critically reflect on your experience of the role play scenarios to identify the key challenges in successful project delivery when working as a team

The role-play exercises were quite varied in scope and nature, so I have chosen to reflect on them in a "reflection diary" format. I will provide a brief description of each exercise and then detail my experience and thoughts on it, and where relevant I will touch on how I took the insights from the sessions further.

Session: 9th February 2022

Activity: Project start-up exercise

My experience: We were asked to think of a project proposal for a client consultation scenario. Given the information provided I decided the first stage should be a Desk Based Assessment (DBA). I made this decision in reference to the "purpose and context" of a DBA as listed by CIfA, particularly the following points taken directly from the guidance document (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2014, pp. 4-5):

- *An assessment of the potential for heritage assets to survive within the area of study*
- *An assessment of the significance of the known or predicted heritage assets considering, in England, their archaeological, historic, architectural and artistic interests*
- *An assessment of the impact of proposed development or other land use changes on the significance of the heritage assets and their settings*

This seemed well suited as the client was asking for clarification on what likely constraints the historic environment would have on their proposed work. Therefore, a DBA would be the most suitable action to take.

I didn't know the details of planning permissions or practical steps having not worked heavily in the commercial sector. This became a reoccurring theme for me throughout the webinars; while I have an understanding of archaeological principles I have little practical experience working within the planning process. This has led me to read more on archaeology and the planning process such as *Planning and Archaeology: Historic England Advice Note (Consultation draft)* (Historic England 2022).

What I learnt: I didn't consider how the construction elements would impact the proposal, e.g. the temporary roads needed for construction traffic (though I had made the note that I would want confirmation on what the red outline on the map was actually noting).

I neglected to check for area designations, an important oversight on my part. In response to this I decided to look up the relevant area designations after the session. I found the proposed area fell into several designations including SSSI, SAC, SAP and Ramsar (see figure 1).

The quality of the discussion in this session highlighted to me the value of sharing relevant information and the agenda in advance as this allowed the group to come prepared with more considered insights. This is something that can be taken into project delivery where the more

information is circulated between the project team, the more cohesive and effective the team can be (Hocutt 2022).

Session: 16th February 2022

Activity: HER exercise

My experience: We were given 20 minutes in the webinar to assess the heritage interest for a small development site.

When the discussion started I didn't feel prepared for it, mostly due to long loading times for the HER data, meaning I had little research time before the discussion. There were points made in the discussion regarding it being a prehistoric landscape and the level of intervention suggested which I disagreed with but didn't really feel comfortable refuting, in-part as I felt like I'd not had enough time to look at the scenario, and partly due to my own lack of experience with development requirements. This ties into what I mentioned above regarding being inexperienced in development led archaeology particularly in regards to consultation with private development companies.

I found Andy's experiences of working for an HER particularly interesting. I was aware that HERs fall under the responsibility of councils, however I did not know how fragmented the management of this was, particularly in regards to the different funding between HERs. This helped contextualise my own experiences in using data from different HERs.

What I learnt: This exercise and webinar confirmed to me that there is a gap in my knowledge when it comes to planning and development led archaeology. This drove the feeling that I was not in a position to disagree. Reflecting on the session I realised I should have more confidence. There was scope for me to bring up why I was uncertain without implying that the group consensus was wrong. At worst it may have been re-explained in a way I understood and at best it may have highlighted a previously unconsidered factor.

Session: 23rd February 2022

Activity: Project management methodologies

My experience: In this session we discussed the benefits and drawbacks of several management techniques in the context of a given scenario. In the first case study of a limited chair production run, it became clear that I had misinterpreted the principles behind lean management. The task was valuable as it highlighted my misunderstanding and allowed me to correct my knowledge in a way that wouldn't have happened if it had been a pure reading exercise.

What I learnt: I found the idea that not everything needs to be a project but that some things will just be "business as usual" interesting, as virtually all my work is considered project based at DigVentures. Until recently virtually all DigVentures funding was tied to specific projects and therefore most staff were working in the confines of these projects.

The session encouraged me to do further reading around project management. One interesting book I read was *The Lean Start-up* which takes its ideas primarily from Lean and Agile methodologies (Eric 2011). I found the concept of "build-measure-learn" useful for the context of community archaeology. I saw aspects of DigVentures approach mirrored in this concept, as a key challenge in community archaeology remains taking effective measurements of public value (Watson 2021) and adjusting our activities in response to this.

Session: 13th March 2022

Activity: WSI task

My Experience: We were given 10 minutes during the webinar to read over the task, which outlined different scenarios within a development area with various options of actions to take. Upon starting the task I was asked to chair it.

I found it quite difficult to chair a meeting where my knowledge was not particularly extensive and having had only 10 minutes to see the task I didn't feel like I was in a position to add significant value to the discussion. Watching the session back the aspect that I noticed about myself as chair was that I was clearly very worried about not knowing what to say and making sure that everybody got to speak to the point that I ended up coming across somewhat curt.

What I learnt: On reflection I did not need to know anything to be an effective chair, and took the role to something of an extreme where I was purely focused on managing who was speaking at any given time. This lost an element of friendliness and appreciation to the person sharing their thoughts that I personally value when others are chair. To avoid this in a real world situation I would thank someone for speaking and their input which I neglected to do in this scenario.

After the session I read *In The Chair: How to Guide Groups and Manage Meetings* as this had been recommended (Andrew 2014). One of the five skill listed as being needed in a chair was attentiveness (Andrew Green 2014: pp. 228-267). In this regard I could have improved on my active listening and in future will make sure to re-state what participants have said.

I was concerned that as the meeting was held online I would have to monitor who was speaking more closely than for an in-person meeting. However advice I read on this since was that after a small adjustment period this stops being a significant problem when dealing with small groups, especially as the group gets to know each other better (Hulks 2020).

This experience was quite translatable into the general world of project management as it showed how team management is dependent on the size and cohesion of the project group. Using Tuckman's "Stages of Development Model" (Tuckman 1965), when the team is new or "forming" the chair or project manager has to take a more active role to keep everything running smoothly, but as the team becomes more cohesive and enters the "norming/performing" stages this requirement reduces and the focus should be on maintaining cohesion and keeping a friendly atmosphere (Last 2019). In this particular experience the group had already worked together and I overestimated the need for intervention and could instead have focused on fostering a positive atmosphere.

Session: 16th March 2022

Activity: Detectorist Health and Safety

My Experience: We watched a clip from the fictional comedy 'The Detectorists'. Our task was to identify health and safety concerns and ethical issues in the clip. I noted down all the concern noted on Martin's slide. It looked like this was the case for everyone in the group. I would assume this is because health and safety procedures affect everyone, regardless of their level and job role. For health and safety policies to be effective it can't just be the preserve of managers to monitor.

In terms of the ethical question it was universally agreed that whilst the exact situation that played out on screen was exaggerated for narrative purposes, the decision to cover up heritage is immoral and I agreed with the course of action that the group proposed for Tim to remedy that issue.

What I learnt: This was the session that I drew the fewest learnings from as it covered I topic I was already very familiar with. This may be a sign that while health and safety education was a major challenge to successful project delivery the past, it has now permeated the sector to such an extent that the priority is more to maintain this education rather than build it.

Session: 23rd March 2022

Activity: Project planning and costing scenario

My Experience: We were all given a character to play in this scenario and then given 10 minutes to prepare for the meeting. All of us were given a decision related to the project brief and our character's role within it. In my case I was given the role of paleoenvironmental specialist and had to decide if I should be present on site for sampling based on the information provided. I came to the decision that I didn't need to be on site as the project brief suggested that in all likelihood the paleoenvironmental significance would be low. I argued that I should not travel to site and the group agreed that based on the project brief this was the correct course of action.

What I learnt: I think there is an interesting dynamic between costing a project competitively and costing it in a way where it can actually be feasibly delivered. In terms of project delivery this highlights that a "perfect" project plan is likely to be too expensive for most clients and a team will have differing views on what aspects of the budget to prioritise. This is probably the aspect of planning an archaeological project that I think is most challenging.

An interesting example here was costing for aspects such as welfare which the company may be able to provide or may not. It was interesting to hear that Martin and Nigel had different opinions on this as it was in some ways a question of risk. As someone who is risk-averse I would definitely want to budget for it and potentially underspend, but it is interesting to take that stance that you can take a risk in the hope of making your bid more competitive. While I

would still not take the risk in this case it is interesting to think of scenarios where I possibly would.

Session: 30th March 2022

My Experience: There was no activity this week but I wanted to include it as it was particularly impactful to me. Sadie Watson spoke to us about public benefit in development led archaeology. Given my job role it is something that I have worked extensively in. I came out of this session feeling very positive in regards to the prospects of public archaeology. When I left university (as recently as 2018) and was looking for entry level jobs, public archaeology was something I was aiming to work in, but positions were very limited. At that time community archaeology jobs being listed would often be the only community archaeology position in the company and would therefore require a very high level of experience. In the last four years of working in public archology I have seen the sector grow and the larger units creating departments around this. Most of the large units and some of the medium ones now have public archaeology departments rather than a single individual often just focused on social media and organising site visits. On a personal note this was confirmation that my beliefs and values, in regards to archaeology becoming a more accessible, are shared in such a way that they are changing the industry.

Word count: 2,181

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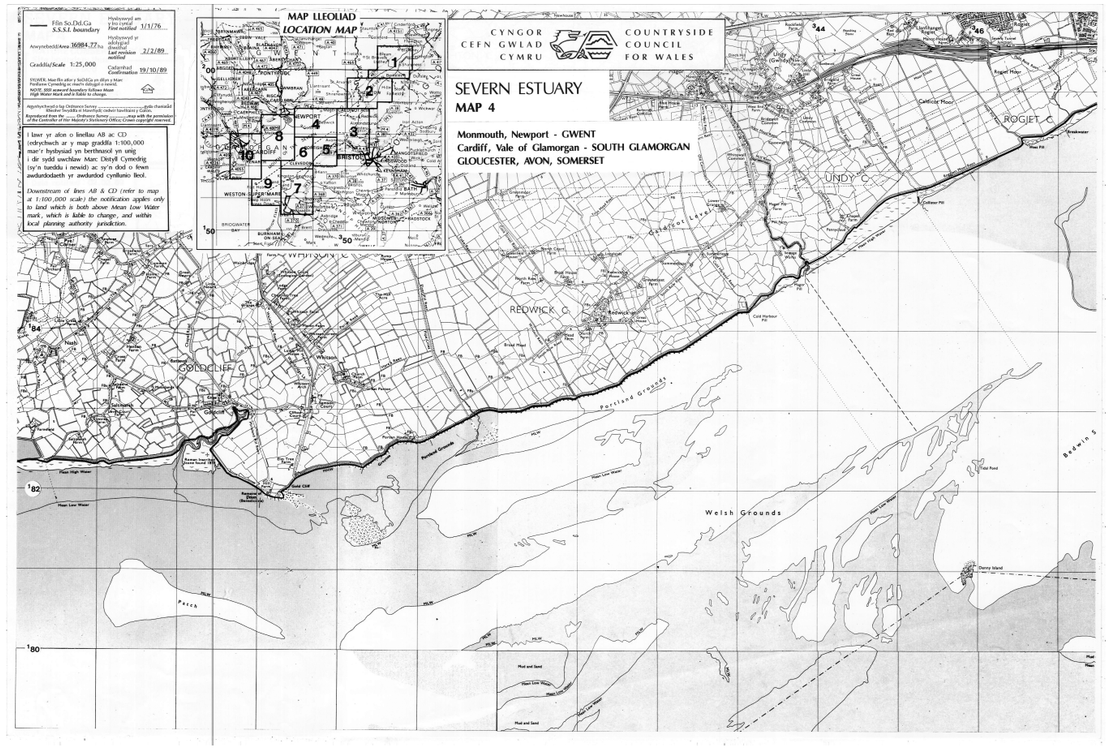


Figure 1. Designation at Goldcliff. Top left - S.S.S.I.. Top right - S.S.S.I.. Bottom left - SPA and Ramsar. Bottom right - SAC